



ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

2020/21

Final	AGS 2020_21
Author	J Irvin OPCC
Date	November 2021

1. Introduction

The PCC and the Chief Constable are two separate legal entities with separate statutory responsibilities. However, they work together to ensure West Mercia Police is working effectively and is held accountable for the standard of service delivered to the public.

This Annual Governance Statement for 2020/21 explains how the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Chief Constable for West Mercia Police have complied with their published corporate governance framework for the year ending 31 March 2021.

2. Scope of responsibility

The PCC and the Chief Constable are responsible for ensuring that their business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act¹ (the Act) sets out the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable and the Policing Protocol² sets out how these functions will be undertaken.

The Act requires the Police and Crime Commissioner to have a Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer (the Treasurer). The Chief Executive is the head of paid service and undertakes the responsibilities of monitoring officer³. The Act also requires the Chief Constable to appoint a Chief Finance Officer⁴ (the Head of Commercial Services). The Financial Management Code of Practice⁵ sets out the responsibilities of the PCC's Chief Finance Officer and Chief Executive and of the Chief Constable's Chief Finance Officer.

The Policing Protocol sets out the high level financial responsibilities of the PCC and the Chief Constable, making clear that the former is ultimately accountable to the public for the management of the Police Fund while the latter has day to day responsibility for managing their allocated budgets after these have been approved by the PCC.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the PCC and Chief Constable are also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of their affairs and facilitating the exercise of their functions. This includes ensuring a sound system of governance (incorporating the system of internal control) is maintained through the year and that arrangements are in place for the management of risk.

¹ PRSRA11, S5-8

² Policing Protocol Order 2011

³ Local Government and Housing Act 1989 S5

⁴ PRSRA11, Sch 2 p4

⁵ Revised Financial Management Code of Practice for the Police Forces of England and Wales and Fire and Rescue Authorities created under section 4A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.(July 2018)

The Chief Constable is responsible for operational policing matters, the direction and control of police officers and police staff, and for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of the force. The PCC is required to hold the Chief Constable to account for the exercise of those functions and those of the persons under the Chief Constable's direction and control. The PCC must satisfy himself that the force has appropriate mechanisms in place for the maintenance of good governance, and that these operate in practice.

A Joint Corporate Governance Framework sets out how governance operates for both the PCC and Chief Constable. The framework consists of:

- Statement of corporate governance – outlining the statutory framework and local policy.
- Code of corporate governance (the Code) – setting out how the core principles will be implemented.
- Scheme of corporate governance – defining the parameters within which the organisations will conduct their business, scheme of delegations etc.
- Separate policy and procedures for each corporation sole, with protocols where they operate jointly.
- Cooperative arrangements - those arrangements by which the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable support the exercise of each other's functions.

The Joint Corporate Governance Framework can be found on the PCC's website www.westmercia-pcc.gov.uk or can be obtained from the Office of the PCC at Hindlip Hall, Hindlip, Worcester, Worcestershire, WR3 8SP.

The Code is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework: 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'⁶.

This Annual Governance Statement explains how the PCC and Chief Constable have complied with the Code and the requirements of Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control.

3. The purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes and culture and values by which the PCC and Chief Constable are directed and controlled, and the activities through which they account to and engage with the community. It enables the PCC and Chief Constable to monitor the achievement of their strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the timely delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services, including achieving value for money.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve

⁶ <https://www.cipfa.org/policy-and-guidance/publications/d/delivering-good-governance-in-local-government-framework-2016-edition>

policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the PCC and Chief Constable's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them effectively, efficiently and economically.

4. The Governance Framework

The key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the PCC's and Chief Constable's governance arrangements and how these adhere to the seven principles in the Code are set out below:-

4.1 Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

The Policing Protocol Order 2011 requires both the PCC and Chief Constable to abide by the seven principles of personal conduct set out on 'Standards in Public Life: First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, commonly known as the *Nolan Principles*. Additionally, the Police Code of Ethics, combines these values with others enshrined in policing, and sets and provides a framework for upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.

The PCC and his Deputy (DPCC) have both signed a code of conduct based on the principles referred to above. These documents have been published on the PCC's website, along with the declarations of interest of both the PCC and DPCC.

Officers, police staff and staff of the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner operate within:

- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Police Force policy and procedures including those relating to Anti-Fraud and Corruption and Whistleblowing, referred to as the Professional Standards Reporting policy in the Force.
- corporate governance framework,
- conduct regulations and codes of conduct.

