

Police & Crime Panel – November 2025

Progress update from Police & Crime Commissioner

Strategic Performance Objectives – Police & Crime Plan

The Commissioner set four Strategic Performance Objectives for the Constabulary in the Police & Crime Plan. Good progress is being made in these areas:

- **Improve crime recording** – Following a re-audit, HMICFRS has closed the ‘Cause of Concern’ issued in last year’s inspection. This reflects the significant progress made to improve crime recording accuracy over the last year. At the point of the re-audit, a 10 percentage point improvement had been made in crime recording accuracy (82.6% at PEEL 2024 to 92.6% at re-audit 2025). Progress continues to be made, with particular focus on recording of sexual offences.
- **Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour** – The improvements in crime recording are still feeding through into crime data so the new baseline is still being set and it is too early for data to not be reflecting changes in crime recording practices for many crime types. However, in areas unaffected by crime recording accuracy, there are positive signs of progress. As reported elsewhere on the agenda, the focused work in town centres resulted in a 6% year on year crime reduction in town centre related crime during summer 2025, building on the 14.5% reduction in offences through Operation Hotspot in 2024/25.
- **Solve more crime** – The Plan put in place by the Chief Constable to respond to the Police & Crime Plan is starting to deliver results in increasing the amount of crime being solved. This is important as Hertfordshire solves a smaller amount of crime than the national average and is towards the bottom of its ‘most similar group’. Solving more crime means more offenders held to account and more justice for victims. The first 10 months of 2025 have seen 1,238 more crimes solved than the same period in 2024. (8,665 in Jan-Oct 2025, compared to 7,427 in Jan-Oct 2024, a 16% increase). Further increases are expected as the new operating model drives improvements.
- **Keep people safe** – There has been a marked increase in the use of protective orders. In 2023, the Constabulary had the lowest use of Clare’s Law, the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, in the country. Data scrutinised at September’s APM showed significant improvements being made in the number of disclosures, which is critical to tackling VAWG:

Clare’s Law **Right to Ask** disclosures: 76 (2023) → 334 (2024) → 304 (2025 Jan-Aug)

Clare’s Law **Right to Know** disclosures: 6 (2023) → 20 (2024) → 130 (2025 Jan-Aug)

Other performance highlights

- **Responding to the public** – there have been significant and sustained improvements in 999 and 101 call handling performance, through strong leadership, grip, training and technology.

101 and 999 Call Handling – first 6 months of 2025/26 (April to September)				
Month	101 Abandonment Rate	999 Abandonment Rate	Avg. Answer 101 (min:sec)	Avg. Answer 999 (min:sec)
01/04/25	13.31%	0.92%	01:30	00:07
01/05/25	15.81%	0.71%	02:08	00:07
01/06/25	14.44%	0.82%	02:11	00:07
01/07/25	9.98%	0.74%	01:25	00:06
01/08/25	8.17%	0.59%	01:06	00:06
01/09/25	4.49%	0.71%	00:42	00:05

The national target is to answer 90% of 999 calls within 10 seconds. Historically, this has rarely been achieved in Hertfordshire with performance normally around 84-89%. However, this was achieved in September and October 2025, showing significant year on year improvement.

Sept 2022	89.46%	Oct 2022	87.53%
Sept 2023	78.26%	Oct 2023	79.95%
Sept 2024	81.05%	Oct 2024	89.38%
Sept 2025	92.25%	Oct 2025	94.08%

PEEL Inspection

The Commissioner and the OPCC have oversight of the Constabulary's work to address recommendations from PEEL 2024 through internal governance boards. Good progress addressing remaining recommendations is being made.

HMICFRS has published its inspection framework for PEEL 2025-27. Hertfordshire can expect to be inspected in the second half of 2026 with the inspection report published in spring 2027.

A number of changes have been made to the inspection framework. Key changes to highlight are that fraud and custody will be standalone inspection themes and a new approach will be taken to longstanding and unresolved AFIs, meaning they will be 'limiting judgements' if the inspectorate judges that progress is not being made.

Accountability & Performance Meetings

Since the last meeting of the Panel, the Commissioner has used the APMs to hold the Chief Constable to account on the following topics:

- **July:** Safer town centres; Neighbourhood policing; Crime outcomes; Firearms licensing; HMICFRS national thematic report – police response to public disorder
- **August:** HMICFRS (PEEL) – Closure of cause of concern; Police powers and public treatment (inc. Scrutiny Panels reports 24/25; Independent Custody Visitors report 24/25; Police Race Action Plan
- **September:** Rural crime; Firearms licensing; Public protection – Clare's Law and Domestic Violence Protection Orders; Out of Court Resolutions

- **October:** Knife crime; County lines; Serious Violence Duty; Fraud and scams; Operation Hotspot half year update
- **November:** Custody; Burglary winter plans; Roads policing and road safety; Hate crime; Missing people

APMs are webcast live and recordings able to view back for public transparency.

