



**LINCOLNSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL  
ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26**



## FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce the Lincolnshire Police and Crime Panel Annual Report for 2025/26. The report builds upon the Panel's first Annual Report of 2024/25 and provides a summary of the Panel's work, scrutiny activity and development since June 2025.

During the period covered by this update, the Panel has continued to focus on significant strategic challenges facing policing within Lincolnshire. These include the continuing issue of long-term funding sustainability for Lincolnshire Police, the Force's improvement journey following the HMICFRS PEEL inspection findings, and the wider pressures facing policing and community safety services across the county.

The Panel has continued to provide constructive challenge and support to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) through regular scrutiny of the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan, budget planning, performance monitoring and governance arrangements.

Members have continued to support the PCC's representations to Government regarding Lincolnshire's long-standing funding concerns. Throughout the year the Panel has recognised the additional pressures faced by a large rural force area with significant transport infrastructure, seasonal population increases and increasing demand associated with vulnerability, safeguarding and serious organised crime.

The Panel has also focused on its own development and effectiveness. Work has progressed on strengthening the Panel's scrutiny arrangements through the establishment of sub-groups, the recruitment of an additional independent co-opted member, and continued member development activity.

I would like to thank all Members of the Panel for their continued commitment and constructive approach throughout the year. Thanks are also extended to the Police and Crime Commissioner and his staff, the Chief Constable, and officers from Lincolnshire County Council for their ongoing support and engagement with the Panel.

Chris Cook

Chair – Lincolnshire Police and Crime Panel

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## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Lincolnshire Police and Crime Panel continues to exercise its statutory responsibilities under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 by scrutinising the actions and decisions of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lincolnshire.

The Panel's role remains focused on ensuring transparency, accountability and effective governance in relation to the PCC's responsibilities. These include the setting of policing priorities, oversight of the police budget and precept, commissioning of services, and monitoring the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan.

Throughout 2025/26 the Panel has continued to review the impact of national and local policing pressures on Lincolnshire Police by maintaining focus on:

- Long-term police funding and financial sustainability;
- Delivery of the Police and Crime Plan;
- The Force's response to HMICFRS inspection findings;
- Community safety and victim support services;
- Governance, complaints and ethical oversight; and
- The continued development of the Panel's own scrutiny arrangements.

The Panel has continued to meet formally in public session and has supplemented this through member briefings, working groups and additional scrutiny activity.

## PANEL MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANISATION

Following the Lincolnshire County Council elections in May 2025, the Panel reviewed its composition to ensure compliance with the statutory balanced appointment objective.

At its meeting in June 2025, the Panel considered a report outlining changes to political representation across the constituent authorities. Following discussion, the Panel supported proposals to co-opt an additional elected member to maintain political balance requirements and to confirm an existing panel member as the co-opted member representing the Independent Group. The Panel also continued its work to strengthen independent representation. During September 2025 Members considered the outcome of the recruitment process for additional independent co-opted members. While the recruitment exercise identified a highly appointable candidate with significant governance and leadership experience, Members noted that the original ambition of strengthening financial scrutiny expertise had not yet been fully achieved.

As a result, the Panel agreed to continue recruitment activity with a more targeted approach designed to attract applicants with financial and accountancy expertise. Newly appointed members are being incorporated into the ongoing skills audit process.

During the year the Panel also agreed to strengthen its governance and scrutiny arrangements through the establishment of sub-groups to allow for more detailed and continuous scrutiny between formal quarterly meetings.

## **PANEL MEETINGS AND CORE BUSINESS**

Since June 2025 the Panel has continued to meet on a quarterly basis in public session.

At the June 2025 meeting the Panel:

- Re-elected Chris Cook as Chairman and Graham Marsh as Vice-Chairman;
- Reviewed the balanced appointment objective following local elections;
- Received an update on delivery of the Police and Crime Plan;
- Considered the Police and Crime Commissioner's Annual Report for 2024/25;
- Approved publication of the Panel's first Annual Report; and
- Reviewed the findings of the HMICFRS PEEL inspection of Lincolnshire Police.

The June meeting also included consideration of complaints received against the PCC during the reporting period and discussion regarding the ongoing development of the Panel's work programme.

At the September 2025 meeting the Panel received extensive updates regarding:

- Ongoing police funding pressures including issues with the funding formula;
- Delivery of the Police and Crime Plan;
- Progress against HMICFRS improvement activity;
- Community confidence and officer morale;
- Violence against women and girls;
- Victim and witness support services; and
- The recruitment of additional independent co-opted members.