Policies, procedures, regulations and the governance framework are reviewed as appropriate. Notifications of disclosable interests and a register of gifts and hospitality are published on the PCC's and the Force website.

The Force has a Professional Standards Department (PSD) whose role is to protect the public from harm by upholding the professional and ethical standards of West Mercia Police. The three main functions of PSD are: the Anti-Corruption Unit, the Misconduct and Complaints Team and the Vetting Unit.

PSD are responsible for the administration of complaints by members of the public against police officers and staff below the rank of Chief Constable. Complaints

against the Chief Constable are dealt with by the PCC. The West Mercia Police and Crime Panel administers formal complaints made against the PCC.

In February 2020 new regulations⁷ came into effect giving PCCs extra responsibilities for reviewing how complaints are dealt with, where the complainant is not happy with the outcome determined through the PSD complaint process. To effectively discharge this duty the PCC has appointed an external qualified body to assess the review, however the final outcome decision is made by an appropriate officer in the PCC's office.

West Mercia Police have established an Internal Ethics Committee responsible for enhancing trust and confidence in the ethical governance and actions of the Force. In doing so the Committee seeks to provide assurance, advice and guidance, and make recommendations to the Chief Constable around decisions, policies and processes.

The West Mercia Joint Audit and Standards Committee (JASC) established by the PCC and the Chief Constable considers issues of standards, ethics and integrity as part of its core function. The JASC is a public meeting and copies of all papers are published on the PCC's website.

Quarterly Professional Standards Department performance meetings are held between the Head of the Department and the PCC to coincide with the publication of IOPC performance data to provide oversight and challenge on PSD performance.

The PCC's office hold regular meetings with representatives from the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) to discuss matters relating to complaint handling and its strategic oversight.

4.2 Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

The Policing Protocol highlights that the Police and Crime Commissioner is accountable to local people and draws on this mandate to set and shape the strategic objectives for the force area in consultation with the Chief Constable.

The Police and Crime Plan sets out what the strategic direction and priorities are and how they will be delivered. The Safer West Mercia Plan 2016 – 2021 was published in October 2016 following a two phase public and stakeholder consultation.

As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, the scheduled PCC elections in May 2020 were postponed for a year. In response to this, the Plan was subject to a minor refresh to ensure it remained fit for purpose for the additional year. Following consultation with the Chief Constable the changes made were submitted to the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel for approval. The Panel approved the revised Plan at its meeting in June 2020 and it was published in July 2020.

The PCC has published a Consultation and Engagement Strategy for his term of office. This sets out how local people will be involved with the PCC and the Chief

⁷ Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020

Constable to ensure they are part of decision making, accountability and future direction. West Mercia Police has both a formal Communication and OCC contact strategy with an overarching Consultation and Engagement Strategy. Both strategies are designed to complement and support each other.

In conjunction with West Mercia Police, the PCC has commissioned a public perceptions survey. Members of local communities are being interviewed and asked their thoughts on police visibility, accessibility and integrity on a quarterly basis. In response to Covid the survey moved to a telephone only format but was able to maintain a representative sample of around 3000 residents across the West Mercia area during 2020/21. The information the survey provides is used to inform the PCC's Police and Crime Plan and to support decision making within West Mercia Police. The results of the survey are published on the PCC's website.

West Mercia Police undertakes a victim survey with victims of certain incidents and crime about the services they have received from the police. Following an extensive review supported by an external consultant, a revised question set was introduced in April 2020 for the victims of domestic burglary, vehicle crime and hate crime. A pilot survey for victims of road traffic collisions was introduced in December 2020. The surveys seek to measure the satisfaction levels of individuals in a consistent way, allowing comparison to be drawn between different victim groups, service stages, local policing areas and demographic groups. Surveys of both domestic abuse and rape victims were suspended at the end of March 2020 in response to potential safeguarding issues resulting from the Covid restrictions..

During 20/21 the PCC conducted five formal consultations with communities and partners, around proposed strategies on domestic abuse, road safety and victims, the 2021/22 precept and in October launched the 'Your Voice- what matters to you?' survey. This survey sought to understand the views members of the public on local policing, contact and engagement, crime and anti-social behavioural issues and views towards the council tax precept to help inform both the PCC and the Force.

In addition, the PCC consulted with Town and Parish Council through an annual survey on a range of subjects, including the visibility of local policing, relationships with officers and local crime priorities. The feedback is being used to inform the PCC's and to help identify where and how local police relationships are working well, or if they can be improved.

