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CHIEF CONSTABLE'S ANNUAL REPORT

2021 - 2022

ISLE OF MAN
CONSTABULARY

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HOW THE REPORT IS LAID OUT

A balance has been sought between data and a narrative account of the Isle of Man Constabulary's (IOMC) performance throughout the period from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. Where possible data has been set out in an easy to understand graphical format, but detailed data tables are linked to the report for those who wish to dig behind the headline figures. Where necessary an interpretation of the data is offered.

In addition to graphics and data tables, the report contains an overview of a dozen or so of the most important issues facing the IOMC as it strives to keep the Isle of Man safe. These range from the exploitation of young and vulnerable people, through to the tackling of international money laundering.

A section deals with organisational issues, providing a short narrative about people, finance, facilities and information technology.

At the end of the report there is a section focusing on the future, which looks at threats to public safety and matters that might affect the IOMC's ability to develop.

INTRODUCTION LETTER

Minister Jane Poole-Willson
Chief Executive
Tromode DHA Headquarters
Tromode Road
Douglas
IM2 5PA

Dear Minister

I am required by the Police Act 1993 to provide an annual report on the performance of the Isle of Man Constabulary. The Act does not stipulate the way that the report should be constructed, but by convention it has become the case that it contains data and a narrative about all aspects of the Constabulary's performance. I know that you are keen that this should continue to be the case.

I am therefore pleased to be able to present to you my report for the 2021-22 year. As you will see, it looks a little different than its predecessors, with a slightly greater emphasis being placed on graphics. It is no longer the case (sadly!) that people wish to read lengthy, nuanced documents, but I have attempted to strike an appropriate balance. However, the text is slightly shorter than in the past. The next version of the report will likely be considerably different as the Constabulary is beginning to use Microsoft Power BI, a powerful software tool, which will transform the way that we use and share performance data.

All told the year was unremarkable. The level of recorded crime fell by slightly over 6%, the detection rate rose by 3% to reach 46% and there were reductions in most categories of crime. Burglary fell by almost 40% to its lowest level for decades and there were real signs of a slowdown in the growth of violent crime. There were fewer serious assaults. In other words, the Isle of Man is even safer than it was last year and remains a supremely safe place.

INTRODUCTION LETTER

Data within the report tends to show that the 2020-21 year, on which I reported last year, was something of a statistical outlier. Very high levels of demand during the summer of 2020, lengthy covid-19 lockdown periods and reduced traffic on the roads all combined to make the year unusual. By comparison, most of the data for the 2021-22 year is similar to that of 2019-20.

The most significant issue during the year was the exploitation of young and vulnerable people by organised criminal groups intent on supplying controlled drugs. I wrote at length about this last year and, whilst the ending of tight border restrictions changed the way that drugs were produced into the island, the wickedness of such criminal groups remained evident.

The year saw the Constabulary undergo its first inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services since 2004. The inspection took up a lot of the Constabulary's time and it is disappointing that at the time of writing, in late May 2022, the draft report has not yet been received. Nevertheless, the inspection should be seen as having been a positive experience.

I am grateful to you, your political colleagues and the officers of the Department of Home Affairs for the support that you have given the Constabulary during the year. Similarly, your predecessor, Graham Cregeen, who lost his seat in the House of Keys general election, gave a great deal of his time and attention to the Constabulary. For all of this, I am hugely appreciative.

I am due to retire at the end of 2022, so this will be the last report that I prepare. I am hugely proud to have been the Chief Constable of such an excellent police force. The public will never fully understand the dedication, determination and effort that so many officers invest every day of the year. They are remarkable public servants. I worry for their future, though: police officers have had a real term pay cut of close to 20% over the last decade or so and life is really difficult for many young officers, who now have little disposable income and few chances of establishing themselves on the housing ladder. Without change a crisis may emerge.

Yours sincerely

Gary Roberts QPM
Chief Constable

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S OVERVIEW

The 2021-22 year felt much more normal than its predecessor, even it if began with the island in its third covid-19 lockdown period. Overall levels of demand were on par with the years immediately before the pandemic and all manner of signs exist to indicate that 2020-21 was something of an aberration in terms of demand, particularly in regards to crime.

This section provides a narrative regarding some of the most important matters facing the IOMC as it strives to keep the Isle of Man safe. Detailed data in respect of these matters can be found here.

CRIME

Assessing the performance of the police is complex and the days are long gone when the best indicator was the level of recorded crime. The investigation of crime is only part of what the police do and the IOMC and its officers spend as much time dealing with issues caused by poor mental health, or by complex vulnerability, or on other safeguarding work as they do on crime. That said, it is accepted that for many people the overall level of crime is important, as it gives a basic indication of the safety of a place.