During September 2025 the Panel conducted a confirmation hearing for the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

At the December 2025 meeting the Panel continued its regular scrutiny of Police and Crime Plan delivery, complaints handling and future work programming. The Panel also discussed the forthcoming Government White Paper proposing a new model for policing and the potential implications for the role of the PCC and PCP. Members also received updates regarding the work of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels and considered the Panel's proposed work and development programme for 2026/27.

Detailed minutes, reports and recordings of all meetings continue to be published on Lincolnshire County Council's website.

## KEY ACTIVITIES AND THEMES

The following sections provide a summary of some of the principal issues considered by the Panel during the reporting period.

### GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Following the completion of a member skills audit during the previous reporting period, the Panel continued work to strengthen areas of specialist expertise, particularly in relation to finance and budget scrutiny.

The recruitment of an additional independent co-opted member formed an important part of this work. Members recognised the importance of broadening the Panel's range of professional experience to strengthen challenge and oversight.

The Panel also considered how scrutiny activity could be strengthened outside of formal quarterly meetings. In September 2025 Members agreed to establish dedicated sub-groups to focus on complaints handling, the scrutiny of budgets and Police and Crime Plan delivery (yet to be established subject to the recruitment of additional financial and budgetary experience to the Panel), and the format of Commissioners regular reports to the Panel.

Members considered that these arrangements would:

- Support more detailed examination of complex issues;
- Improve continuity of scrutiny between meetings;
- Enhance public confidence and transparency; and
- Allow earlier identification of emerging risks and concerns.

The Panel also continued to engage with the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels to ensure awareness of national developments and best practice.

### POLICE AND CRIME PLAN SCRUTINY

Throughout the year the Panel continued to scrutinise delivery of the Police and Crime Plan and to monitor progress against the Commissioner's priorities.

At the September 2025 meeting Members discussed a wide range of operational and strategic issues affecting policing within Lincolnshire.

The Commissioner updated the Panel on the Force's ongoing improvement work following the HMICFRS inspection findings. Members were advised that progress was being made across most identified areas of concern, although the Commissioner emphasised that sustainable long-term funding remained critical to supporting lasting improvement.

The Panel also examined:

- The effectiveness of community policing arrangements;
- Police response models and prioritisation;
- Resource pressures across operational departments;
- Victim and witness support services;
- Responses to burglary and theft offences;
- Community reassurance and neighbourhood policing; and
- Partnership approaches to safeguarding and prevention.

Discussion took place regarding Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). The Commissioner confirmed that PCSOs continued to play an important role in community reassurance and engagement. While recruitment activity had been paused pending greater financial certainty, Members were advised that there were no plans to remove PCSOs from the Force structure.

The Panel also received updates on initiatives including:

- Safer Communities Leaders programmes for young people;
- Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG);
- Honour-based abuse;
- Spiking incidents;
- Sexual violence support services; and
- Witness and victim support commissioning.

Members welcomed the continued emphasis on partnership working and early intervention, whilst continuing to request clear evidence regarding outcomes and performance.

## **BUDGET AND FUNDING CHALLENGES**

Funding and financial sustainability have remained central themes for the Panel throughout the year.

At the September 2025 meeting the Commissioner provided a detailed update on ongoing discussions with Government regarding Lincolnshire Police funding pressures.

The Commissioner advised that while engagement with Ministers had been constructive, progress had been complicated by ministerial changes and continuing uncertainty regarding national funding arrangements.

Members discussed several issues contributing to financial pressures including:

- Lincolnshire's extensive road network;
- Seasonal population increases;
- County lines and organised crime activity;
- Rurality and geographic scale;
- Additional demand transferred from partner organisations; and
- The long-standing inadequacies within the national police funding formula.

The Commissioner reiterated concerns that previous revisions to the funding formula had disproportionately benefited urban forces while disadvantaging rural policing areas such as Lincolnshire.

The Panel expressed continued support for efforts to secure a fairer and more sustainable funding settlement for Lincolnshire Police.

Members also discussed the wider implications of financial uncertainty for workforce planning, recruitment, neighbourhood policing and the Force's long-term improvement programme. In February 2026 the Panel undertook its annual statutory scrutiny of the proposed Police Precept for 2026/27.