Social media is widely used by the PCC and the Force as well as more traditional methods of engagement. The PCC actively uses Twitter and Facebook to engage with communities. With Covid forcing the cancellation of many face to face public events the PCC held a series of live questions and answer sessions with local policing Superintendent's and gave members of the community opportunity to submit questions to be asked. Jointly with the Force the PCC also held four online four public engagement events across the local policing areas.

The PCC has also introduced a Safer West Mercia Podcast Series to highlight particular areas of policing and services that provide support to victims of crime and to provide practical advice.

The Force has appropriate mechanisms in place for engaging with a variety of stakeholders, partners and the public. The Safer Neighbourhood approach is central to policing in West Mercia and there are Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) throughout the force area. Police Officers, Police Community Support Officers, Specials and Volunteers work with local communities to address local policing priorities.

The PCC has a Community Ambassador Scheme, appointing an ambassador for each local policing area. These individuals act as the 'eyes and ears' for the PCC and ensure community concerns and issues are fed back and dealt with accordingly.

The Force has a number of active Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs). Three are protected characteristic groups which offer specialist advice and guidance to police on diversity issues and the effects on their communities. In addition there are five IAGs covering each of the Local Policing areas, inputting into their neighbourhood police services. Members of IAGs act as 'critical friends' to the police, influencing, advising and shaping how the police support and protect communities.

The PCC has an annual holding to account programme. The 2020/21 programme included performance, thematic topics and three public meetings, on policing during the pandemic, diversity, equality and inclusion and on the policing budget. A number of virtual holding to account reports (without a formal meeting) were also submitted by the force in response to PCC requests. Notes of the holding to account meetings held between the PCC and the Chief Constable are published on the PCC's website. The public meetings are also available to view on the website.

The PCC and the Force each has a Publication and FOI scheme in place. All FOIs received by the PCC are dealt with by the PCC's office or passed onto the force by agreement as appropriate. The PCC and the Force publish the outcome of FOIs they are responsible for on their own website.

The PCC's publication scheme establishes the means by which information relating to decisions will be made available to local people, with those of greater public interest receiving the highest level of prominence, except where operational and legal constraints exist. Key decisions made by the PCC are published on the PCC's website.

The Annual Report sets out how the PCC has exercised his functions in each financial year and the progress which has been made in the financial year in meeting the objectives set out in the police and crime plan. An Annual Report was published in June 2020.

4.4 Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

The PCC has issued a Police and Crime Plan. It outlines the police and crime objectives (outcomes) and the strategic direction for the policing of the Force area.

The annual Force Strategic Assessment provides an overview of the external environment that the force operates in; this includes the threat from crime and the changing situation in relation to macro issues such as the political and financial state

and how they might impact on communities and how they are policed. A Force Control Strategy for the coming year is developed from the Strategic Assessment findings. This is underpinned by the Force Vision and Values.

Collaboration agreements set out those areas of business to be undertaken jointly with other Forces and Local Policing Bodies, whether to reduce cost, increase efficiency or increase capability to protect local people. Statutory partnerships are subject to either contractual agreements or are governed by legislation.

The Force collaborates with policing partners in the West Midlands region (Staffordshire, Warwickshire and West Midlands) in order to combat the national threats identified in the Strategic Policing Requirement. Regional oversight and governance mechanism are established at a senior level, with strategic governance maintained via the Regional Governance Group (RGG). The RGG is attended by the PCC and Chief Constable of each of the four forces and governs the ROCU and the Regional Counter Terrorism Unit and also provides regional scrutiny of the National Police Air Service (NPAS).

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) ensure that planned activities to support the objectives of the PCC and Chief Constable are financially sustainable. The MTFP is monitored closely throughout the year, and reviewed and updated formerly as part of the budget setting process each year.

The PCC's grant scheme is based on identified need with clear outcomes. The approach is set out in the Commissioning and Grants, including a requirement for service providers demonstrate where their services can add social value, and this forms part of the assessment process in line with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

4.5 Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

The PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan outlines the police and crime objectives (outcomes) and the strategic direction for the policing and supporting services of the Force area. The PCC has developed a delivery plan which sets out monitoring and progress against the commitments within the Plan. This programme is subject to internal scrutiny at the monthly PCC Office Governance Board and external scrutiny by West Mercia Police and Crime Panel.

The Head of Commercial Services and the Treasurer produce and maintain the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), which supports delivery of the Safer West Mercia Plan and is integrated into Force business plans. The MTFP, West Mercia Strategic Assessment and Force Management Statement inform the business planning cycle. The MTFP is monitored closely throughout the year and reviewed and updated formerly as part of the budget setting process each year.

