
JOINT AUDIT COMMITTEE (JAC)

**Minutes from public
meeting held on
29 September 2021**



**JOINT AUDIT COMMITTEE (JAC)
PUBLIC MINUTES**

Notes of the meeting held on 29 September 2021 at 9:30am.

Present:

Sue Davis	:	Chair
Richard Hollands	:	Vice Chair
Cath Hannon	:	Board Member
Bhupinder Gakhal	:	Board Member
Charmaine Burton	:	Board Member
Mark Kenyon	:	Chief Finance Officer - PCC
Lynn Joyce	:	Head of Internal Audit - PCC
Gemma Brookes	:	Internal Audit - PCC
Veronica Ejizu	:	Governance, Risk and Assurance Senior Manager - WMP
Laurelin Griffiths	:	External Audit – Grant Thornton
Iain Murray	:	External Audit – Grant Thornton
Ravi Lakhani	:	Head of Financial Accounting and Tax – WMP
Beth Tobitt	:	Strategic Finance Manager - WMP
Janey Barrett	:	Head of Insurance Services - WMP
Rachel Jones-Burns	:	Organisational Learning and Risk Manager - WMP
Anastasia Miller	:	Detective Superintendent - WMP

489	<p>Item 1 - Apologies</p> <p>The Chair welcomed the new Members to the Committee and Iain Murray and Laurelin Griffiths who are attending their first face to face meeting of the Committee since taking up their new roles with Grant Thornton.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Chief Executive Jonathan Jardine and Director of Commercial Services Neil Chamberlain.</p>
490	<p>Item 2 - Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest raised.</p>
491	<p>Item 3 – Minutes of the last meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 June 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.</p>
492	<p>Item 4 - Matters Arising – Verbal Update on Statement of Accounts <i>Presented by Ravi Lakhani.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit of the 2021 draft Statement of Accounts is substantially complete, with only a few outstanding items yet to be resolved by the Force. • The statutory deadline for the uploading of the Accounts with the audit opinion is the 30 September 2021.

- The issues presented will not be resolved by the statutory deadline and therefore a notice will be presented on the website detailing the reason for delay.
- The Force will update the Committee of any change to the draft Statement of Accounts.

The Chair responded that she was reassured there were no major concerns despite the delay of the uploading of Accounts.

- Richard Hollands asked if there would be any implications of the delay in uploading the Accounts.

Ravi Lakhani confirmed there would not be implications or fines issued for the Statement of Accounts being uploaded after 30 September 2021. Professionally, the Force strive to meet deadlines, however there are no financial implications on the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) budget. The matters presented relate to accounting issues, as opposed to budgeting issues.

493 Item 5 – Risk Management Update, including Force Risk Register

Presented by Mark Kenyon and Veronica Ejizu.

The report was circulated in advance of the meeting and Mark Kenyon and Veronica Ejizu highlighted the key points:

- The Report summarises the position of the Police and Crime Plan and the consultation that took place during the summer period.
- The Police and Crime Plan is due to be presented and shared with the Police and Crime Panel on 18 October 2021. The Plan will also be shared with the Committee.
- This will enable the PCC's Risk Register to be finalised. The completed PCC Risk Register will be brought to the Committee Meeting in December 2021.
- Since June 2021 the Force's Corporate Risk Register has been refreshed and reviewed.
- 6 new risks have been added to the Corporate Risk Register, including one critical risk relating to Core Skills, resilience and Training.
- The Risk Assessment Methodology has been altered as issues were highlighted regarding how different departments were recording risk. The new methodology will ensure risks are assessed in a consistent manner
- The Force plans for the Corporate Risk Register to become a live document, ensuring changes are recorded and the register is dynamic.
- By the date of the next Committee meeting new risks may have presented themselves and other risks may have been closed as the Force embed the action plans to mitigate risks.
- Some risks are now closed on the Corporate Risk Register, and other risks have amalgamated.

- Richard Hollands observed that the new risks added to the Corporate Risk Register appear to be categorised at the high end of risk exposure. Are these risks inherently high, or is this due to the Force's controls and mitigations being ineffective?