Constabulary internal changes, restructure and savings

The Chief Constable has completed his restructure of the Local Policing Command, which took effect in September. The objective of the restructure was to increase leadership capacity and resilience, with particular emphasis on increasing proactive crime fighting and crime solving.

The Local Policing Command has been split into two divisions – East and West. Each division is led by a Chief Superintendent, supported by three Superintendents responsible for neighbourhood and response policing, crime investigation (CID) and operational support. Chief Inspectors are now responsible for two local authority districts (with the exception of Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield which remain standalone districts). Each local authority district continues to have a dedicated Neighbourhood Inspector who will lead local partnership working.

These changes are decisions for the Chief Constable, but were discussed with the Commissioner who is supportive of the restructure.

As a result of the financial challenges for policing following the Spending Review and in-year budget pressures, the Constabulary has undertaken an in-year voluntary redundancy process for police staff. The Commissioner and the OPCC have provided oversight and scrutiny of the process to ensure value for money for the taxpayer.

OPCC internal changes, restructure and savings

The Commissioner asked the OPCC Interim Chief Executive to undertake a review and restructure of the OPCC's staffing structure in order to strategically align to the Police & Crime Plan, address gaps in capacity and reduce costs given financial pressures.

The OPCC's last restructure was in 2017, despite changes in statutory responsibilities, public expectations and strategic priorities. Over time, the office had grown organically resulting in a structure that no longer reflected strategic or operational needs. The Police & Crime Plan (2025-29) highlighted the need for a more agile and proactive operating model.

The Commissioner is grateful to the Interim Chief Executive for the extensive work he has done on the restructure and to OPCC staff for their engagement and understanding during the process.

The implementation of the restructure resulted in a net reduction of 7 posts (5.3 FTEs), an 18% reduction in the size of the office.

	Old structure	New structure	Reduction
Number of posts	39	37	-18%
Number of FTEs	37.12	31.81	-14%

The restructure is expected to deliver approximately £323,000 in annual savings compared to the projected pre-restructure outturn for the current year. This is made up of a combination of cashable savings that will be available for use elsewhere in 2026/27 and the avoidance of overspend.

The Commissioner is considering how the savings can be used next year to support the delivery of the Police & Crime Plan.

BCH Collaboration

The Commissioner remains actively engaged in the governance and oversight of the BCH Collaboration with his counterparts and this year is chairing the PCC strategic oversight meetings.

Work is underway to assess the operation of the Collaboration in a number of areas, considering whether it provides an effective and efficient service. The Commissioner will update the Panel on this work in future meetings.

Finance and Estates

The Commissioner continues to provide regular oversight of the police budget on behalf of taxpayers and has increased the Constabulary's reporting this financial year.

The police budget continues to be challenging and work is underway to reduce an in-year deficit. It is expected that the pay award from 1st September will again not be fully funded, adding to operational and inflationary pressures.

The development of the new Police HQ at Welwyn Garden City is significantly advanced and ahead of schedule. Occupation is expected in summer 2026, resulting in significantly improved working conditions for police officers and staff in investigative, operational and support teams.

Police officer recruitment

A new cohort of 36 police officers were welcomed to the Constabulary during the summer. Made up of student officers and trainee detectives, officers will be helping achieve a new record number of police officers in Hertfordshire, with this year's budget funding 2,405 officers.

Operation Hotspot

An increase in high visibility police patrols and crime fighting has been achieved in the first half of this financial year through Operation Hotspot.

Building on the success of year 1, which saw 26,000 hours of additional patrols and a 14.5% fall in crime and ASB in hotspots, year 2 has got off to a strong start. Across all measures – patrol

hours, arrests, stop and searches, use of ASB powers and weapons seizures – police activity has increased compared to the same period last year.