The PCC and Chief Constable's joint system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information, financial regulations, administrative procedures (including segregation of duties), management supervision, and a system of delegation and accountability.

The Force has established a Change and Transformation Board to govern its change and Transformation Programme, including ICT and estates Project. This Board scrutinises performance and proposed investment decisions and monitors both costs and benefits, ensuring these are aligned to the strategic objectives and are delivered efficient and effectively. The Board meets monthly. It is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable and includes senior officers and managers from the Force and a representative of the PCC.

4.6 Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

The PCC and Chief Constable ensure that their statutory officers have the skills, resources and support necessary to perform effectively in their roles and that these roles are properly understood throughout the organisation. Specialist advice is sourced externally as required.

The Corporate Governance Framework provides a clear statement of respective roles and responsibilities and how they are delegated. A revised Corporate Governance Framework was published in November 2020.

The PCC has also implemented a staffing structure within the OPCC to ensure it has the necessary capability and capacity to support him deliver his statutory functions, such as commissioning services for victims and witnesses.

Chief Officers have clearly defined leadership roles and are responsible for implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services within their respective portfolios.

The organisations' training strategies set the climate for continued development of individuals. The respective performance development review processes will ensure that these strategies are turned into reality for officers and members of staff. This principle is also included within the Police and Crime Plan.

The Force have implemented a new People Strategy, to ensure that every individual is equipped for their role, understands the part they play in achieving the organisational objectives, and supports them in achieving their personal and professional goals, now and in the future. Governance and delivery of this Strategy is via the People Strategy Board, chaired by the Chief Constable.

The PCC is a member of the national Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC). The Chief Constable and his fellow chief officers are members of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC).

4.7 Principle F: Managing Risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

The PCC and Chief Constable each have a Strategic Risk Strategy in place to ensure that the risks facing the force and PCCs office are effectively and appropriately identified, evaluated and reported.

The force has a system of risk identification and escalation, centrally overseen with clear ownership in the relevant business areas and at the appropriate level to

manage risks. This is updated bi-monthly and reported to directorate meetings and, where appropriate, the Executive Board. A complementary system of risk management is in place for the development programme recognising the different nature of risk in developmental activity. The strategic risks registers of the PCC and Force are reviewed on a quarterly basis and are subject to scrutiny by the Joint Audit and Standards Committee.

Two significant risks emerged in 2020 – a global pandemic, Covid 19 and a major investigation into allegations of manslaughter and corporate manslaughter at an NHS Trust. Both the PCC and the Force have put arrangements in place to address these risks.

The force has introduced a new performance framework which uses a reporting hierarchy to monitor performance across the whole organisation at gold (strategic), silver (service) and (bronze) operational levels. The Force produces a number of performance products in support of the framework. Force performance is reviewed as part of the quarterly Force Delivery Group (FDG) meeting regularly attended by the PCC.

The PCC has a duty to hold the Chief Constable to account for the performance of West Mercia Police. The PCC has implemented a holding to Account programme that provides a clear and robust way to enable the PCC to closely scrutinise key areas of the force and to hold the Chief Constable to account for ensuring the force's efficiency and effectiveness.

The Corporate Governance Framework sets out the parameters for decision making, including the delegations, consents, financial limits for specific matters and for contracts. The West Mercia Governance Board has been established to govern West Mercia Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Board meets on a month and aims to:

1. To ensure that:
 - There is the right vision, mission, objectives, culture and strategy to achieve the organisations' purposes
 - There are good, robust processes for formulating and adapting these
 - The agreed strategies are being implemented and monitored and if there is divergence then appropriate and timely action is taken
2. To ensure that the organisations have the right resources in the right places to deliver the strategies
3. To ensure there are the right systems of good governance to ensure the organisations and their resources are well directed and controlled.

The PCC maintains a separate PCC Office Governance Board to govern the activity of the OPCC in delivering the Safer West Mercia Plan. The main decision making meeting for the force is the Executive Board, which meets monthly and is chaired by the Chief Constable. The Board receives regular reports on operational performance and the financial position, and receives the business cases for all projects initiating significant change.

A Joint Audit and Committee (JASC) operates in accordance with Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) guidance and the Home Office Financial Management Code of Practice. The JASC's main role is to provide assurance to the PCC and Chief Constable that the corporate internal control and governance framework, including risk management, is operating adequately and effectively. As part of its annual work programme the Committee receives regular updates on internal and external audit, HMICFRS inspections and treasury management. The papers and minutes are published on the PCC's website.