In the year to the end of March 2022 the overall level of recorded crime fell by just over 6%. There were increases in only two categories of crime: offences against the person, where low level assaults increased slightly, albeit serious assaults reduced in number, and sexual offences where, to a large degree, the increase of 18% was driven by increasing numbers of people who had the confidence to come forward. (For context, there were fewer than two sexual offences recorded each week.)

The most significant reductions included the possession of offensive weapons, where 24% fewer offences were recorded and in burglary, where the combined number of domestic and commercial burglaries was below 70. It has been difficult to find such low levels in the modern era.

The detection rate was 46%, three points higher than last year. Within the report can be found an explanation of how offences are recorded and marked as detected or otherwise. The detection rate is the highest in the British Isles.

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S OVERVIEW

SEXUAL ASSAULTS

The investigation of rape is as sensitive as it is complex. For most people who have fallen victim, telling the police about their experience is only part of a traumatic and challenging series of events. For some, a primary focus is on seeking to have an offender brought to court and convicted; for others, simply telling someone about what has happened is for the time being enough. The service that someone reporting a rape or a serious sexual assault gets should be personal and bespoke to their needs.

Progress to establish a sexual assault referral centre (SARC) has been slow, with the covid-19 pandemic being partly to blame. However, during the 2021-22 year a specialist doctor was employed on a fulltime basis to provide a service to those who has been raped or sexually assaulted. This was a major step forward and, with the SARC likely to become operational in 2023, the service that victims and survivors will receive will be as good as it can be.

Experience elsewhere suggests that the opening of the SARC will lead to something like a doubling in reports.

For several years the IOMC has detected about 20% of all rapes reported to it. This was around ten times the rate seen in the United Kingdom. In the 2021-22 year the detection rate fell to just 5%. This might cause alarm. Considerable work has been undertaken to assess why this is the case and the following table presents a detailed account of where each individual case ended.

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S OVERVIEW

SEXUAL ASSAULTS

Reported Date	Incident Date	Offence	Current Status	Outcome / reclassifcation	Prosecuted	Why Not Charged
03/02/2021	01/01/1974	Rape	Filed	Offender has died	Deceased	
05/06/2021	01/03/2012	Rape	Filed		No	AGC Decision
01/11/2021	01/01/2013	Rape	Filed	NFA - complainant or witness too ill	No	Deferred
15/01/2021	01/01/2014	Rape	Filed	NFA - Investigation complete - Suspect identified	No	AGC Decision
31/07/2021	01/08/2019	Rape	Filed	No crime	No	No Crime
09/02/2021	01/10/2020	Rape	Filed	NFA - Investigation complete - Suspect identified	No	AGC Decision
09/02/2021	03/02/2021	Rape	Filed	No crime	No	No Crime
01/03/2021	22/02/2021	Rape	Filed	NFA - complainant no support - Suspect identified	No	No support from complainant
01/11/2021	01/04/2021	Rape	Filed	NFA - complainant no support - No suspect	No	No support from complainant
05/05/2021	04/05/2021	Rape	Filed	NFA - Investigation complete - Suspect identified	No	AGC Decision
22/05/2021	21/05/2021	Rape	Under Investigation			
23/05/2021	21/05/2021	Rape	Under Investigation			
29/09/2021	05/06/2021	Rape	Under Investigation			
22/06/2021	21/06/2021	Rape	Filed	NFA - complainant no support - Suspect identified	No	No complaint from complainant
11/10/2021	01/07/2021	Rape	Under Investigation			
10/07/2021	10/07/2021	Rape	Filed	NFA - Investigation complete - Suspect identified	No	AGC Decision
15/08/2021	15/08/2021	Rape	Filed	NFA - Investigation complete - Suspect identified	No	AGC Decision
11/09/2021	10/09/2021	Rape	Under Investigation			
26/09/2021	18/09/2021	Rape	Under Investigation			No support from complainant
21/09/2021	20/09/2021	Rape	Filed	No crime	No	No Crime
12/10/2021	02/10/2021	Rape	Under Investigation			
24/10/2021	23/10/2021	Rape	Filed	NFA - complainant no support - No suspect	No	No support from complainant
15/11/2021	07/11/2021	Rape	Under Investigation			
14/11/2021	10/11/2021	Rape	Under Investigation			
25/11/2021	13/11/2021	Rape	Under Investigation			

As can be seen, there were twenty six recorded rapes, ten of which remained under investigation at the end of the year. Some of them may lead to charges. Of the remaining sixteen, in four cases the victims did not wish there to be a prosecution; in three cases there was evidence to show that the complainant had not told the truth and in one of these there was a prosecution for doing an act against justice; in one case an offender had died and in another the victim was too ill for the matter to proceed; this leaves seven cases. In five of those cases the police investigation discovered a suspect and HM Attorney General decided that charges were not to be brought. In the remaining two cases there were too many investigative difficulties for a suspect to be identified or for a case to proceed.

