



Briefing Note

Police Reform / implications for the OPCC update

June 2026, R. Greenwood

1. Purpose of paper

- 1.1 This paper has been prepared to provide a summary of the Police Reform White Paper for local partners. It outlines the five chapters of the White Paper (section 2), gives an overview of proposals relating to the abolition of Police and Crime Commissioners (section 3), and sets out the current known implications for Gloucestershire (section 4).

2. Police Reform White Paper – published 26/01/26

- 2.1 On 26 January 2026, the Home Office published the [Police Reform White Paper – From Local to National: A New Model for Policing](#), setting out the most significant restructuring of policing in England and Wales in more than half a century. The White Paper outlines a comprehensive programme of reform intended to modernise policing, strengthen public confidence, and ensure the service is equipped to meet the challenges of increasingly complex crime.
- 2.2 The proposals include a major shift in the governance and organisation of policing. Central to the reforms is the creation of a National Police Service, bringing together the capabilities of the National Crime Agency, Counter Terrorism Policing, regional organised crime units and other national functions under a single structure to improve coordination, intelligence-sharing, and specialist capability. Alongside this, the Government will review the current number of police forces with a view to reducing fragmentation and improving efficiency.
- 2.3 The White Paper also commits to strengthening neighbourhood policing, improving police performance, delivering a future-focused workforce strategy, and overhauling governance arrangements across policing. These reforms aim to refocus local forces on the issues that matter most to communities (visibility, responsiveness, and tackling everyday crime) while ensuring serious and organised crime is addressed through nationally coordinated expertise.
- 2.4 These reforms represent a substantial shift in the landscape of police governance. The Government has confirmed its intention to replace PCCs with new Policing and Crime Boards, a model aligned with wider governance reforms across public services (as outlined elsewhere in this report). The White Paper therefore marks the beginning of a period of significant transition for local accountability structures.

- 2.5 To support the JIAC with their understanding of the Government's intentions, the following tables summarise the five chapters of the White Paper:

Chapter 1: Case for change
- Current policing model is still largely based on structures from the 1960s despite major changes in crime and society. - Government aims to modernise policing to ensure it can succeed now and in the future. - Problems with the current system cited as: - Smaller forces lacking financial resilience and being unable to deliver specialist services; - ICT systems being developed in silos which do not interact or share information with one another, - Fragmented system of 86 decision making chief constables and PCCs making it difficult to drive national direction and leadership. - Public confidence is declining, even though it remains comparatively high relative to other public institutions. - Performance is inconsistent, with declining standards and a "postcode lottery" in policing effectiveness across England and Wales. - Crime has changed dramatically, especially due to technology and online offending. - Fraud now represents 44% of all reported crime. - Significant increases in VAWG and child sexual abuse recorded.

Chapter 2: Better policing for local communities		
PART 1: Neighbourhood Policing	PART 2: Removing the barriers that stop the police focusing on the public's priorities	PART 3: A new system of local police governance
13,000 additional neighbourhood policing personnel to be delivered across England and Wales. - New standards to stop routine abstraction of neighbourhood officers. - Stronger action on shop theft and assaults on shopworkers using new powers and funding. - Enhanced training for all neighbourhood officers and PCSOs	- Work with justice partners to reduce demand on policing (including national rollout of Right Care, Right Person). - Define police productivity and develop core Productivity Priorities. - Explore use of AI to free officers for frontline duties - Streamline and integrate training across policing and partner organisations.	- PCCs to be abolished in 2028, with governance transferring to Strategic Authority Mayors or local council leaders through Policing and Crime Boards. - Every Board required to appoint a Policing and Crime Lead for day-to-day oversight. - Improved and more transparent processes for appointing, suspending and dismissing Chief Constables. - Governance model designed to support

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Public dashboard to monitor Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee performance		future creation of fewer, larger police forces. Clarification of functions for Boards and their support aimed at reducing perceived cost and ensuring consistency

Chapter 3: A Stronger policing system

PART 1: Police force structures	PART 2: The National Police Service (NPS)	PART 3: Police funding
- Independent review to design future police force structures, reporting summer 2026. - Aim to significantly reduce the number of police forces to improve efficiency and service quality. - Home Secretary's powers to change force boundaries will be simplified to support future mergers. - Local policing will be delivered through Local Policing Units, generally at the level of towns, boroughs and cities. - Government intends to identify a pathfinder force merger during this parliament.	- A new National Police Service (NPS) will be created as a single national police force. - NPS will provide national leadership, set standards, and oversee digital, commercial, and forensic services. - NPS will eventually absorb major national policing bodies (NCA, Counter-Terrorism Policing, ROCUs, and the Senior National Coordinator role for public order policing).	- Police funding formula will be reviewed to reflect the new policing system. - Short-term work will explore how to align funding with government priorities during the transition.