In the first six months of 2025/26, Operation Hotspot delivered:

- **More patrols** – over 16,000 hours of additional police foot patrols in town centres, on top of routine patrols by Neighbourhood Policing Teams
- **More arrests** – 225 arrests were made during hotspot patrols (67% of the 24/25 total)
- **More searches** – 393 stop searches were carried out (58% of the 24/25 total)
- **More challenge to anti-social behaviour** – 979 uses of anti-social behaviour powers, such as directing people to leave an area or issuing Community Protection Warnings (61% of the 24/25 total)
- **More knives seized** – 46 knives taken off the streets (88% of the 24/25 total)

In addition, a number of statistically significant crime reductions have been achieved in hotspot areas, on top of reductions last year:

- **Personal robbery down** – in Hertfordshire’s hotspots, the number of personal robbery offences fell by 50% year on year
- **Violent crime down** – serious violence was down by 20% in St Albans city centre, 15% in Hemel Hempstead town centre, 22% in East Herts’ town centres, 12% in Borehamwood town centre and 16% in Waltham Cross’ hotspot

Retail Crime Partnership

Following the Retail Crime Forum convened by the Commissioner in the summer, further partnership work has been undertaken to bring the police and retailers together to tackle retail crime.

Priorities identified in the Forum meeting are being progressed by a Retail Crime Partnership Board chaired by the Commissioner. Current priority workstreams are improving reporting mechanisms, support for independent retailers, interventions for prolific offenders and youth diversion.

Violence Against Women and Girls

The Chrysalis Centre, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire’s domestic abuse perpetrator programme has been recommissioned with a new operating model to improve triage and case management.

The Commissioner has funded a new stalking perpetrator programme as part of Chrysalis which is now operational. It will work on a similar basis the DA programme, targeting behaviour change amongst offenders.

Work is underway to explore the joint commissioning of VAWG advocacy services in Hertfordshire, bringing together services funded by the Commissioner with those funded by the County Council and NHS. The intention is to provide a more streamlined, single point of access to support and advocacy service, improving the service to victim-survivors.

Violence Prevention

Hertfordshire is one of just three PCC areas that do not have Violence Reduction Units who have secured Home Office funding to pilot Prevention Partnerships. It follows lobbying by the Commissioner to Minister Jess Phillips for funding for violence reduction activity, which around half of PCC areas do not receive.

£300,000 has been received for a pilot in 2025/26. The project will focus on identifying and supporting young people who have been named as a suspect in a criminal investigation but where there has been no further action and there are no other children's services interventions. The pilot will operate in Dacorum Borough.

The Commissioner has established and is chairing a strategic oversight board with local authority and partner representatives as well as independent experts to help guide the work. The Commissioner's long term goal is to use the pilot to develop further violence reduction work across the county.

Huntingdon Station major incident – victim support

Beacon Victim Care Centre remains on standby to scale up support for victims of the Huntingdon Station incident. The agreed process includes clear public messaging on referral pathways, redeployment of resilience staff if required, and triage via a Single Point of Contact to ensure continuity of care.

Financial assistance information will be shared where appropriate, and data capture/reporting mechanisms are in place for Ministry of Justice returns. Community engagement options, including local presence, will be considered if demand rises. Governance arrangements allow for weekly or fortnightly reviews with OPCC and Beacon to monitor impact and adjust resourcing.

To date, British Transport Police has triaged 14 injured victims, three of whom are Hertfordshire residents, and Beacon has received one referral from an uninjured passenger. A resilience plan is ready should further mobilisation be necessary.

Knife Crime

The Knife Angel visited Hertfordshire for the first time during October. Its stay in Welwyn Garden City was the focal point of a month long programme of intensive anti-violence youth engagement, which included:

- 31 schools taking part in anti-violence sessions
- 6,997 young people receiving face to face anti-violence education
- 41 referrals for one to one interventions for young people at risk of criminal exploitation
- 349 virtual reality sessions delivered to young people on knife crime

The Commissioner grant funded a range of educational and community activity alongside the Knife Angel. Knife crime is low in Hertfordshire, but one is too many and there is more we can and must do to reduce it further. The Knife Angel provided an important focal point during October as well as ongoing legacy activity across the county.

Firearms licensing

The Commissioner has continued to focus on holding the Constabulary to account and seeking improvements in firearms licensing performance. It has now been a topic on the agendas of 5 APMs since his election.

The performance of the BCH collaborated firearms licensing unit is recognised as being the worst in the country, with longstanding backlogs. The Chief Constable has put additional Hertfordshire staff into the unit with a mandate to focus on Hertfordshire renewals only.

Despite 2024/25 being a peak year for application renewals, the Hertfordshire backlog is falling. Weekly throughput has been increasing throughout this year. In February the Hertfordshire renewals backlog was 1200 cases. This has now fallen to around 800 cases. It should though be recognised that some of these are very recent applications and are not true 'backlog'. The number that have been pending for over 1 month is around 650.

The Commissioner recognises that the progress made this year on renewals has led to new applications not being prioritised for the obvious reasons that public safety requires current holders of firearms to be prioritised before new applications.

