

# Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel



# Annual Report

*April 2017–  
March 2018*

*Providing effective Scrutiny and Support to the  
Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner*



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## Members of the Panel

There are 10 Local Authorities in the Avon and Somerset Force area, each of which must be represented on the Panel by an elected member. It is the responsibility of each authority to ensure that the member appointed has the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience for their role on the Panel. The overall composition of all Police and Crime Panels should form a “balanced appointment” objective which takes account of, as far as is practical, both political and geographical proportionality. Reaching the balanced appointment objective is a collective responsibility of the component authorities and the Panel itself.

Somerset County Council, the Somerset District Councils and Taunton Deane Borough Council each have 1 seat. The former Avon Unitary Councils (North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Bath and North East Somerset) have 2 seats. Bristol City Council has 3 seats, having been allocated an additional seat based on the city’s population size and comparatively high crime levels.

They are joined by three Independent Co-opted Members, recruited through a competitive selection process, who have the same voting rights as the local authority Panel Members. In total there are 18 Panel Members:-

Bath and North East Somerset	Cllr Cllr Mark Shelford and Cllr Cherry Beath
Bristol City Council	Cllr Asher Craig, Cllr Mark Weston and Cllr Afzal Shah
Mendip District Council	Cllr John Parham
North Somerset Council	Cllr Nigel Ashton (Chair) and Cllr Roz Willis
Sedgemoor District Council	Cllr Ann Bown
Somerset County Council	Cllr Neil Bloomfield
South Gloucestershire Council	Cllrs Heather Goddard and Cllr Mike Drew
South Somerset District	Cllr Martin Wale (Vice-Chair)
Taunton Deane Borough Council	Cllr Jane Warmington
West Somerset District Council	Cllr Stuart Dowding
Independent Member	Andrew Sharman,
Independent Member	Joseph Mullis
Independent Member	Vacancy

A recruitment exercise to fill the vacancy above will take place over the summer.

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## Chair's Introduction

I am pleased to introduce the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel Report for 2017/18 and reflect on the Panel's challenges and achievements over the last year. Policing has undergone much change since 2012 and it is evident that there is more change to come as the powers and responsibilities of Police and Crime Commissioners expand at pace.



In February 2018, the Commissioner presented her Policing Precept proposal to the Panel which amounted to an average increase of £12 per annum on council tax bills. In reaching our decision, the Panel was mindful of the pressures faced by the taxpayers of Avon and Somerset in the current economic climate, and the impact of an increasing council tax burden. We also considered the increasingly complex demands faced by the Constabulary and the on-going deficit which has resulted from reduced funding year on year. Having balanced these conflicting drivers, the majority view of the Panel was that the Precept proposal was both fair and necessary at this time.

The increase will raise £4.6 million and the Panel welcomed the assurances from the Commissioner that this will be ringfenced to specifically recruit and maintain current numbers of Police officers and PCSOs in our Neighbourhoods. Going forward as the pressure on resources increase, there will be increasing focus on collaboration with neighbouring constabularies and partner agencies to keep our communities safe and maximise value for money. This was recognised in the Policing and Crime Act 2017 which introduced a formal duty for all three emergency services to collaborate, and in turn, a duty on the Panel to respond and scrutinise commissioned services and the allocation of resources. This, and ensuring that local policing maintains a strategic priority will be key activities for the Panel in the future.

There needs to be a constructive tension between the Commissioner and an appropriate level of challenge and support. A timely flow of information makes the Panel's Scrutiny function more effective and I would like to thank the Commissioner and her staff for their co-operation and transparency. The members that serve on the Panel have carried out a level of scrutiny that goes beyond their statutory responsibilities and I would like to place on record my thanks to those members who have gone the extra mile to contribute to this work. By dedicating additional time and drawing on specific knowledge and expertise to look in detail at performance, we hope to make a difference and provide a robust oversight of the Police and Crime Commissioner's priorities and key business areas.

In June 2018, I will step down from the position of Chairman after six years. The members of this Panel will continue to have a unique mandate to hold the Commissioner to account on your behalf and our combined efforts will ensure that Avon and Somerset gets the best possible Police service.

Nigel Ashton,  
Chairman

## Roles and Responsibilities

In each Police force area, there is an elected Police and Crime Commissioner. The Commissioner is responsible for setting the strategic objectives of the Police force and deciding how funding for local policing and crime reduction activity is allocated. The first elections took place in 2012 and Independent candidate Sue Mountstevens was elected Commissioner for Avon and Somerset. She was re-elected for another 4 year term in 2016. The role of the Commissioner is to be the voice of the public and to hold the Chief Constable to account.