So, the investigation of rape is complex. Those who report rapes are given every possible support and their feedback is used to help improve the service given to others.

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S OVERVIEW

OFFENDING BY YOUNG PEOPLE

In 2020-21 there was a significant upturn in offending and reoffending on the part of people aged below 18. The data contained in my last annual report was worrying and the constitutional affairs and justice committee of Tynwald was prompted to carry out a review of how the island's services are dealing with youth offending. The committee is yet to report, but this link takes you to a record of the evidence that I gave to it at a public hearing. It should be noted that I gave evidence, using data that largely came from 2020-21.

The detailed data shows that the Police Early Action Team (PEAT) dealt with more young offenders in 2021-22 than ever before. 467 young people were responsible for 1073 offences, with the fifteen most prolific offenders committing 247 of the 1073 offences.

The most notable thing from the data is not the overall level of offending, but the fact that violent offences increased by 68%. This increase accounted for the entire increase in the overall level of violent crime. Sadly more than half the assaults on police officers recorded during the year were committed by young offenders and many of the assaults were far from insignificant, with officers being kicked, punched, spat on and head-butted by teenagers.

Work is underway to prevent violence and a violence reduction plan in part focuses on offending by young people, with programmes of work being established to divert young offenders away from the use of force.

It is important to remember that the island's young people are generally excellent and a credit to their families. They excel academically and in sport, art and music. Many of them play a key part in the life of the community. The comparatively few recidivist young offenders are, though, a challenge and much more needs to be done across society to stop their offending.

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S OVERVIEW

Early intervention is so important. 90% of young people referred to PEAT under the LINK scheme, which is intended to identify and divert from offending young people who are just starting to offend, did not reoffend during the year. This gives cause for optimism.

The need for collaborative work cannot easily be overstated and the demise of the successful Youth Justice Team has been subject to much discussion. However, it is good to be able to report that, at the year end, work was underway to re-establish a multi-agency team able to deal with youth offending and other issues. All that was needed was a change of senior leadership in partner agencies and a shared will to do something positive.

DRUGS

I wrote at some considerable length last year about drugs and the role played by organised criminal groups from Merseyside in the supply of drugs to the island. While some things changed in 2021-22, many things remained the same.

It is still the case that the drugs market here is a lucrative one and that these organised criminal groups seek to find every way possible of bringing drugs to the island to sell. The number of drugs seizures and the volume of drugs seized reduced during the year. Some of this was because the ending of border restrictions caused the methods used when restrictions were in place to change. No longer was the postal system as widely used, but instead drugs were brought here through freight carriers and in specially adapted vehicles, which often contained hidden compartments.

The reduction in the value of drugs seized is perhaps only indicative of a change in police tactics, with greater emphasis being placed on disrupting activity, as opposed to trying over long periods to seize drugs. Nevertheless, the island clearly has a drugs problem and it is particularly noteworthy that the amount of heroin seized increased tenfold.

For much of the year specialist drugs officers focused on work to dismantle organised criminal groups, working closely in concert with colleagues from the north-west of England. Their most important investigations remain sub judice at the time of writing.

The wickedest part of the drugs trade is the exploitation of vulnerable and young people.

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S OVERVIEW

EXPLOITATION

During the year the IOMC began an important piece of work designed to identify the most vulnerable children and young people and to put in place measures to protect them. Styled as "Operation Yarrow" analysis was conducted, which focused on several critical, recent factors: their age; the number of times the young person had been arrested; the number of child protection investigations that featured them; the number of times they had been reported as being missing; the number of times that they had been a victim; the number of police intelligence reports about their involvement in exploitation, grooming, the carrying of weapons, drugs use and supply, accrual of drugs debts, abuse of alcohol and the extent to which they had mental health problems. Additionally, attention was paid to the level of risk that our partners in Manx Care had ascribed to them.

The analysis led to the creation of a list of those most at risk and bespoke interventions were put in place for each child or young person, aimed at reducing the risk of them being exploited, or of offending, or falling victim. Within a very short time success were achieved: young people subject of the project were able to get the support needed to stop offending, change their previously risky behaviour and, in some cases, to return to education, or even take up employment.

Alongside Operation Yarrow, considerable work was done during the year with the Department of Education, Sport and Culture and with senior school leaders, both to share information needed to tackle the exploitation of young people but also to overhaul the support given to individual schools by local, specialist community police officers.

At the same time a renewed focus, including the provision of specialist training, was given to restorative justice, with a view to making much more extensive use of restorative approaches.

All of this work – and further initiatives such as the use of a mentoring scheme for those who are starting to offend, the rollout of drama activity to highlight the threats of criminal exploitation – are starting to make a real difference. Further work to create an analytically rich data picture, so that the IOMC and partners fully understand all of the issues connected to the exploitation of children and young people will add further momentum.