Chapter 4: Consistently higher standards

PART 1: A more active Home Office	PART 2: Improving police performance	PART 3: Raising individual standards
Home Secretary to set clear National	New Police Performance	Reform of vetting and misconduct systems to

Strategic Policing Priorities. - Streamlining direction-setting documents to give consistent strategic guidance. - Reform of the Policing Protocol to clarify leadership roles and responsibilities. - Clearer boundaries on operational independence and Home Secretary intervention powers	Framework to produce a shared view of force performance. - Tiered performance system introducing earlier intervention and tailored support. - Creation of a Home Office Police Performance Improvement Unit for system-wide oversight - Establishment of policing guarantees: minimum service levels for the public.	improve culture and integrity. - Mandatory national vetting standards and real-time alerts for officer risk indicators. - Requirements for suspension where officers face domestic abuse or sexual offence investigations. - Strengthening and reforming the IOPC, including statutory changes to referral thresholds and victims' rights.
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Chapter 5: A more capable police service		
PART 1: The future workforce	PART 2: Unleashing the power of our people through data and technology	PART 3: Smarter crime prevention
- Create a modern workforce with greater flexibility to recruit and retain specialist skills. - Develop a national workforce strategy including allied police professionals and non-warranted specialists. - Mandate national leadership standards and reform chief constable appointment processes. - Introduce a Licence to Practise for police officers. - Improve workforce culture with stronger support, development, and leadership. - Enhance wellbeing through the Police	- Invest £115m over three years to expand AI and automation in policing. - Create a National Centre for AI in Policing (Police.AI). - Roll out Live Facial Recognition, including 40 new LFR vans. - Establish a public register of AI used by police forces. - Create a bespoke legal framework for technologies such as facial recognition. - Simplify data governance with a single national decision-maker for policing datasets. - Mandate national standards for police data and data quality.	- Deliver a national integrated crime-mapping system for England and Wales. - Strengthen national crime-prevention partnerships and remove blockers to collaboration. - Provide clearer strategic direction on crime prevention across government. - Support local areas to reduce youth offending and improve multi-agency prevention.

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Covenant and national wellbeing standards.		

3. Abolition of the PCC model and creation of Local Police and Crime Boards

- 3.1 The following information is based on current understanding of developments with regards to the creation of Police and Crime Boards. All aspects of this are under discussion and therefore the detail provided below should only be viewed as current understanding and not as stated Government intention.
- 3.2 Government proposals set out a move from the current PCC governance model to multi-member Policing and Crime Boards by 2028. The reforms aim to strengthen oversight, resilience, and democratic representation across policing governance.
- 3.3 The new Board structure is now being shaped and is expected to be the dominant national governance model post-2028. Hosting arrangements are still under review, and this means that where the Board physically sits is to be determined, although expectations are that this will be locally decided.
- 3.4 Several Home Office led thematic workstreams feed into the programme, covering:
- Board mechanics
 - Finance
 - Scrutiny
 - Partnerships
 - Wales-specific governance
 - Fire governance integration
 - Staffing and transition arrangements

Policing and Crime Board core design features

- 3.5 The Policing and Crime Boards (PCBs) are introduced as the multi-member governance bodies intended to replace the PCC model in non-mayoral areas. Their core design reflects a shift to collective leadership, with membership expected to include local authority Leaders and Mayors from the force area, supported by two independent co-opted members appointed based on required skills, typically those relating to finance, criminal justice, policing knowledge, or governance.
- 3.6 PCBs are designed to be scalable to variations in force size and local government structures, ensuring equitable representation across relevant organisations. The new model seeks to maintain close alignment with broader devolution policy and regional authority structures. Overall, the design emphasises strategic leadership, statutory responsibility, and effective partnership working across policing and community safety systems. Partnership responsibilities and convening powers will be a priority and it is likely that Local Criminal Justice Board chairs will be Police and Crime Leads for example.

- 3.7 Boards will become body corporate and will employ Police and Crime Leads (PCLs). They must be scalable to accommodate potential future force reorganisations – important when considering prospect of force mergers. Where there is a Mayor, the Deputy Mayor role is expected to align with the Board structure.
- 3.8 Boards will assume full responsibilities for budget, precept setting and scrutiny. There will be no structure overseeing the Board which increases the importance of the Monitoring Officer role. The role of Best Value and HMICFRS is under consideration here too. Further reserved functions that must remain with the PCB include issuing the Police and Crime Plan, setting the budget and precept, and making decisions regarding the appointment, suspension, or removal of the Chief Constable.

Governance roles and requirements

- 3.9 Current understanding is that each PCB will be required to appoint three statutory officers: a Chief Executive, a Monitoring Officer, and a Chief Finance Officer. This replicates the governance structure currently in place for PCCs. Where appropriate, these roles may be shared with other organisations (suggested to be Local Authority or other force areas). The Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer posts may be combined (as is the case now in Gloucestershire OPCC), provided this is legally compliant and operationally manageable.
- 3.10 This is a change of anticipated direction as it was thought savings could be realised by removing the requirement of these statutory roles. This change may reflect concerns about losing the expertise of key staff who currently hold these roles. Accommodation arrangements may also remain unchanged, given the potential impact relocating may have on relationships, ways of working, and data-sharing
- 3.11 Alongside these appointments, PCBs must also establish their own local procedural framework. This will cover matters such as:
- the processes for appointing, resigning, determining the term of office, and removing the Chair and Vice-Chair;
 - setting quoracy requirements;
 - agreeing voting arrangements;
 - creating committees and sub-committees; and
 - determining policies on allowances and expenses.
- 3.12 Although PCBs will not fall under Local Government Access to Information regulations, they will still need to comply with transparency and accountability standards set out in statutory guidance. This approach is intended to provide local flexibility while ensuring a consistent and robust governance framework nationally.