## **HMICFRS INSPECTION AND IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY**

The Panel continued to closely monitor the Force's response to the HMICFRS PEEL inspection findings and the associated improvement programme. At the June 25 meeting discussion focussed on the outcome of the 2023 – 25 Peel Inspection Report. The Panel noted several areas of concern detailed within the inspection findings and was pleased to note a program of remedial work was underway including an independent evaluation of the financial management of the Force by CIPFA.

Throughout the reporting period Members received updates regarding progress against the identified causes of concern and areas requiring improvement.

The Commissioner advised the Panel that improvement work remained ongoing across a range of operational and organisational areas. Attention continued to focus on:

- Protecting vulnerable people;
- Investigative standards;
- Workforce resilience;
- Governance and performance management; and
- Organisational culture and leadership.

The Panel recognised the scale of the challenge facing the Force and the additional pressures created by funding uncertainty and workforce pressures.

Members continued to emphasise the importance of maintaining public confidence throughout the improvement process and requested regular updates regarding HMICFRS revisit activity and performance outcomes

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PUBLIC CONFIDENCE**

The Panel continued to explore issues relating to public trust, confidence and community safety. During the September 2025 meeting Members discussed concerns relating to officer morale following commentary circulating on social media. The Commissioner advised that discussions with staff associations indicated that morale remained stable and that communication from senior leadership regarding current challenges had been positively received.

Members also discussed:

- Public confidence in policing;
- Community reassurance;
- Accessibility of policing services;
- Responses to anti-social behaviour;
- Violence against women and girls;
- Spiking incidents;
- Honour-based abuse; and
- Support for victims and witnesses.

The Commissioner emphasised the importance of partnership working and prevention activity in addressing hidden harms and supporting vulnerable communities.

The Panel welcomed the establishment of new partnership arrangements designed to improve understanding of honour-based abuse and strengthen support pathways for victims.

Members also supported continued work with youth engagement programmes designed to increase young people's involvement in community safety discussions and decision-making.

## **COMPLAINTS AND OVERSIGHT**

The Panel continued to exercise its statutory responsibilities in relation to complaints made against the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Regular complaints position statements were presented throughout the reporting period, outlining complaints received, recorded and resolved.

At the June 2025 meeting Members were advised that two complaints had been received during the relevant reporting period. Officers confirmed that arrangements remained in place to ensure transparency and appropriate oversight through liaison between the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Lincolnshire County Council.

At the September 2025 meeting the Panel was advised that one complaint remained active while another complaint was awaiting final resolution.

The Panel continued to recognise the importance of maintaining clear, transparent and proportionate arrangements for handling complaints and ethical matters.



## REPORTING, REPRESENTATION AND MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

During 2025/26 the Panel continued to place importance on member development, transparency and external engagement.

The work programme for 2026/27 incorporates additional opportunities for member development particularly in relation to:

- Financial scrutiny;
- Governance and accountability;
- Complaints handling;
- Police performance and data interpretation; and
- National developments affecting policing and community safety.

During the year the Panel received briefings regarding on-line harms and artificial intelligence from the Home Office and the management of the PEEL inspection process from HMICFRS.

The Panel also continued to engage with national PCP networks and forums to share experiences, develop best practice and ensure Lincolnshire's concerns regarding police funding and rural policing challenges were represented at a national level.

Members reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining a constructive, non-political and evidence-based approach to scrutiny.

## CONCLUSION

During 2025/26 the Lincolnshire Police and Crime Panel has continued to provide active and constructive scrutiny of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the wider policing landscape within Lincolnshire.

The year has again been characterised by significant financial pressures, organisational improvement activity and increasing complexity within policing demand. Throughout this period the Panel has sought to maintain a balanced approach which both challenges and supports the Commissioner in the delivery of effective policing and community safety outcomes.

The Panel has also continued to develop its own effectiveness through improved governance arrangements, strengthened member development activity and the establishment of additional scrutiny mechanisms.

Looking ahead, the Panel will continue to focus on:

- Long-term financial sustainability;
- Delivery of the Police and Crime Plan;
- Progress against HMICFRS improvement requirements;
- Public trust and confidence;
- Community safety and safeguarding; and
- The continued development of effective and transparent scrutiny arrangements.

The Panel remains committed to ensuring that policing across Lincolnshire is subject to robust, transparent and constructive democratic accountability in the interests of the county's communities.



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*Sources used in preparing this report include published agendas, reports and minutes of Lincolnshire Police and Crime Panel meetings held during 2025/26 together with associated publicly available documentation published by Lincolnshire County Council and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.*