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S OVERVIEW

SAFEGUARDING

Thankfully there were fewer suicides than in each of the last two years. It is difficult to determine why there were over twenty in the 2020-21 year, and it is possible that covid-19 pandemic played its part by heightening anxiety and by increasing loneliness and isolation. Nevertheless, the overall rate remains higher than anyone would want.

During the year partner agencies came together to create a rapid response to suicides, so that the families and close friends of people who have taken their own lives can have swift access to support. The trauma caused by suicide is enormous and it remains much too early to determine the success or otherwise of this initiative.

In the data section the figures for the police use of coercive powers under Section 132 of the Mental Health Act paint a stark picture of the extent to which police officers use those powers. However, great caution is needed, as almost all of the increase is due to a change in recording practices. Nevertheless, mental health matters remain a major driver of police demand and, despite the support of mental health professionals employed by Manx Care, police officers still spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with people in crisis. In the year ahead work will begin to refresh the existing joint IOMC – Manx Care protocol on mental health, so that it remains fit for purpose. Some of this work will necessarily focus on ensuring that police officers do not bear a burden that ought to be carried elsewhere.

The IOMC plays a full part in the work of the safeguarding board. In the year considerable efforts were put into rewriting safeguarding procedures and police officers were heavily involved in this work and in work to conduct serious case reviews. One recurring theme of those reviews was the matter of self-neglect and it is evident that this is a societal matter that will require considerable attention. In simple terms, many more vulnerable people than expected live difficult, sometimes lonely lives, where they fail to look after themselves.

The work of the board is important, but the IOMC is a small organisation and two senior officers spent a considerable amount of their time working solely on safeguarding matters. The board is seeking to develop and improve after a period of relative stagnation that largely coincided with the covid-19 pandemic, which makes the demand that it causes so considerable.

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S OVERVIEW

OCSIA

In April 2020 the IOMC took responsibility for the Office of Cyber Security and Information Assurance (OCSIA), which had formerly been part of the Cabinet Office. Its small, dedicated team carry out a variety of functions, including the preparation and ongoing oversight of the island's cyber security strategy, receiving and disseminating reports about cyber breaches and online and providing guidance and support to the public service about information security and data protection matters.

Data from OCSIA is contained within the data section of this report. As can be seen, OCSIA had another busy year and, importantly, its work has made a real difference. In one noteworthy case, it received a report of a serious online fraud and within twenty four hours offenders in the United Kingdom had been located and arrested and stolen property recovered.

OCSIA also ran another successful conference focusing on cyber issues. CyberIsle has become an established feature of the local calendar and this year's event brought together businesses, the public sector and private individuals. Importantly, local businesses that had fallen victim to cyber-attacks shared their stories in a way that undoubtedly helped others to prepare their own defences.

In the year ahead OCSIA will bring forward a new national cyber security strategy and will carry out work to ensure that there is a proper definition of the critical national infrastructure, allowing steps to be taken to ensure that it is appropriately resilient.

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S OVERVIEW

ECONOMIC CRIME

The issues that matter most in terms of economic crime rarely touch the lives of most members of the Manx public. Few people fall victim to fraud; money laundering will rarely involve ordinary people and compliance with international standards will have little meaning to most people. However, now and for the foreseeable future some of these matters are probably the most important part of the IOMC's work.

Keeping the island safe is largely about tackling the threats posed by organised criminal groups, who seek to deal drugs; it also about protecting vulnerable people from harm and about keeping our roads safe. These things rarely if ever affect the viability of the economy, yet a failure in our approach to economic crime has the potential to do just that.

In 2025-26 the Isle of Man will again be assessed by Moneyval, a Council of Europe body, which will help determine our economic future. If the island's authorities cannot show that we have an effective anti-money laundering regime, not simply in terms of what our laws and structures look like, but in terms of actually using every available criminal and civil sanction to pursue offenders, then there is a real risk that the Isle of Man would go onto a "grey" list, which would threaten the viability of our economic model. Serious stuff.

In the past year, the Economic Crime Unit has seen a further increase in demand. It faces several challenges: fraud is a real problem, despite the decline in recorded offences; tackling the funding of the local drugs trade is vitally important as a means of dismantling organised criminal groups and investigating international money laundering cases is notoriously difficult.

To show compliance with international standards and to satisfy Moneyval's assessors we will have to show that proper efforts were made to investigate international cases and that successes were achieved. For the purposes of the assessment, cases involving the United Kingdom may not be viewed as being international. So, our efforts in investigating and charging those involved in laundering money for Merseyside-based organised criminal groups bring no benefits in the assessment process.

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S OVERVIEW

ECONOMIC CRIME

During the year the Economic Crime Unit's longest running case, Operation Braid, moved towards its climax. With charges being prepared for several individuals here and in the United Kingdom. As these matters will be sub judice, little more can be said. However, there is an important point to be made: simply managing the stringent requirements of the pre-trial disclosure have involved three officers working fulltime for nine months, with specialist legal support.

