

## **Decision by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire**

**Item:** APM Terms of Reference

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> September 2025

**Background:** Proposal to change APM format to podcasts for greater public engagement.

**Paper:** APM podcast EMT paper

**Decision:** PCC approved trial of podcast format for 6 months and £3,000 funding for Facebook advertising.



<b>Meeting</b>	Executive Management Team						
<b>Date</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> September 2025						
<b>Title of Report</b>	Proposal to move the Accountability and Performance meetings (APMs) from being live streamed to a podcast format with greater public interaction.						
<b>Submitted By</b>	Amie Birkhamshaw, Deputy Chief Executive with support from Rachel Stone, Principal Comms Manager						
<b>Deadline for Decision</b>	As soon as possible to inform the change for the November 2025 APM.						
<b>Decision(s) Required</b>	To approve the requirement and process for the APM podcast format						
<b>Financial Implications</b>	<p>To agree in principle a £3,000 comms and engagement budget for a 6-month trial of APM podcasts with further detailed work to be undertaken to determine an accurate advertising and graphic design budget envelope required. Budget is proposed to be taken from the uncommitted grants budget which stands at £638,476.80 as of 06/09/25.</p> <p>Summary Grants Budget Status:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>2025/26 CS&amp;CJ Total Budget</b></td> <td>£1,133,600.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Commitment &amp; Income sub-total</b></td> <td>-£495,123.50</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Estimated uncommitted balance</b></td> <td>£638,476.80</td> </tr> </table>	<b>2025/26 CS&amp;CJ Total Budget</b>	£1,133,600.00	<b>Commitment &amp; Income sub-total</b>	-£495,123.50	<b>Estimated uncommitted balance</b>	£638,476.80
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<b>Commitment &amp; Income sub-total</b>	-£495,123.50						
<b>Estimated uncommitted balance</b>	£638,476.80						
<b>Legal Implications</b>	Images and footage used as part of the podcast backdrop will be subject to copyright considerations.						
<b>Equalities Impacts</b>	None identified.						
<b>Freedom of Information Exemption Section if Applicable</b>	Not exempt						

### 1). Context

The PCC holds public Accountability & Performance Meetings (APM) with the Chief Constable every month, to help Hertfordshire residents see what the PCC does to

hold the Chief Constable to account and what he is doing to address the issues that matter most to the public.

Since September 2024 the meetings have been held on a Thursday morning and live streamed via Microsoft Teams Webinar. The recording has been published on the PCC's website together with a note of the meeting.

The meetings cover a range of topic areas, largely driven by findings from the policing inspectorate HMICFRS and independent scrutiny but also capture areas that the public have raised with the PCC via the Commissioner inbox. In recent months this has included Firearms Licencing, Hare Coursing and the Cowley Hill Primary School police response. Currently the meeting structure only enables the public to listen to the conversation between the PCC and Chief Constable, they are not able to submit questions in advance or ask questions in a live environment.

Over the past year since the new APM meetings were launched, they have followed a standard format which has been to advertise the agenda topics one week in advance of the meeting through HertsConnected, and on static websites such as Herts PCC's website. The meetings are currently advertised on static and limited social media platforms and audiences are not targeted which have contributed to the poor public attendance, averaging approx. 75 people each month.

Once the meeting has been held, the coverage is hosted on YouTube, with a link placed on the PCC's website. Beyond this, there is little further promotion on the event.

## **2). Proposal- Podcast**

There is an opportunity to change the format and interaction of the meetings to give greater flexibility, accessibility and engagement. Moving to a Podcast format will enable viewers greater flexibility to choose when and how to engage, unlike live streaming. It also provides greater flexibility when it is published and can be pre-recorded with release scheduled to suit the OPCC's requirements. It also creates content which can be reused in different reports and sliced into small social media snippets which will allow separate and bespoke content creation around specific issues. This will give the OPCC the opportunity to use the footage to run engagement or lead-generation campaigns and provide data back on which issues resonated most with which audiences – fundamentally changing the format of the APM from broadcast to engagement.

The nature of pre-recording and changing the focus to public engagement allows the APM to be used as a tool to provide the public with a voice. Enabling the public to submit questions in advance for chosen APMs would give the public greater opportunity to have their views presented and answered by the PCC and Chief Constable, enabling the agendas to be shaped by current content and live public issues.

To maximise engagement with the public each APM will need a dedicated and focused comms plan broken into three sections; 1) Pre-event engagement campaign, 2) Profile raising/brand recognition campaign to promote the podcast and build a following and 3) Lead-generation and data gathering campaign using the content from the podcast. This will run on a rinse and repeat cycle, but the data in the third phase will help shape the messaging in the first phase.

This dedicated and concerted comms effort in how the podcasts would be advertised and socialised across media channels will be a shift change for the office but will also help grow the PCC's platforms to maximise other campaigns that will be running simultaneously.