Veronica Ejizu responded that some of the risks displayed on the Corporate Risk Register are high, following the mitigation that's been implemented and due to the risks being new and the way in which risks are now scored. The plan is to embed the new process whilst considering different action plans for mitigating risks. The Team plan to communicate with various portfolio areas and enquire as to what is actually happening with risks along with the action plan for mitigation.

- Richard Hollands observed that the control information included in the report is narrative and to gain a judgement of how effective controls it may be beneficial to provide either a grading or judgement of the controls. This will allow members to get a sense of how good the controls are.

Veronica Ejizu responded that this is an area of improvement for the Force, as only the trend and individual risk rating is included at present. There is a difference between the inherent risk environment and what has been implemented to migrate the risk down. This is something the Force could include.

- Cath Hannon thanked Veronica Ejizu and her Team for their hard work. Cath highlighted the issues concerning the safeguarding policies for cadets and recruiting cadet leaders, and asked if the Force are certain they are not over recruiting cadets for the number of leaders available.
- The Chair also questioned the fundamentals of the cadet risk. If West Midlands Police (WMP) are not following best practice, the risk is that the Force are missing vulnerabilities within cadets and not identifying incidents when cadets are at risk.

DCC Vanessa Jardine responded that firstly, WMP place a high regard on their cadets and that the cadet scheme is a fantastic opportunity to engage and work with young people and underrepresented communities. The Force is certain they could tenfold increase the number of cadets due to the high level of interest in the scheme within the community. Despite this, the Force have remained mindful of the challenges that cadet leaders are experiencing whilst ensuring the correct number of leaders are available to safeguard and also lead effective groups. DCC Jardine reassured Members that the Force do not recruit cadets unless leaders are in place. The number of schools contacting WMP in terms of the cadet programme is high, however this is controlled carefully. In relation to the target set by the previous Police and Crime Commissioner for 500 cadets to be employed; the Force controlled this and worked towards what was able in terms of resourcing and having cadet leaders in place.

The risk results from a cadet leader in Greater Manchester Police who was recently jailed for abusing cadets. This influenced the Force to pause, review and reflect upon their safeguarding policy as there are always improvements that could be implemented. It is important to recognise that WMP take safeguarding of cadets extremely seriously.

- Cath Hannon advised that at present, there is a national focus against Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) which has been likened to a national crisis in dealing with terrorism. Are the Force looking to include VAWG on the Corporate Risk Register?

DCC Vanessa Jardine advised that a presentation against VAWG, with a dedicated and specific strategy concerning ongoing work, was shared at this month's Strategic Policing and Crime Board. This is a priority within the West Midlands and the Force can consider placing this on the Corporate Risk Register, however, there is a question whether this is a societal risk as opposed to WMP not taking VAWG seriously. The Force have dedicated staff to address these issues and the strategy has also been recognised and endorsed by the PCC.

- Cath Hannon asked if the Force could provide a report of the reason VAWG is not detailed on the Corporate Risk Register.

DCC Vanessa Jardine informed that, if appropriate, VAWG would be put through the process that all risks follow before being added to the Corporate Risk Register. If the decision discloses that VAWG is not suitable to be added to the Register at present, the Force will return to the Committee to explain the reasoning for this. If the strategy is not delivering or is showing a lack of impact, then yes, it would be relevant to be on the risk register but that's not necessary at the moment.

- Cath Hannon referred to the commentary made on the previous Corporate Risk Register regarding Information Management. The commentary stated that the SLA was changing from 28 days to 56 days for the CPS to assess cases that go to court. Cath advised that this information is not accurately reflective of the position of SLA and suggested the commentary be revised.

Veronica Ejizu responded that this has not been included within the summary narrative detailed on the Risk Register but will be in supporting paperwork but has not found its way to the corporate risk register

The Chair referred new members to recent internal audit reports, whose findings reflected the concerns members are expressing in this area, which had also been considered at length by the previous Committee.