The Police and Crime Panel was also established in 2012 and its purpose is to support and challenge the Commissioner's work and the decisions she takes. The Panel is made up of Councillors from the 10 Local Authorities in the force area and 3 Independent Panel Members who bring a variety of skills and experience to the role. Somerset County Council currently acts as the Host Authority for the Panel and is responsible for its administrative and officer support arrangements.

The Commissioner's plans and objectives are set out in a document called the Police and Crime Plan. This is the most important document any Police and Crime Commissioner will produce during their term of office. The Commissioner is required by law to consult the Panel on the plan and other duties connected to her role. A summary of the Panel's core responsibilities is set out below :-

- review the plans and objectives set out in the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan
- scrutinise the Commissioner's proposed Council Tax Precept - this is the money collected from council tax specifically for Policing
- hold a Confirmatory Hearing for the Commissioner's proposed appointment of a Chief Constable. The Panel has the ability to veto the appointment if this is considered necessary
- consider and resolve complaints in relation to the Commissioner's conduct.

The Panel's primary function is to hold the Commissioner to account but it is important to remember that the Panel does not hold the Chief Constable to account. If the Panel has a particular issue of concern, for example an increase in violent crime, the Panel's role is to establish how the Commissioner is addressing this at a strategic level. In turn, the Chief Constable has responsibility for implementation of the Police and Crime Plan and day to day operational matters in our communities. He is accountable to the Commissioner.

In carrying out the above duties, it is essential for the Panel to stay well informed on policy and issues affecting Policing and the Panel has dedicated officer support and appropriate developmental training to assist with this.

## Key Activities

In order for the Panel to carry out its role, there must be some consideration of operational outcomes and performance. This will help establish whether resources have been allocated appropriately which is critical when it comes to looking at the following year's budget plan. The Panel has therefore dedicated agenda time during the meeting cycle to take a more detailed look at performance against the Police and Crime Plan. By undertaking a number of mini inquiries the Panel has been able to into specific topics in more detail. These include:-

### Putting Victims First

The Commissioner's vision for victims set out in the Police and Crime Plan is :-

*"I want to improve victim's satisfaction with and influence over the services they receive. I will support a joined-up approach to service delivery that has the voice of victims at its heart. I will be a fierce advocate for all victims, particularly those that are vulnerable, intimidated or persistently targeted, victims of serious offences such as domestic abuse, sexual abuse and hate crime."*

The Panel studied in detail the work in progress to address the lack of joined up services for victims and the efforts being made to make the voice of victims heard in the criminal justice process. The Lighthouse Victim Care Service was developed in 2013 in response to the Commissioner's new responsibility to commission local referral and support services for victims of crime. Operating from three 'hubs' in Keynsham, Bristol and Bridgwater, its aim is to provide a single point of contact for victims from first point of contact with the police, through the investigation phase and on to the end of the criminal justice process.

Inevitably, this service was a key line of inquiry for the Panel who looked for assurance in three principal ways – the means by which victims can access the service, the experience of victims who engage in the process, and the training available for the staff responsible for interaction with victims. The Panel feels these elements are fundamental to the success of the service and should run parallel to a robust performance framework that focusses on quality assurance and monitoring. The audits conducted by senior staff on different workstreams, the monitoring of staff interaction with victims, and the review of departmental performance by the Force's Continuous Improvement Board have provided valuable insight into the service and areas that require improvement.

### Cyber Crime

In 2016 the Panel was aware that the number of recorded offences of cybercrime had increased by 91%. At the time, the Constabulary did not have a dedicated cyber-crime unit

but a wide-ranging capacity within various different units to deal with different elements of cyber related criminality. The Panel was briefed on the high level challenges this crime presents for the Constabulary, particularly in terms of child protection and economic crime which often requires the pursuit of offenders outside of the UK. However, the Panel also sought assurance that the high volume lower level frauds occurring regularly in our communities should also form part of everyday policing. The point was made that the internal reporting boundaries between the Constabulary and Action Fraud can be meaningless to the average person and do not take into consideration the economic and personal loss to victims who are frequently elderly and vulnerable. The Panel recommended that Work around education and prevention should be prioritised in order to protect our communities and that front line officers and PCSOs are trained to deliver the appropriate level of services to the public when these reports are made.

Work has continued and more information can be found in the Link Member section below.

### Anti-Social Behaviour

The Panel and the Commissioner agree that partner agencies coming together in a “One Team” approach is crucial to addressing the underlying causes of anti-social behavior. It is evident that the co-location of Police and Local Authority services is working well especially in the case of on-going neighbourhood disputes that require both Police and Local Authority intervention. CCTV continues to provide a solid evidence base in addition to a written log of incidents which people are routinely advised to keep. The Panel believes that training should be a key element of the partnership approach to this problem but recognise that individual partners must be alert to this and take responsibility for the training of their staff.