What all of this means is this: existing resources will not be enough to get the things done that will satisfy the Moneyval assessment. Work began during the year to create a specialist international money laundering investigation team, but its success will depend on extra funding, having sufficiently trained people in place, the continuing provision by the Financial Intelligence Unit of appropriately targeted and high quality intelligence packages, and by investigators working with all relevant partners in a focused way, setting aside any inclination for risk aversion in terms of launching investigations. There is a lot to do and, with the right will and support, several ongoing cases can be turned into prosecutions, but no one should be under any illusion about the scale of the challenges ahead, or about the implications of failure.

On the local side, data in the report again shows the extent to which action is being taken against those involved in the financing of the local drugs trade. It could be argued that money launderers are akin to people who handle stolen goods. When acquisitive crime was a problem here, courts used to stress that without handlers there would not be no burglaries or thefts and handlers usually received similar sentences to those who had committed the original offence. Money launderers rarely if ever receive similar sanction to those concerned in the supply of drugs. I wonder whether this is right.

GARY ROBERTS QPM
CHIEF CONSTABLE

2021-22 IN FIGURES

CRIME DOWN
6%

2,765
recorded crimes

13,618
calls for action

The Isle of Man is safer than anywhere in the UK

Crime severity on the Isle of Man has steadily increased over the past 3 years, yet the Island remains the safest place in the British Isles, when compared to all 43 Police Force Areas of England and Wales. The Isle of Man has a crime severity rate over 40% lower than the lowest in England and Wales.

DOMESTIC INCIDENTS
-7%

MENTAL HEALTH INCIDENTS
-5%

OFFENCE	COUNT	% CHANGE
OFFENCES AGAINST THE PERSON	658	+2%
DRUGS OFFENCES	534	-14%
OFFENCES AGAINST PROPERTY	509	-5%
THEFT AND KINDRED OFFENCES	500	-13%
PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES	219	-10%
SEXUAL OFFENCES	98	+18%
FRAUD OFFENCES	81	-20%
OFFENCES RELATING TO POLICE	57	-21%
OFFENSIVE WEAPONS	42	-24%

people arrested
1,769
of whom
219
were juveniles

ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS
+14%

over
£600,000
drugs seized

1,042
digital examinations conducted

165 search warrants recorded

over
£130,000
paid in fines

DATA OVERVIEW

CRIME

DRUGS

DEATHS & SUCIDE

ROADS

OCSIA

CUSTODY

YOUTH JUSTICE

VULNERABILITY

DATA OVERVIEW

DIGITAL EXAMINATIONS

CALLS FOR SERVICE

FIREARMS

SEARCHES

PROSECUTIONS

SEXUAL OFFENCES

ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

Some of the most important activities undertaken by the IOMC actually take place behind the scenes. The management of finance, the establishment of a sound IT infrastructure and the establishment and effective use of internal governance processes are necessary if the service that the public receives is to be as effective as possible.

During the year those governance arrangements were refined to improve their effectiveness and to ensure that organisational decisions are made as swiftly as possible and at the right level. Some of the issues that were considered during the year will have important operational implications, such as how the IOMC is structured to ensure that armed officers are readily available and how we will respond to the considerable challenges posed by the wide-ranging and voluminous legislative changes that are in the course of taking effect.

The most noteworthy organisational issues largely relate to people, finance and information technology.

ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

PEOPLE

In the last year the IOMC conducted two recruitment exercises for new student officers and both were successful. Despite the low pay being offered to new recruits, high calibre candidates came forward. The new officers were recruited almost exclusively to replace officers who have retired on schedule, as the number of unexpected departures was considerably lower than anticipated. Indeed, retention rates during the last two years have been considerably better than in the previous three or four years.

During the year a superintendent and two chief inspectors retired, with a third chief inspector retiring just after the year had ended. Replacing them was a challenge. While the IOMC has many talented officers and the future in terms of senior officer selection looks to be bright, I felt it necessary to search outside the organisation to help fill the gaps. A rigorous process was held late in 2021, as a result of which an experienced superintendent from Kent and an equally talented and experienced chief inspector from West Yorkshire were offered roles which they will take up soon after the start of the 2022-23 year.

For some time it has been difficult to recruit transferee officers from the United Kingdom because of changes to pensions, which have ended long-standing reciprocal arrangements. Recent legal challenges to pension reforms there will bring about further changes which will benefit us here in that transferring will again become an attractive option. In 2022-23 it is likely – in order to bolster experience levels in patrol teams – that several transferee officers will be recruited.

Two groups of Special Constables were also recruited and, while some of them joined with a view to gaining experience before beginning service as regular officers, many joined simply to offer voluntary service to the community. We could not properly police the island without the dedication of the Special Constabulary and everyone who volunteers in this way has my admiration.