- Bhupinder Gakhall referred to the new regarding alarms management and asked why this hasn't been picked up straight away rather than getting to this position?

Veronica Ejizu responded that the alarms management risk has been on the Corporate Risk Register for a number of months. As the new process is embedded, the Force are working through how risks are escalated onto the Register. As a result, it is possible that the alarms management risk was sitting on a portfolio risk register but had not yet followed the executive level process. Veronica advised that the Force are aiming for this risk to be removed from the Corporate Risk Register by the next Committee Meeting in December 2021, as certain risks do become 'business as usual'.

- The Chair enquired if the Force and PCC's had a programme of building renewal and maintenance, and are alarms a central part of this. Would there not be a programme of replacing outdated alarms? Is there a reason it has not been possible to replace the alarms?

Mark Kenyon advised that there is a Property Board in place which considers issues such as this.

The Chair asked that if this particular risk remains in this state in December 2021, the Committee be provided with an update on a schedule and how the risk is being managed by the Property Board.

- The Chair highlighted that the new members of the Committee have received training regarding risk matters and being an effective audit Committee. A question which was posed to the Committee by the trainer concerned the risk appetite and the input that the Committee has had into thinking about the risk appetite within the Force. The Chair asked for this to be added to the next agenda, whereby a member of the Force will attend the meeting and discuss the decisions made, with Committee members being able to provide input.

Harry Barton responded that this is a relatively new initiative and would be timely to bring into the Committee, and enquired if this would be a part of the public or private Committee Meeting agenda moving forwards.

- The Chair confirmed she is content to have a separate conversation with the Force as to whether this discussion happens in the public meeting or as offline discussions or training sessions. It would be helpful for the Committee members to discuss this before it is taken back to the Executive.

Harry Barton agreed that a training session to discuss processes with Members would be helpful.

494 **Item 6 – HMICFRS Update**

Presented by Inspector Rachel Jones-Burns.

The report was circulated in advance of the meeting and therefore Rachel Jones-Burns highlighted the key points from this report:

- There has been a significant period of activity within HMICFRS.
- Heading towards publication in early November 2021.
- In the interim phase, we have had opportunities to consider recommendations that are likely to be signed off. HMICFRS have sat with the organisation to discuss the recommendations.
- 6 thematic inspections have been undertaken since the last Committee Meeting and details are summarised in the report.

- Cath Hannon referred to the interim report regarding police engagement towards VAWG and in terms of the three-year strategy asked, is there one change to be highlighted that would cause an immediate impact on women and girls as opposed to waiting for the three-year delivery of the strategy?

DCC Vanessa Jardine emphasised the complexity of this issue and the difficulty in identifying one key deliverable. The Force are not looking to take three years to deliver the strategy, there will be key deliverables every quarter as the Force move along the process. It is fundamental in society's approach

against VAWG to start increasing awareness in schools from an education perspective, through to the violence that exists against women and girls in the wider society. The strategy is a series of processes and a single deliverable that will make an immediate difference cannot be identified. DCC Jardine advised that she is content to share the strategy with Cath to gather views and comments.

- Cath Hannon highlighted that the succession planning of RASSO officers does not appear to be well organised, and questioned if there is a plan in place to ensure the RASSO team have the staff to do the job they have to do.

DCC Vanessa Jardine responded that this matter will be discussed later in the meeting.

- The Chair highlighted the piece of work that HMICFRS completed regarding neurodiversity and asked if this the first-time incidents of neurodiversity have been looked into?

Rachel Jones-Burns responded that neurodiversity has been included within previous inspections, however this is the first involved piece of work where it is led by people with neurodiversity.

The Chair highlighted her previous work within mental health services and recognised the need for ensuring resources and training is available to ensure systems are meeting needs.

495 **Item 7 – HMICFRS VFM Follow-Up**

Presented by Beth Tobitt.