Providing a budget for Facebook advertising is beneficial in the first instance to help raise awareness and build brand recognition both the podcast and the PCC's platforms. However, as we begin to start gathering data through insights and engagement, paid advertising will enable us to ensure the right message reaches the right person online for example applying specific demographic, geographic or behavioural criteria for audience targeting (e.g. young parents in Hertfordshire, or

justice involved individuals aged 18-25) to enable messages to be tailored for different communities. By drilling down and ensuring we target our message to the right people, we can begin to build meaningful online relationships.

The paid advertising will also be supported by organic social media. This will involve auditing and joining all the online communities within Hertfordshire. This will increase reach and engagement immediately and will crudely allow us to target messages based on geography and lifestyle. The level of engagement this will garner will be considerably more than anything seen on the PCC's social media platforms and will play a large part in growing his following online. However, it will open the OPCC to more communication, a two-way dialogue and potentially negative comments. But the benefits of authentic engagement and profile raising far outweigh the risks.

### **3). Schedule**

Week 1: Defining questions / Topic areas for the public and Advertising /begin phase 1 of the engagement campaign

Week 2: Giving the public 5 working days to submit questions/ encourage debate on individual platforms and online community groups to build up the algorithm for organic campaign

Week 3: Collate all questions received, theme and distil/ sift and agree question set with Constabulary and determine which questions will be taken to podcasts and which can be individual content for stage 1 of the comms plan with paid advertising.

Week 4: Prepare briefing and answers to selected questions for the PCC to share with Constabulary and release content online to encourage debate and momentum – move into Stage 2 of the comms plan.

Week 5: APM Podcast - All comms now focused on Stage 2 to drive up engagement and awareness of podcast.

Week 5 – Editing, subtitling and post-production on podcast. Review of content and content plan created for single issue campaigns for Stage 3.

Week 6 – Implementing content plan for Stage 3 and gathering data for reports while circling back to Stage 1 for the next Podcast using the existing content.

### **4). Considerations**

#### **Budgetary and logistical considerations**

- A budget needs to be agreed for each podcast to support each of the three stages. The professional view of the Communication's Manager is that £500 per episode together with £150 for graphic design should be allocated.
- Corporate Communications would need to support the process with recording the podcast and post-production work in preparing the entire podcast for distribution. It is proposed that the OPCC manage the re-editing of content for bitesize campaigns.
- Each podcast will require the use of the Corporate Communication's studio and this would need to be booked.
- A design guide would need to be agreed between the Chief and PCC beforehand to ensure uniformity of the series and there will need to be decisions made on content introduced within the podcast each episode. To facilitate this there will need to be a comms planning meeting ahead of each episode once themes have been agreed to script out the format and agree visuals which are signed off by the Chief and PCC.
- A decision will need to be taken on the format of engagement. Signposting on social media to an off platform sign-up process negatively affects sign-up. To maximise engagement, comments left on posts should be considered rather than formalising a submission process or at the very least in addition to a formal submission process. The more organic and authentic the

communication/ process, the more engagement that will be received. It is important that all the wrap around comms around the podcast is in-keeping with the format of a podcast, otherwise this impact will be lost in the changing of the formats.

- By keeping it informal, there is an opportunity for public opinion to be reviewed right up to the point of recording. This longer lead-in time means that it gives the OPCC time to consider any changes that need to happen to the narrative and format of the episode, because of any world/local events which a live Teams meeting has not afforded. With regards to pushing content out to build brand awareness and encourage engagement, there is at least a two-week lead-in period for the first one and then moving on the Stage 3 of the first episode becomes the Stage 1 of the next.
- Post-production of the podcast will take at least a week and the packaging up of content for socials afterwards will take about two weeks. This time will need to be protected for both comms teams to ensure consistency of pace of podcasts, which is essential for building up a base of listeners.
- The office will need to be focused on using the office grid and the comms team on using the media grid to ensure that there is a concise narrative across the board. The podcasts will dominate our comms channels consistently and message discipline across the team will be essential as we cannot be seen to be saying one thing on a podcast and another on an email to a resident for example.
- Once agreed, a separate comms plan will be created, and the time and resource must be allocated to deliver it for the podcast to be successful.

#### **5). Proposed Recommendation and Rationale**

- 1). Given the lead in time as noted above with regards to the need to draw on resources within the Constabulary's Corporate Communications department to support the production of the podcasts and the lead in time with undertaking graphic design and narrative build, it is recommended that the format of APM's move from a live streaming format to a Podcast format starting from the November APM on a trial basis for 6 months. This would enable steps 1-6 to be mapped and allocated.
- 2). To agree a provisional advertising budget of £3,000 (approx. £500 per episode) for a trial period of six months with further work to be undertaken by the Comms Managers to understand the more detailed costings.