In 2019-20 the IOMC's training and development budget was restored to the levels seen before the overall budget was cut in response to the VAT crisis. Then came the pandemic. This led to off island specialist training being cancelled and it was towards the end of 2021 before much of it was rearranged. This has posed some real challenges and in some areas the IOMC has fallen behind where it should be. Ambitious plans for the rest of 2022 will help, but managing abstractions for training and staying within budget will be two of the most significant of those challenges.

ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

PEOPLE

As can be seen from the data, professional standards remain high. There were very few formal complaints and comparatively few matters that were resolved or satisfactorily dealt without before they became formal matters. I have described in previous years that police officers have many hundreds of thousands of interactions with the public each year, so only a tiny proportion of them result in complaints of any kind.

Whether it is merely coincidence, but since the beginning of the pandemic we have had to deal with an apparently growing number of people, who believe that laws do not apply to them without them giving personal and specific consent. The nonsense spouted by such individuals is sometimes compounded by their paradoxical propensity to seek to use the complaints system – ironically a legal framework – to advance flawed arguments. To a great degree they waste our time.

Our professional standards manager, Paul Bryan, retired early in 2022 and he will be missed. He gave exemplary service and played a long and important role in keeping our standards high.

In the data tables there is a reference to the integrity of sickness data. The IOMC was obliged to participate in the use of a public service-wide IT system, known as PiP, for the management of all human resources data. The system has some flaws, which quickly became apparent. The most significant is that the system cannot accurately record sickness when variable shift patterns are used and most police shift patterns are variable. As a result, sickness data is not entirely accurate. It purports to show that officers took an average of about nine days sickness absence. The more accurate figure would likely be about seven days. Irrespective of what it is, the level of casual or short-term sickness is very low, especially amongst officers who work 24/7 shifts, and four or five long-term absentees were responsible for a major part of the absence.

The approach of some medical practitioners can be frustrating. In one case an officer claimed to be suffering from post-traumatic distress disorder. A specialist psychiatrist determined that this was not the case, but the officer's general practitioner continued to issue sick notes to say that the officer had the condition. This is but one example of where the system is flawed.

ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

EXTERNAL SCRUTINY

The year saw a considerable amount of external scrutiny being applied to the IOMC. For the first time in almost a generation the force was inspected by HMICFRS and we were also subjected to independent external scrutiny in terms of being re-accredited by the Customer Service Excellence body for the way that we treat the public, but also in terms of how we deal with inclusion and diversity. This led us to achieving a British standard for our work. Additionally, our inclusion scrutiny group was relaunched under a new chair, Sarah Maltby MHK.

The HMICFRS inspection addressed there specific areas: (a) governance, which focused predominantly on the relationship between the IOMC and the DHA, but also considered the effectiveness and relevance of the Police Act 1993 and the way that the complaints system works; (b) how the IOMC deals with protecting the public, which includes our approach to sexual and domestic abuse and safeguarding; and (c) how the IOMC deals with the threat posed by serious and organised crime.

In preparation for the inspection we carried out our internal assessment, using publicly available HMICFRS inspection protocols. From this we produced an action plan. We made the review and the plan available to the inspection team and we prepared our first ever force management statement – a statutory requirement for the forces in England and Wales – as way of helping the team understand context. The management statement is attached to this report here.

The inspection team encountered some difficulties, not least of which was an upturn in covid-19 cases at the time of their visit and, by its own admission, it had under-estimated the complexity and some of the context within which the IOMC operates. This led to the inspectors being unable to provide early feedback in the way that was expected and the draft report has not been received at the time of writing. It had initially been hoped that a draft report would be ready in February 2022.

It is still hoped that the report will offer guidance to help the IOMC to continue to improve, irrespective of the unexpected delays.

ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

EXTERNAL SCRUTINY

The IOMC is paying for the inspection and a sum of £70,000 was set aside from the operational budget. This is yet to be paid.

The scrutiny provided in terms of customer service excellence and inclusion and diversity was really useful. The reports by a UK-based assessor showed that the IOMC continues to carry out some excellent practice.

During the year we also had our use of social media reviewed by a specialist company from off the island. The review report was received after the year had ended.

The work of the scrutiny group is critically important. After her election to the House of Keys, Jane Poole-Wilson, who had been its independent chair for five years, stepped aside and Sarah Maltby MHK took over.

The group acts as important critical friend to the IOMC, seeking to hold it to account for how it deals with issues of inclusion and diversity in the community. During the year it also agreed to my request for it to act as an ethics panel, offering me advice on complex or challenging ethical matters. I have asked it to offer me guidance about how to establish trust within the older LGBTQ+ community, where the issue of my being asked to apologise for police actions in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s is in danger of becoming an obstacle to progress. Dealing with this in a way that satisfies the majority of people is exactly the sort of ethical matter that the panel can help me with.