The Policing and Crime Lead (PCL)

- 3.13 Every PCB will be required to appoint a PCL, who will exercise day-to-day governance functions currently carried out by Deputy Mayors for Policing and Crime or, in some areas, PCCs. The PCL will oversee police force performance, partnership engagement, and delegated decision-making on matters not reserved to the PCB.

- 3.14 The PCL role is designed to provide dedicated professional oversight capacity, ensuring strong daily governance while enabling the PCB to focus on strategic leadership. This model aims to deliver a balance between democratic accountability and operational effectiveness by creating a clear organisational distinction between strategic and delegated operational governance.
- 3.15 At present the Home Office has indicated that this role will not be politically restricted, i.e. a politician will be eligible to be a PCL but this debate remains ongoing. The role will be appointed to via a process and on a fixed term contract with a break clause and will be employed directly by the PCB rather than by any constituent authority, reinforcing both organisational independence and clear lines of accountability. Eligibility and disqualification rules are expected to mirror those that apply to Deputy Police and Crime Commissioners and Deputy Mayors for Policing and Crime, including compliance with the Official Secrets Act and disqualification where an individual is subject to sexual offence notification requirements under the Local Government Disqualification Act 2022.

Reform timeline

- 3.16 The following timeline has been provided by the Home Office although this should be viewed as indicative only:

Dates	Detail
Nov 2025 – Dec 2025	Develop and agree governance arrangements
Jan 2026 – March 2026	Refine policy with transition working groups
Jan 026 – July 2026	Instruct lawyers, develop clauses for Police Reform Bill
(tbc) July 2026	Police Reform Bill introduced
(tbc) July 2026 – March 2027	Passage of Police Reform Bill through Parliament
(tbc) March 2027	Police Reform Bill receives Royal Assent
Spring 2027 – Spring 2028	Work with local areas to progress Implementation
04 May 2028	Go live of new arrangements
Summer 2028	Evaluation

4. What does this mean for Gloucestershire OPCC?

- 4.1 There remains a high degree of uncertainty about how the wider reform agenda will impact the functions currently undertaken by OPCCs. The eventual model will be shaped by a number of interdependent factors, most notably the outcome of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the development of future devolution arrangements, and the findings of the Independent Review to design future police force structures (Chapter 3, Part 1, due to report in summer 2026).

LGR and Devolution

- 4.2 As Gloucestershire is not currently part of a mayoral authority, the functions of the OPCC are expected to transfer either to local council leadership or to a new Police and Crime Board. Recent discussions suggest that the latter is the more likely outcome. Under this scenario, the OPCC may remain a separate legal entity, potentially continuing to operate from within the police estate while retaining the majority of its existing functions.
- 4.3 The move to a Board could support a more collaborative model of governance, with greater alignment between policing and wider public services such as housing, health and community safety. While this could strengthen partnership working and system-wide approaches, it may also result in slower decision-making and more complex governance arrangements. Key details (including board composition, appointment processes, accountability mechanisms and scrutiny arrangements) remain unresolved, limiting the ability to fully assess the operational impact at this stage.

Force mergers

- 4.4 In parallel, the outcome of any future police force mergers will have a significant bearing on governance arrangements. Should Gloucestershire Constabulary merge with another force, the corresponding Police and Crime Board would also be expected to merge, operating at a larger geographic scale. Representation from local government is likely to reflect the revised Local Policing Areas within these expanded structures.
- 4.5 This could offer benefits in terms of more coordinated and integrated decision-making across wider service systems, supporting a more strategic, regional approach to community safety. However, these advantages must be balanced against the risks of increased complexity, reduced transparency and the potential dilution of local voice. Larger, collective governance structures may make it more difficult for communities to identify clear lines of accountability.

Conclusion

- 4.6 Taken together, these reforms present both opportunities and challenges. While there is clear potential to strengthen integration across public services and support more preventative approaches, risks remain around governance complexity, reduced visibility of leadership and instability during transition. There are also important implications for partnerships and commissioned services. PCCs currently play a central role in funding victim services, commissioning community safety initiatives and convening multi-agency partnerships. Under a revised model, these responsibilities may need to be redistributed or shared between organisations, creating potential risks to continuity, particularly for the voluntary and community sector during transition.

- 4.7 Ultimately, the key issue for Gloucestershire will be how effectively any new governance model, whether via a Police and Crime Board or a merged regional structure, can maintain strong, locally meaningful accountability.