The report was circulated in advance of the meeting and therefore Beth Tobitt highlighted the key points from this report:

- The Force have shifted to a corporate model rather than an operational model.
 - The Advanced Public Order had previously increased by £5.20. This augmented during the introduction of the Force Capability and Force Support Unit.
 - In order to increase efficiency, the Force have decided to split the advanced public order cost in three different ways: neighbourhood, response and advanced public order. As a result, the figure would decrease to approximately £1.38.
 - In terms of Response Management, this is approximately £16.64 below the average.
 - In 2015/16, WMP were plotting a similar trajectory to comparable size Forces.
 - Greater Manchester Police have shifted to a local base delivery, adding 1000 response officers.
 - Many of WMP's activities are completed by Neighbourhood Policing and Force Support Teams.
 - The Force aim to close the gap through increasing the number of officers.
- The Chair emphasised the difference between WMP and other forces operating models, and questioned if there is evidence about which specific model works best or is it specific for each organisation, due to context and society of each force area.

DCC Vanessa Jardine referred to her previous experiences and current communications with Greater Manchester Police; this comparable force operated through a different policing model to WMP. DCC Jardine assured that WMP's operating model consists of a solid structure with the investment into neighbourhood policing and dedicated neighbourhood policing officers, accepting in times of need and summer demand that we can draw on those. Greater Manchester Police have a larger workforce of neighbourhood policing officers; however, this workforce also includes functions such as response and investigations. The Force Support Unit for WMP is a great function; the Force have a dedicated resource for this allowing for concentration and increased efficiency.

WMP have no intention of transferring policing model. The costs of changing the model would be significant, along with the disruption this would cause to the organisation. WMP are in constant dialogue with Greater Manchester Police at both a Chief Constable and operational level due to the similarities within each force, despite the different operating contexts.

	<p>The Chair reassured the Committee that being an under-spender or an over-spender against the norm is not unusual for organisations, we just need to understand why and whether it's the right thing for us to be doing. The Chair thanked Beth for the comprehensive report.</p>
<p>496</p>	<p>Item 8 – Treasury Management Update <i>Presented by Ravi Lakhani.</i></p> <p>The report was circulated in advance of the meeting and therefore Ravi Lakhani highlighted the key points from this report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 3 of the Report provides an economic and interest rate forecast. This was provided as the activity within the economy affects the Bank of England's interest rates. The Bank of England's interest rates then affects the rate at which the PCC can borrow and invest money. • The Bank of England forecast inflation to peak at 4% throughout 2021. The question is whether this forecast will be temporary, or alternatively result in permanent inflation. • Particular issues have arose concerning the labour market, and those who left the labour market during the COVID pandemic returning to the market on a permanent basis. • There is also an issue of spare capacity within the economy and whether this will increase inflation. In addition, built up savings during the pandemic may also result in excess demand. • The interest rate is forecast to rise in the first quarter of 2023 • Residual Risk remains from COVID variants and worldwide shortages. • The Force's investments are as follows: £79 million is with NatWest, £30 million with money market funds, £85 million of investments and £5 million with the property fund. • There has been a lack of suitable counter parties to invest with. • The Treasury Management Policy has a limit with NatWest which has been breached due to the lack of suitable investment parties. • The budget investment return is £520,000 which is in line with what the Force expect. • The Force have utilised money market funds; which can be withdrawn at any point in time. • The PCC has not undertaken any borrowing within this financial year. <p>- Richard Hollands thanked Mark Kenyon and Ravi Lakhani for their report, and highlighted the risk of unfunded inflation pressures detailed on the Corporate Risk Register. What does this look like in terms of the impact of inflation on our financial position?</p> <p>Mark Kenyon advised that the PCC and Force are updating the medium-term financial plan. This gap can potentially be significant to us as a Force, due to most of the inflation being categorised as paid inflation, general inflation or incremental progression. Each year, this amount tends to be between £10-£15m pounds. This can be dependent upon on the Police Settlement announcement next year.</p> <p>- Richard Hollands questioned if the Force absorb unfunded gaps from the reserve fund.</p> <p>Mark Kenyon responded that we tend not to absorb the unfunded gaps from the reserve fund. At present, there is a savings target of £3m pounds. The Force are currently undertaking a priority-based budget review to locate this gap. In the past, we have used reserves to fund the change programme.</p> <p>- Bhupinder Gakhal also complimented Mark and Ravi for their report. Bhupinder shared his opinion that he believes interest rates may rise in 2022. Investment with National Bank of Kuwait was noted, is this something that is a one off?</p> <p>Ravi Lakhani responded that the Force only invest with counterparties subject to a credit rating, and therefore link their treasury management advisors and providers with a credit rating list of any suitable counterparties. As per the Treasury Management Strategy, the Force will only invest in banks with a rating of F1 or higher within the short term. In order to support this, the Force also only invest with banks who have their subsidy or base within the UK. The National Bank Kuwait has a credit rating at present of F1 plus for any investments in less than 12 months. Conversely, NatWest has a lower credit rating for less than 12 months. In terms of risk and reward, this is not a huge amount. The interest</p>