During the year panel members played an important and active role in the recruitment of police officers and special constables and its members will also be involved in the process to recruit my successor.

ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

FINANCE

The IOMC again met its budgetary targets, albeit it made some use of the seized assets fund for some projects where funding was unavailable through the revenue budget process. The IOMC is undoubtedly financially disciplined, but the future does not look to be very encouraging, with the twin threats of poorer government finances because of covid-19 and high levels of inflation posing a genuine threat to how the IOMC operates.

In the 2022-23 budget process the IOMC made a bid for extra analytical support to deal with increasing demands, particularly in regards to managing the flow of data connected with external threats, such as those posed by organised criminal groups from Merseyside. Funding was provided for two extra posts.

At the start of 2022 legislation became effective allowing for the use of drug wipes to detect drug-driving offences. Each wipe costs about £14 and the off-island testing of each sample costs upward of £600. In their first two months of use more than seventy cases were detected. Sadly the IOMC had pointed out the likely expenditure implications when the legislation was first proposed, but no extra funds were given. This means that the force's forensic science budget will likely largely be overspent within the first quarter of the 2022-23 year.

TECHNOLOGY

The covid-19 pandemic dealt a blow to our technological development. Progress to implement our ambitious strategy slowed considerably and we were not able to leverage maximum value from our collaborative arrangement with NEC Northgate. The main issue was the impact of the pandemic on the company's development team, many of whom are based in Asia. Additionally a worldwide shortage of chips made some aspects of procurement a real challenge.

Nevertheless, progress continued to be made towards the use of electronic files and, close working relationships with the prosecutions team from within HM Attorney General's Chambers allowed for the smooth exchange of such files. Upgrades were made to our core Connect system during the year and this will allow the rollout of mobile devices to take place in the first quarter of 2022-23, allowing all officers to use all police systems when away from police buildings.

Current projects include the use of drone technology, a move to cloud storage and safe use of facial recognition technology.

FUTURE ISSUES

I am scheduled to retire from the Constabulary on 31st December 2022 and this will present many more opportunities than threats to the service. At the time of writing my successor has yet to be identified and it is still hoped that time will allow for a proper and meaningful handover to occur. It has been twenty three years since a Chief Constable was appointed from outside the organisation and there is much here that is unusual, whether in terms of governance arrangements, or in regards to how Manx politics work, that a handover would be greatly beneficial.

The IOMC has changed so much in recent years in terms of its culture, its specialist ability and the demands that it faces that it is difficult at times to recognise it as being the same body that I joined in 1984. Yet, some things have been ever present, such as the dedication of police officers and their individual and collective determination to do all that they can to keep the people of the Isle of Man safe.

My successor will face some considerable challenges and, in this short final section, I lay some of them out.

FINANCE

The effects of inflation, the damage caused to public finances by the covid-19 pandemic and the increasing pressures caused by increasingly high levels of expenditure on the health service are likely to pose a threat to the IOMC's financial health. We have been financially disciplined for a long time and we have met budget targets, even when they were really challenging. However, pressure may well grow and there may be a temptation for cuts to be made to the IOMC's budget.

It has taken several years to recover from cuts made after changes to the VAT agreement and after the 2008 financial crisis. Corporate memory may have weakened, but cutting the police service will mean cutting local policing and the impacts of this would again be considerable and would predominantly be felt by the young and the vulnerable.

The IOMC's existing budget is still insufficient in some areas: forensic digital capacity, the use of technology and the investigation of international financial crime are the most critical examples.

FUTURE ISSUES

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The IOMC's current strategic plan is due to expire in March 2023 and my successor will need to work quickly with stakeholders to create a new plan for the future. The IOMC is well placed to understand the threats that exist to public safety and it has developed a sophisticated approach to assessing and responding to these threats. Similarly, it has developed a robust process to assess its own ability to deal with those threats.

At an organisational level the biggest challenges, aside from the issue of funding, include preparing for the next Moneyval assessment and in dealing effectively with the increasing gap between the demand for digital investigations and available resources.

Whatever the IOMC's next strategic plan looks like, it will almost inevitably focus on dealing with vulnerability in the community and with tackling the threats from serious and organised crime. The former is particularly challenging. For too long the police have been seen as the agency of last resort, an agency that cannot say no. Other public bodies rely too much on the police at times and this will almost certainly have to change as demands grow and finances become tighter.

JOINING THINGS UP

If the future looks a little unclear, then there is actually something that stands out in sharp focus: the need for public services to be joined up. Too little progress has been made in establishing mixed teams of professionals who can help keep safe the most vulnerable in our community. 2021-22 actually brought some really positive signs: senior professionals in Manx Care and other bodies, who showed a willingness to try to bring about changes, but progress was slow and there is real danger that efforts will fall into an avoidable trap, which involves trying to utilise a large UK model and then shoehorn it into the island.