There are no quick fixes and there remains considerable work to be done on service efficiency and productivity to ensure Hertfordshire residents receive a consistent and satisfactory service, whilst ensuring that good quality decisions are made to maintain public safety. This work is underway under new leadership in the department.

The police inspectorate, HMICFRS, will be inspecting the performance of the BCH collaborated unit as part of a national thematic inspection. The Commissioner welcomes this and will be meeting with the inspectorate shortly.

Hate Crime

A new Independent Chair of the Hertfordshire Hate Crime Partnership Board has been appointed by the Commissioner. Sir Leigh Lewis is a former Permanent Secretary at the Department for Work & Pensions and amongst current roles is Vice Chair of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and Hon Vice President of the homelessness charity St Mungo's.

As part of Hate Crime Awareness Week's theme of disability, Hertfordshire charity Electric Umbrella produced a music video with Hertfordshire Constabulary highlighting the issue of disability hate crime. The song, *It's not a crime to be different*, has been well received and resulted in a visit to 10 Downing Street.

There have been a range of community tensions over recent months, linked to issues including asylum hotels, flags and the horrific Yom Kippur attack at the Synagogue in Manchester. The Commissioner and the Constabulary have actively engaged with faith groups across the county this year to provide reassurance and listen to concerns.

Fly Tipping and Waste Crime

Fly tipping and waste crime continues to be a challenge in parts of the county. The Commissioner is carefully studying a recent House of Lords Environment Committee report on the issue and is working with a number of his counterparts on the topic.

Nationally, policy remains fragmented with different responsibilities falling to local authorities, the police and the Environment Agency depending on the type, size and location of the dumped waste. This results in significant dissatisfaction for victims who rightly perceive being passed around the system by different agencies. This was highlighted at a roundtable the Commissioner attended recently organised by the NFU Hertfordshire Branch.

Regrettably, two local authorities in Hertfordshire have now ceased investigating fly-tipping on private land resulting in a gap in investigation and enforcement activity in significant rural parts of the county.

This also has knock on implications for the Fly Tipping on Private Land Fund administered by the Commissioner's office. This has historically relied on partnership working with local authorities to investigate the fly tip before funding for clearance and target hardening is provided. As a result, some funding applications are not currently able to be processed unless the fly tip falls within a category which would have resulted in a police or Environment Agency attendance.

Youth Commission

The Hertfordshire Youth Commission on Policing & Crime was established by the Commissioner to bring a group of young people together to have their say on policing and crime. Facilitated by the charity Leaders Unlocked, the Youth Commission is holding a 'big conversation' with young people across the county, to understand their views.

The Youth Commission has identified a number of priority subjects to look at, including VAWG, exploitation, hate crime, knife crime and police powers.

The Youth Commission will report their findings and recommendations at a conference in January.

Safer Streets Fund

Two projects funded by the Safer Streets Fund under the previous Government have now come to a conclusion.

- **Hatfield** – the project focused on a neighbourhood south of the town centre resulted in a 12% drop in reports of anti-social behaviour. Over 1,000 extra police patrols were carried out as part of Operation Oarlock. A range of community safety measures have been implemented, including upgraded CCTV, garage defenders, new street lighting and environmental improvements. Arrests have been made in connection with drugs and theft offences.
- **Hertford** – the project focused on improving feelings of safety in the town centre and night-time economy. Several Project Vigilant deployments have been carried out to detect and deter predatory behaviour, with 60 police officers receiving specialist

training. CCTV across the town centre and in the Gascoigne Way car park has been upgraded. Bystander training has been provided to people working in the night-time economy along with further educational and awareness activity, including promoting the Ask for Angela scheme.

Criminal Justice

The Criminal Justice Board met in September and considered updates on the Government's Sentencing Bill, the Herts Youth Justice Service and Integrated Offender Management.

The Commissioner remains concerned about the implications of the Sentencing Bill for policing and crime. It will result in significantly more offenders being managed in the community and it is not yet clear that the probation service will have the resources or capacity required.

Many criminals who commit offences of concern to the public will rarely, if at all, be sent to prison. It will be incredibly rare for shoplifters, burglars, car thieves to go to prison in future. Serious violent and sexual offenders will serve significantly shorter sentences.

The National Police Chief's Council forecasts that the Bill's provisions will increase crime by around 6% - an extra 396,000 offences nationally.

Police Reform White Paper

It is expected that the Police Reform White Paper will be published before Christmas, with a primary focus on greater collaboration and efficiency of national policing capabilities.

Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

The Commissioner continues to engage through the Herts Leaders Group in the countywide work responding to the Government's plan for LGR and Devolution. The Commissioner's priority is to ensure that any devolution arrangements for Hertfordshire ensure there is strong democratic oversight and accountability for policing.