rates delivered on other investments convey benefits that allows the Force to fund additional officers and resources. Ravi assured that WMP are protected to an extent.

497 **Item 9 – Insurance Update**
Presented by Janey Barrett.

The report was circulated in advance of the meeting and therefore Janey Barrett highlighted the key points from this report:

- It can be quite challenging to find an insurer.
- An issue has been presented regarding the casualty programme and blending self-insurance against premiums that external providers charge.
- In terms of property and assets insurance, rates are positive. There is only a slight issue with changing matters in the Force and estates programme.
- The Team manage claims both inhouse and externally. The Team do not have a budget, but rather a provision in terms of claims.
- We have little control in terms of what claims come in, apart from the motor risk in which we can train our drivers.
- Managing insurance has been a challenge internally due to the ongoing development of the Force.
- The Force aim to identify and evaluate risks to see if claims should be dealt with inhouse or externally, assuming there is an alternative transfer route to insurers.

- Charmaine Burton asked how does the Force identify who would be suitable insurers?

Janey Barrett responded that it is usual for the Force to go out to tender. Within the public sector, there would only be two to three insurers ordinarily due to restraints on funding. The nature of the Blue Light book advises that the Force may have a claim which is received today, for example a fatality, it would be closed down during the investigative period, and then reopened when the criminal side is finalised. This long-term nature of claims can be an issue. Previously, there used to be a mutual insurance company within the market, however the company were declared bankrupt. Claims such as child abuse, social services and noise would all sit with the same insurers. Gradually, each of these insurers are pulling out of the market.

- Cath Hannon questioned if Janey could foresee a time where the Force will not have an insurance provider, and if this is the case what is the process that follows?

Janey Barrett responded that we are moving evermore towards this, however hopefully there will never be a time we will not be able to receive insurance from an insurance provider. Despite this, if this situation was to occur, the Team would be forced to take higher levels of excess. Janey reassured that there will always be an insurance market, although issues may arise concerning the level the Force can receive cover from. If not, the Force would need to increase the budget.

- Cath Hannon enquired if this level of excess is accounted for in the reserves fund.

Mark Kenyon responded that this is accounted for through the budget allocation paying into the fund, along with the reserves. The reserve is assessed on a regular basis.

Janey Barrett added that every claim the Force are aware of, the Force have a reserve allocated within the fund. This is regularly reviewed to ensure the Force have made provisions for each claim within the insurance fund.

- Bhupinder Gakhal highlighted there may be a future risk of insurers declining the Force's requests for insurance.

The Chair thanked Janey Barrett and her Team for the comprehensive report and their hard work.

Item 10 – Internal Audit Update

Presented by Lynn Joyce.

The report was circulated in advance of the meeting and therefore Lynn Joyce highlighted the key points from this report:

- Three audit reports have been finalised since the previous Committee Meeting. Two are in draft, one of which we have received management comments for and will be finalised shortly.
- 26 audits have been followed up in terms of their progress on recommendations and implementation is at 87% which is on par with the last quarter.
- In terms of the National Fraud Initiative, the Team have focused on the deceased pensioners and creditor payments. From 250 high quality creditor matches, only 6 duplicate payments were identified to date. The value of these is £193,000. £165,000 of this has been repaid.
- The plan position audit is always low at this time of year. The beginning of the year is dedicated to planning and preparing for auditing to begin.
- There has been a high fluctuation in risk and a meeting with the Deputy has been set up during October to see if revisions are needed to the audit plan
- Two audits received minimal or limited assurance. The first was in respect of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO). The findings of the audit were similar to those that came out of the national review.
- The accounts payable process was given limited assurance. The audit team completed a data analytical review, which advised that there were issues concerning duplicate payments. Management have agreed a series of actions to address the weaknesses.

The Chair welcomed Gemma Brookes and Anastasia Miller to the Committee Meeting who were present to discuss the RASSO audit.

- Cath Hannon referred to Page 8 of the report, and requested an update concerning the unallocated reports for investigation.

Anastasia Miller responded that this has been replicated nationally in terms of RASSO that briefly dipped during the pandemic. The increase in reporting has resulted in an uplift in demand. Early in the summer, the Force were dealing with resource challenges in terms of the level of the demand. As a consequence, the Force prioritised where the level of risk was sitting within each area using the THRIVE model. This caused a slower process of investigation due to prioritisation. However, there are now no unallocated cases within the system. The short-term injection of staff, including both year three students and those with high levels of experience, have helped to support the current position.

- Cath Hannon highlighted the sensitive issues concerning RASSO and the ratio of new students to experienced members of staff. What is the Force's succession plan concerning this to ensure student officers are receiving the support they need?

Anastasia Miller responded that staff are expected to have a detective accreditation (PIP 2 qualified), or are aspiring to be a detective. At present, 90 officers/staff going through the detective development programme over the next 12 months. Due to the pandemic, the Force were unable to deliver all training courses in person and have been tabled in for a future date. In the interim, there is a post within the PPU to deliver critical training outside the scope of the detective development programme, including specialist rape and investigative response. This training is being rolled out at present. New staff are not left unattended and victims are receiving the level of appropriate support. Victims are also video interviewed, and training is being delivered concerning the vulnerable victim interview technique. 90% of staff have completed this training. Moving forward, the Force need to upskill and ensure their front-line officers have an enhanced knowledge for dealing with victims through continued professional development.

DCC Vanessa Jardine added that WMP welcomed the uplift of police officers, however this meant the individuals are brought into the organisation brand new. The Force operate through a priority-based budgeting process, resulting in staff being allocated to the most critical points within the organisation.

Strategically this promotes many advantages, including officers within WMP gaining experience very quickly due to the unfortunate number of incidents being dealt with. Year three students will deal with such experiences whilst receiving mentoring, coaching and support.

- Cath Hannon raised concerns over capacity and matching resources and demand.

Anastasia Miller responded that the capabilities of detectives, along with the level of their workload, mean they are able to reduce the stress of those who are less experienced. WMP are continuously looking to improve this situation and advise on what actions can be done differently, posing the question if the operating model is working effectively in line with demand. The victims having trust and confidence within the Force is the most crucial factor; this is a difficult offence to report. Staff must know how to deal with victims effectively with the aim to minimise trauma. For some victims, every communication with the Force could be traumatising.

- The Chair questioned what will victims see that is different, and if it is possible to consult victims who have experienced the Force's response first hand.

Anastasia Miller responded that this is an extremely sensitive area and Black Country Women's Aid are imminently launching a pilot to look at how the Force could deliver a better service to victims. The Force aim to receive an evaluation and feedback from this pilot. It is challenging to gather feedback from victim's due to the potential trauma.

- Charmaine Burton considered the recruiting for the West Midlands region, and asked if recruitment was gender based. Often, a victim would prefer a female officer to interview them for example.

Anastasia Miller responded that yes, the Force strive to deliver in this area. In terms of the Victim Code, a victim is entitled to request the gender of their interviewer. This is stipulated within the Victim's Code and the Force strives to achieve this. Currently, the Public Protection Unit has a higher female than male workforce. However, there are more male officers joining now which is balancing the workforce.