In previous reports I have spoken about the need for our community to focus on adverse childhood experiences. Doing so still offers the best strategic means of tackling long-term patterns of offending, abuse and problems concerned with vulnerability. Local, multi-agency teams offering support to those in need at the earliest stage remains the best way of focusing on young people, whose exposure to damaging events can have lifelong consequences.

FUTURE ISSUES

JOINING THINGS UP

Work to create multi-agency teams will inevitably run past my retirement, but there will need to be real focus on getting things done in 2023 and, almost inevitably, the IOMC will end up playing a really important role.

I am certain that existing data protection legislation will enable multi-agency teams to be established and become effective.

LEGISLATION

In the year or two ahead the IOMC will face real challenges in implementing several major new pieces of legislation. A rush of legislative activity prior to the 2021 House of Keys general election saw far-reaching, complex and comprehensive legislation being brought forward to deal with sex offences, domestic abuse, liquor licensing and the administration of the criminal justice system. I rarely use the word "unprecedented" but the scope and extent of the new laws was completely without precedent.

The IOMC has a lot of work to do to be ready for the new laws, which will take effect on a rolling basis over the course of the next two years. The implications of some parts of the Justice Reform Act are really challenging, as they will fundamentally alter many working practices connected to the preparation of cases for criminal courts. There is a real risk that those changes will bring about the opposite of what the last government actually sought, in that fewer people might be brought to justice. Extensive work has been conducted since the laws first took shape, but it is important to highlight the very real difficulties that the IOMC will face in the next year or two.

The Licensing and Public Entertainments Act is presenting significant challenges and there is a danger that its intention – to create a flexible, modern licensing regime – will in part fail because the right balance has not been found in terms of flexibility and the maintenance of standards within the trade.

In my last report I mentioned the need for legislation to help manage protests in a way that balances the right to protest, with mitigating disruption to the public. During the 2021-22 year the IOMC managed several more protests and, whilst almost every organiser worked with us to arrange their event, some did not.

FUTURE ISSUES

LEGISLATION

There is another important legislative issue: firearms laws. The government is committed to modernising firearms laws, which are old-fashioned and complex. They are increasingly unfit for purpose and there are threats to public safety arising from the way the law restricts the licensing regime, particularly in regards to the extent to which someone's health records can be accessed and in regards to the way that shotguns legislation allows certificate holders to possess as many weapons as they chose, without the police having to be told.

A DIGITIAL FUTURE

The IOMC has long had an ambitious plan to equip itself to become fully digitally enabled. A lot of work has gone on, but there must be great care taken to ensure that appropriate financial support continues to be given to this programme of work. Any reduction in funding would threaten the digital plan and any threat would inevitably weaken the IOMC's ability to deal with the challenges of a speedier justice system, and harm its ability to deal with threats to public safety.

Aside from that, the second highest scoring issue in our organisational risk register is the capacity and capability of the IOMC's digital evidence unit. Quite simply there aren't enough staff to deal with demand. A plan exists to add support, but there is no sign at all that the unit's workload will diminish in any way. Staying one step ahead of demand – and ahead of offenders – will be a real challenge for the future.

FUTURE ISSUES

ECONOMIC CRIME

The most significant issue on the organisational risk assessment is the future of our approach to economic crime. Quite simply the island as a jurisdiction must be able to satisfy its next assessment by the Moneyval body that it is effective in combating international money laundering, terrorist financing and counter-corruption. This means that all agencies need to be able to show that they have used every power at their disposal to tackle offending.

For some time work has been underway to establish a dedicated unit, which will focus only on international offences. For the purposes of Moneyval the United Kingdom is not counted as an international jurisdiction. At the time of writing a business case was being prepared to seek additional funding solely for this purpose.

Whatever else happens, there must a huge and concerted effort to show effectiveness. Irrespective of whatever else happens, this will need to be the IOMC's main priority until the middle of the decade.

POLICE OFFICER PAY

I have made mention elsewhere of the way that police officer pay has fallen in recent years. Police officers have had a real pay reduction of about 20% over the last decade and many are struggling to make ends meet. Student constables start on £24,000 a year and many young officers cannot find their way onto the housing ladder.

In recent months officers, including sergeants, have told me about how hard things are for them. Some have little or no disposable income towards the end of the month; some cannot afford to have a social life; some cannot afford dental treatment.

I accept that very many people are suffering because of the lasting effects of the pandemic and because of inflation, but the damaging consequences of low police pay could be felt across the community for a long time. Fewer officers, fewer good officers, poor morale and even, in a worst case scenario, corruption were all unintended consequences the last time police pay fell in real terms, which was in the 1970s.

ALL CHARTS & DATA

FORCE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT