



**Matthew Barber**

Police & Crime Commissioner  
for Thames Valley

## **Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Response to HMICFRS Report into the Effectiveness of Integrity Arrangements in Thames Valley Police**

[A report into the effectiveness of integrity arrangements in Thames Valley Police - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#)

HMICFRS Report Published: 26.02.26

PCC Response: April 2026

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### **1. Executive Summary**

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published its inspection of the effectiveness of integrity arrangements in Thames Valley Police on 26 February 2026. The inspection assessed the force's performance across three core areas: vetting, professional standards, and counter-corruption. The Inspectorate concluded that Thames Valley Police's arrangements were:

- **Adequate for vetting**
- **Requires Improvement for upholding professional standards**
- **Requires Improvement for tackling potential corruption**

These findings reflect both areas of progress and areas where further improvement is required.

The publication also sits within a wider national context. On 27 March 2026, outgoing HM Chief Inspector Sir Andy Cooke QPM DL warned that delayed action on inspection findings can allow risks to escalate into more serious organisational failings, underlining the importance of timely and sustained improvement across policing nationally.

### **2. PCC Response**

I welcome this inspection, which provides important independent assurance in areas fundamental to public confidence, ethical policing and organisational integrity.

In preparing this response, I have considered both the HMICFRS findings and the force's comprehensive internal response. The force's report outlines actions taken since the initial hot debrief, the progress made and strengthened governance arrangements now in place. This provides a useful basis for scrutiny. While the significant work undertaken by the force is recognised, it remains essential that improvements are evidenced, embedded and sustained.

However, the HMICFRS findings highlight several areas where further assurance, sustained leadership focus and measurable outcomes will be required.



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The OPCC's role is to provide independent scrutiny and assurance, rather than to replicate force operational activity. While some overlap in areas of governance and data review is unavoidable, this is necessary to independently test evidence, verify progress, and ensure that improvements are embedded and sustained. This requires ongoing, constructive dialogue between the OPCC and the force to maximise assurance while minimising unnecessary duplication.

## **2.1 Context from the Deputy Chief Constable (JIAC, 6 March 2026)**

At the recent meeting of the Joint Independent Audit Committee (6 March 2026), the Deputy Chief Constable highlighted that the inspection fieldwork was conducted eight months earlier and that the force had received a hot debrief at that time. He acknowledged that some issues highlighted by HMICFRS were fair - including decisions being made at inappropriate authority levels and delays in making mandatory referrals to the Independent Office for Police Conduct. Immediate action was taken on the areas identified following the hot debrief, meaning some findings in the published report reflect historic practice. This context helps clarify the timeline of improvement activity.

Nonetheless, the published HMICFRS findings remain the formal independent assessment and continue to form the basis on which assurance is required and progress must be demonstrated.

## **2.2 National Context**

The outgoing Chief Inspector's [recent comments](#) regarding the consequences of delayed action at a wider national level, reinforce the importance of ensuring that the required improvements in Thames Valley Police are delivered promptly and consistently.

## **2.3 Thematic Assessment**

### **Vetting**

The force has strengthened its vetting arrangements, including increased capacity, revised Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and progress in reducing backlogs. Further assurance is needed on:

- full compliance with Authorised Professional Practice (APP) 2025
- robust post misconduct vetting reviews
- full integration of vetting, HR and access control systems
- consistent vetting arrangements for non-police personnel

### **Professional Standards**

Significant improvements have been made in Appropriate Authority (AA) oversight, complaint handling, investigation timeliness, quality assurance and backlog reduction.



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Areas requiring continued focus include:

- workforce understanding of discrimination related responsibilities
- greater Professional Standards Department (PSD) visibility and engagement across policing areas
- stronger evaluation, rather than only dissemination, of organisational learning

In parallel, the OPCC continues to strengthen its scrutiny and assurance activity in relation to complaints and professional standards. This includes enhanced internal dip-sampling of complaint handling, which has recently increased in scale, alongside continued oversight through the OPCC's quarterly Complaints and Standards Committee. The scope of this Committee is being used to provide independent assurance on complaints performance and is expanding to incorporate misconduct matters, supporting greater transparency and accountability.

### **Counter-Corruption**

This remains the area of highest risk. While progress has been made in business interest oversight, gifts and hospitality governance and coordination between PSD, Vetting and Counter-Corruption Unit (CCU), significant risks remain:

- need for a force wide, risk based random drug testing programme
- clearer governance and oversight of IT monitoring and encrypted applications
- stronger processes for managing notifiable associations
- more consistent and timely handling of sexual misconduct risk
- CCU capacity to match both reactive and proactive intelligence demands
- alignment between the Strategic Threat Assessment, control strategy and improvement plan

The OPCC's scrutiny activity includes ongoing consideration of how counter-corruption risks, including gifts and hospitality and business interest controls, are reported and assured, to ensure appropriate visibility of emerging issues without replicating force operational governance.

### **3. Recommendations and Next Steps**

I will continue to use existing governance and accountability channels – across the OPCC and force – to monitor delivery, request regular updates, and publish relevant information to ensure transparency.

This oversight is supported by established OPCC scrutiny arrangements already in place, including continued OPCC attendance at monthly Professional Standards Department (PSD) performance meetings and regular engagement with the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). These forums provide opportunities to review performance data, interrogate emerging issues, track referrals and outcomes, and identify organisational learning.



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OPCC representatives also attend relevant force led integrity and improvement meetings, including Risk, Improvement & Learning (RIL) meetings, to maintain visibility of HMICFRS related activity and the force's response. This engagement supports effective information sharing and relationship building and enhances the OPCC's understanding of progress and risks.

### **Vetting**

- Evidence compliance with APP 2025 and post misconduct review requirements
- Complete system integration between vetting, HR and access controls
- Regular reporting on non-police personnel vetting

### **Professional Standards**

- Sustain strengthened AA decision making processes
- Improve training and capability around discrimination related casework
- Evaluate organisational learning and demonstrate its impact

### **Counter-Corruption**

- Expand drug testing to a force wide, risk-based model
- Strengthen IT monitoring and encrypted app governance
- Improve management of notifiable associations and sexual misconduct related intelligence
- Ensure CCU capacity keeps pace with growing demand
- Demonstrate full alignment between threat assessment, control strategy and implementation plans

### **Oversight**

I will continue to use existing governance and accountability channels - across the OPCC and force - to monitor delivery, request regular updates, and publish relevant information to ensure transparency.

This scrutiny is focused on those areas highlighted by HMICFRS as requiring improvement, ensuring that force reported progress is independently tested and sustained over time.

### **Conclusion**

Thames Valley Police has made meaningful progress since the HMICFRS hot debrief, and its internal response demonstrates commitment to improvement. However, the HMICFRS findings identify important areas requiring sustained focus, particularly within vetting, professional standards and counter-corruption. As Police and Crime Commissioner, I will continue to provide robust scrutiny and support to ensure that these improvements are delivered, evidenced and sustained to maintain the trust and confidence of the public.



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