Warwickshire County Council are commissioned by the PCC and Chief Constable to provide internal audit functions, conducting independent and impartial audits of PCC and Police processes.

The PCC and Force manage information in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Code of Practice on the Management of Police Information. This is overseen by the Audit, Assurance and Compliance Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable (who also holds the position of Senior Information Risk Owner). The Head of Audit Risk and Compliance carries out the statutory and protected role of Data Protection Officer for both the Force and the PCC and ensures that appropriate policies and procedures are in place. Mandatory GDPR and data management training is in place for all officers, staff and volunteers who have access to information and completion rates are monitored by the Audit, Assurance and Compliance Board.

The PCC and Chief Constable's joint system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information, financial regulations, administrative procedures, management supervision, and a system of delegation and accountability.

The financial management arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer of the PCC and the Chief Financial Officer of the Chief Constable (March 2014).

From April 2020 to May 2020, CIPFA conducted a Financial Management Capability Review of West Mercia Police, publishing a report of its findings in July 2020. Using CIPFA's five-star rating system, West Mercia was rated overall as two-stars, although it was at the higher end of the range. An improvement plan is in place to address the recommendations arising from the report.

4.8 Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

The PCC has produced and published an annual report which details performance against objectives for the previous year.

The PCC's decisions and actions are scrutinised by the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel. In 2020/21 this has included, approving the precept for 21/22, making recommendations on the annual report and refreshed Safer West Mercia Plan and

receiving a quarterly performance report detailing activity in support of the Plan and on force performance.

Information published on the PCC's website is in accordance with the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specification Information) Order 2011 as amended. The PCC's website is kept up to date with the publication of key decisions, performance reports and details of HMICFRS inspections including the PCC's response to the Home Secretary on the reports. Decisions of significant public interest made by the PCC are published in a standard easily accessible format.

The PCC and Chief Constable have appointed internal and external auditors. Audit recommendations are reported to the Joint Audit and Standards Committee.

Both the PCC and Force are subject to external independent scrutiny and review, through the external audit of their financial statements, systems and management arrangements, and through the inspection of policing performance by HMICFRS. Audit and inspection reports are published by the PCC.

The Force are required to prepare Force Management Statement (FMS) each year by HMICFRS. The FMS is a self-assessment used to inform the business planning cycle of the organisation. The FMS provides an assessment of current and future demand and how the force will adapt to meet the demand including an assessment of risk of service failure and the financial resources required. The FMS for 2020 was cancelled by HMICFRS in light of the additional demands on the police service in response to policing the pandemic.

5. Review of effectiveness

The PCC and Chief Constable have responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of the governance framework, including;

- The system of internal audit
- The system of internal control

The governance framework is reviewed regularly and influenced by the internal and external audit reviews for its effectiveness by the PCC, Chief Executive and Treasurer. The roles and processes applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance framework are outlined below.

5.1 PCC

The PCC has overall responsibility for the discharge of all the powers and duties placed on him and has a statutory duty to maintain an efficient and effective police force. The effectiveness, review and maintenance of the governance framework is undertaken by the Joint Audit and Standards Committee who discuss governance issues, referring reports to the PCC when necessary.

5.2 West Mercia Police

The Chief Constable has responsibility for conducting a review of the effectiveness of the governance framework within the Force at least annually. This review is informed by the work of senior officers and managers, the Head of Internal Audit and the Risk and Assurance managers within the Force who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment.

5.3 Joint Audit and Standards Committee

The Joint Audit and Standards Committee receives regular reports on governance issues. This will include the review of the Annual Governance Statement for inclusion in the Annual Statement of Accounts and update reports on progress made in addressing significant governance issues included in it.

The Joint Audit and Standards committee receives regular reports on policy and procedure, decision making, leadership, culture, people, performance and conduct. This also includes update reports on progress made in addressing any significant issues identified.

5.4 Head of Internal Audit

In maintaining and reviewing the governance framework, the Treasurer and the Head of Commercial services place reliance on the work undertaken by Internal Audit and in particular, the Head of Internal Audit's independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the system of internal control. The internal audit service is compliant with all CIPFA and industry requirements and standards. The Joint Audit and Standards Committee reviews internal audit performance.

The annual audit plan is agreed in advance with regard given to known risks and previous audit findings. The plan is flexed during the year to reflect emerging issues.

5.5 External Audit and other external review bodies

External Audit are an essential element in ensuring public accountability and stewardship of public resources and the corporate governance of the PCC and Chief Constable's services, with their annual governance report particularly providing comment on financial aspects of corporate governance, performance management, value for money and other reports.