DCC Vanessa Jardine added that in her previous role at Greater Manchester Police, a forum was set up for between the Force, CPS and victims to allow victims to not only give feedback, but help shape policies moving forward. This strategy could be implemented within WMP's processes.

- Cath Hannon mentioned that the Vulnerable Victims Report details opinions and needs of victims which the OPCC Victim's Policy Team have recently concluded over 12 months of asking this question of our services and victims. This needs to be translated into action and delivery by the Force.
- Richard Hollands questioned how sustainable it would be to reallocate resources internally and if this creates pressure elsewhere within the organisation. How did the Force reach this position – were there red flags along the way?

Anastasia Miller advised that what is being experienced by the West Midlands, is being experienced nationally. The pandemic significantly impacted the implementation of the detective development programme. Training and development capability were taken to the Risk Register level in Public Protection. This included ongoing conversations and presentations with the Force Executive team, resulting in mitigating actions being put into place. Part of this included the temporary injection of new staff. It is sustainable in terms of the backlog being cleared. The Force are also expecting staff from the detective academy, notwithstanding there are clearly challenges around this.

DCC Vanessa Jardine responded that WMP did foresee this. The Force had not recruited for five years and has significantly reduced in size. Actions were limited to address this due to the restraints on the Force. The Force's approach to recruit is now over a three-year period.

- The Chair questioned the time scale for the follow up to be completed.

Lynn Joyce advised that it would be beneficial to delay the follow up from six months to twelve months, allowing for a deeper insight and the impact of the follow ups to be actioned and embedded.

The Committee agreed that a 12 month follow up would be suitable to give time for changes to be made and embedded.

- Richard Hollands asked to clarify if the overpayment for the National Fraud Initiative relates to the accounts payable.

Lynn Joyce advised that the overpayments were identified as part of the National Fraud Initiative exercise. The Force is waiting for approximately £30,000 to come back in, the rest has been recovered. The routine audit of the accounts payable process led to the identification of an issue within the duplicate payment report. The National Fraud Initiative would have included any duplicate matches in the data submitted up to October 2020; a retrospective exercise will need to be undertaken on potential duplicates after October 2020.

- Richard Hollands enquired if the Audit Team have closed the gaps in terms of management response.

Lynn Joyce responded that management have agreed to implement everything asked of them. In terms of the duplicate payments, the Team have been unable to identify the exact cause and IT, Shared Services and external providers are working to resolve this issue. Management Control checks have been implemented again; routine tasks had slipped due to resourcing issues during the pandemic. A meeting is taking place today with Shared Services and Audit to discuss the solution on the BACS report reconciliation.

- The Chair advised that during the pandemic the Committee asked questions of the Risk Registers and the impact of change and were reassured this was an operational concern. In relation to accounts payable, this would be categorised as a local and operational risk that staff leave and understanding of processes is lost as a result. Previously, was there an operational Risk Register that identified a risk that key controls may not be applied due to staff leaving and thinking about the role of local manager? Had they spotted the significance of these controls not being done?

Lynn Joyce responded that the Team were aware particular tasks were not being completed due to lack of resources, however they were not fully aware of the significance of the control checks. Shared Services have lost a significant amount of experienced staff and have undertaken service manager changes. As a result, corporate knowledge was lost.

- Richard Hollands referred to knowledgeable people leaving the organisation, and enquired if there is a process to capture learning and knowledge as people leave.

Lynn Joyce responded that to date this issue has not been considered as a whole, although there is information detailed on the Corporate Risk Register concerning organisational knowledge. This information may be from an operational policing perspective rather than system process perspective.

Mark Kenyon added that in terms of this area, he would expect this to be transactional and therefore procedural and process driven.

- Cath Hannon referred to an individual who is in the process of leaving the organisation. Thus far, there is no succession plans to ensure the knowledge and information held by the key individual remains within the Force.

The Chair referred to her attendance at a previous Strategic Policing and Crime Board she attended and the questions raised concerning ensuring lessons are learnt from the Joint Audit Committee. However, this is a wider issue of institutional knowledge and organisational history that may need to

	<p>be referred back to. WMP is a both a complex and large organisation with a significant amount of movement. This is a key control that needs to be captured. We will need to give some thought to how this is picked up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bhupinder Gakhal referred to the payments made to deceased pensioners as part of NFI and enquired if this is an oversight or fraudster at work. <p>Lynn Joyce responded that is it usual for there to be no next of kin in these situations to inform WMP that an individual has passed away. As a result, the organisation continues to pay the pensions as there is a time delay before the team are made aware that the person has passed away. Challenges also arise as pension payslips are online. The Pensions Team take part in mortality screening through the Cabinet Office. This matter must be treated sensitively, as errors have occurred previously. It is difficult to identify whether individuals are deliberately not communicating and if fraud is occurring. Often there isn't a direct next of kin which elongates the process.</p>
<p>499</p>	<p>Item 11 – Public Sector Internal Audit Standards Update <i>Presented by Lynn Joyce.</i></p> <p>The report was circulated in advance of the meeting and therefore Lynn Joyce highlighted the key points from this report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Internal Audit Team is subject to an external inspected. • Within the next 12 months, another inspection is due to take place. • It was recommended that the Team undertake a validated self-assessment through an external organisation. • This consideration has been taken to the senior management team. <p>The Chair advised that Lynn had discussed this with herself and Richard Hollands and are happy to have an input into this. The last inspection was rigorous and pointed out areas of improvement. The Committee agreed they were content with this moving forward using the validated self-assessment option.</p>
<p>500</p>	<p>Item 12 –External Audit – Audit Findings Report <i>Presented by Iain Murray and Laurelin Griffiths.</i></p> <p>The report was circulated in advance of the meeting and therefore Iain Murray and Laurelin Griffiths highlighted the key points from this report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An apology was given due to the delay in the uploading of accounts. • An issue has arose concerning the pensions liability, as the Team are yet to receive the assurances from the West Midlands Pensions Authority. • The Team are in discussion with management regarding provisions, and in particular the completeness of the provisions. • The bulk of the audit is complete and findings are set out within the report. • In terms of adjustments, there are no underlying issues or problems concerning the systems that underpin the production of accounts. • Until the two issues are resolved, the Team are not in a position to reach a conclusion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Richard Hollands observed that the Team advised the issues were not material, however there are issues present concerning the provision of pensions. <p>Iain Murray responded that this matter has the potential to be material, and are accounting technicalities rather than serious underlying issues. Focusing on pensions, relatively small movements can be implemented that cause significant changes. The final report will hopefully be published within the upcoming days or weeks. The Team will issue a further note to the Committee via the Chair rather than waiting until the next meeting due in December 2021.</p>

	<p>The Chair confirmed this would be helpful and requested regular meetings be set up with her as this has been helpful in the past.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Richard Hollands questioned the difficulty of working remotely and under COVID-19 restrictions. <p>Iain Murray acknowledged that the Team are looking forward to being back on site. The business model is based on bringing people into the organisation; virtual training has caused difficulty. Moving forward, a hybrid model would be beneficial.</p> <p>Laurelin Griffiths added that the finance team have engaged with the process effectively, despite the slight hindrance caused by remote working.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Richard Hollands asked the same question to Ravi Lakhani and Mark Kenyon. <p>Ravi Lakhani advised that during the pandemic, the transition to working from home was undertaken relatively smoothly. The main challenge arose when gathering evidence and sourcing data, as this can be difficult to gather and assess in a home environment due to its sensitive nature and data protection regulations.</p> <p>Mark Kenyon thanked Ravi Lakhani and his Team for their hard work.</p> <p>The Chair emphasised her understanding of the reasoning behind delays.</p>
501	<p>Item 13 – JAC Work Programme For Information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The workplan is subject to change. • The Chair thanked attendees for their detailed reports and discussion. • Date of Next Meeting: 22 December 2021.