The External Auditors issued their draft audit report in December 2020. The External Auditors issued an unqualified opinion on both the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts and their overall Value for Money conclusion for both the PCC and the Force.

HMICFRS

During 2020/21 HMICFRS published a number of reports with respect to inspection activity, research or super-complaints however no specific West Mercia Police reports were published. All recommendations and areas for improvement identified in inspection reports are considered by the Force via the Service Improvement Board which is attended by the PCC's office. All reports are publicly available on the HMICFRS website.

Police and Crime Panel

The Police and Crime Panel provides checks and balances in relation to the performance of the PCC and scrutinises the PCC's exercise of his statutory functions. The Panel is independent of the PCC.

6. Significant governance issues

6.1 Significant governance issues 2020-21

In the last AGS no significant governance issues as defined by CIPFA for business as usual activity were identified, however a number of areas were identified to be addressed during 2020 – 21. These were:

Issues identified	Mitigating activity
Following the successful defence of a Judicial Review and the impact of the current Covid 19 pandemic, the Secretary of State has decided that the potential transfer of governance of Hereford and Worcestershire and Shropshire Fire Authorities to the PCC should not take place during 2020/21	CeX engaged at a national level through APACE in developing awareness of potential legislative change through the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill.
Transition of the remaining shared alliance services to their agreed final service model	Two new S22 collaboration agreements entered into for IT shared services and for West Mercia to host Transactional, Forensics and File storage services for Warwickshire
Implementation of the Force transformation programme and monitoring of the business realisation and delivery of savings.	Governance of the Change programme through the Transformation Board.

6.2 Impact of Covid 19

The organisational response to COVID-19 has meant that there have been no significant changes or impacts on existing governance arrangements. The two organisations have adjusted the way that services and governance have been managed and delivered, but not substantially changed the framework of delivery and the range and quality of services delivered.

To fulfil its duties and ensure business continuity in light of the pandemic, the Force implemented a recognised approach to its command structure, with defined gold, silver and bronze levels of command and responsibilities put in place. The gold commander (DCC) established a gold group to prepare for the impact of the pandemic. A gold strategy was developed in line with government and NPCC guidance. Below gold, the silver lead is a commander whose role was to ensure tactical delivery of the gold strategy. Bronze leads were identified across every service function within the organisation. Each was responsible for preparing a risk management plan for their service area.

The force also engaged in the national police response to Covid, Op Talla. On a regional basis meetings were held to discuss any Covid issues and approaches to be taken around enforcement by forces.

The widespread roll out of mobile devices, lap tops and a home working digital solution along with ongoing improvements to the ITC network enabled the majority of force personnel to keep working from home to achieve social distancing or when in self- isolation. Virtual meeting platforms and dial in facilities have been utilised.

The PCC and all his staff have the ability to work remotely and worked from home where possible in line with the Government's advice. The Commissioner and one or two key staff attended the offices for necessary business as required. Solutions including the use of virtual meetings were implemented to enable the PCC to continue carrying out key functions such as holding to account, commissioning services and public engagement.

6.3 Potential significant governance issues 2021 – 22

Although we do not consider there to be significant governance issues in accordance with the CIPFA definition, during 2021-22 the following areas will be addressed:

- Further developing and supporting the role of the Joint Audit and Standards committee particularly in relation to standards
- Ensuring transition of the shared IT services by September 2021 and moving any residual IT services required by Warwickshire Police onto a hosted model.
- Implementation of the Force transformation programme and monitoring of the business realisation and delivery of savings.
- The ongoing impact on governance arising from the Covid 19 pandemic
- The major investigation into allegations of manslaughter and corporate manslaughter at an NHS Trust.
- Embedding of the new governance arrangements for the management of the property estates following the closure of Place Partnership Limited (PPL)

7. Conclusion and commitment statement

We are satisfied that this report is an accurate commentary on the governance arrangements in place in the PCCs office and Force and of their effectiveness during this period.

We shall continue to ensure all the necessary steps are taken to implement and scrutinise effective governance during 2021-22 and that the areas identified in 6.3 are suitably addressed.

Signed

John Campion
Police and Crime Commissioner
West Mercia

Anthony Bangham
Chief Constable
West Mercia Police

Andy Champness
Chief Executive
West Mercia OPCC

Richard Muirhead
Head of Commercial Services
West Mercia Police

Elizabeth Hall
Treasurer
West Mercia OPCC