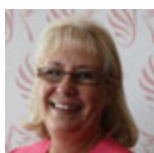
The Panel was able to clarify the powers available to the Police around fly tipping which a number of Panel members report is on the increase in their communities. The law requires any action taken by the Police and the courts in response to fly tipping to be proportionate and supported by sufficient evidence. Accordingly, the court has power to confiscate the vehicle of an offender, but this happens infrequently because it is not considered a proportionate response in many cases. However, it is apparent that Magistrates are becoming increasingly mindful of the impact on the community and this is being reflected in the fines imposed and recent tagging of offenders.



## Panel Link Member Roles

With the support of the Commissioner, the Panel has established a Link Panel Member role to draw on the knowledge, expertise and interests of Panel Members and influence the work of the Commissioner in key areas of business. In doing so, we hope to develop the role of the Panel in proactive Scrutiny work and support the development of strong and effective partnership working with Local Authorities, Community Safety Partnerships and the wider partners at a local level.

This method of involvement also strengthens accountability and transparency by inviting Link Members to report back to the full Panel Membership on activities and key issues in their area of business. Some roles are well established and others are in the early stages of development.



### Mental Health

#### Cllr Roz Willis and Joseph Mullis

Partner agencies in Avon and Somerset have joined forces to ensure that those with mental health problems get the care they need. In 2016, the Control Room Triage service was launched, bringing together local police forces, fire brigades and the local NHS. It places experienced mental health professionals in the Force Communications Centre and Bridgewater Custody Suite to offer real time advice and guidance to support Police and Fire Service officers who respond to incidents relating to mental ill-health.

The Panel welcomed involvement in this and in 2017 Councillor Willis and Joseph Mullis (Independent Member) took part in visits to ascertain the progress of the initiative and to identify the challenges and successes of the service and its impact on the Constabulary.

Both members feel it is clear that the placement of mental health professionals within the Control Room and Bridgewater Custody Suite is having a positive effect with dealing with individuals who present themselves with a mental illness or vulnerability. A number of concerns remain apparent surrounding the use of Section 136 of the Mental Health Act which allows a Police officer to take a person displaying symptoms of mental health symptoms to a place of safety. It was established during the visits that there are limitations

on how and when the Police can use this power and that repeated use may be a sign that people are not receiving appropriate support from local services after being discharged from hospital.

In the space of a year, the service dealt with over 500 referrals, 449 of which related to individuals who were already known to services. This is encouraging and it is felt that further analysis of the anticipated benefits and the desired outcomes of the service would provide a benchmark of progress and enable gaps in service provision to be identified.

Areas identified for future monitoring include a review of the benefits of shared decision-making between the Police and NHS, establishing if information sharing has improved, and if Police involvement in mental health crises has actually reduced. However early findings resonate a welcome addition of assisting the Police with people presenting with a mental health illness or vulnerability.

The Link Members thank OPCC and Constabulary staff for their assistance during the visits and the information provided which helped with the writing of this report.

The Panel would also like to acknowledge the Commissioner's on-going dedication to this priority. In recent years, progress has included the creation of a Crises Care Concordat with partner agencies, the provision of alternative places of safety for children and young people in mental health crisis and specialist training for officers. The Panel welcomes a further commitment in relation to detention following a Section 136 arrest which means that a person in crisis will not be detained in a custody suite unless the circumstances are exceptional.

## Development of the Police and Crime Plan Cllr Asher Craig

Councillor Craig contributed to the plan's development and took part in the OPCC's Strategic Board meetings over 2016 where she set out her aspirations for the OPCC to engage more widely with communities. As her local authority's political lead on equalities and culture, she was keen to lend her experience to the process and ensure that the plan was realistic as well as ambitious.

Councillor Craig made a number of recommendations over the course of the process. These included the need for community cohesion and more effective partnership working to be included within the plan's objectives and the inclusion of 'courteously' as part of the service promise. It was recommended that the workforce should receive the training needed to

perform their duties fairly and respectfully, including unconscious bias training and effective communication skills. Councillor Craig also agreed to facilitate opportunities for the Commissioner to promote the plan through local forums and Neighbourhood Partnerships.

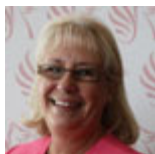
A variation to the plan was recently brought to the Panel and the plan as a whole is at an assurance stage. There's now a timeframe for the reprisal of the role with potential for Councillor Craig's involvement in both the Police and Crime Needs Assessment work over the summer and future Strategic Board meetings where the plan will be finalised before it comes back to the Panel in January 2019.



### Cyber Crime - Cllr John Parham

Councillor Parham has contributed to this work area since 2014 and feels that education and prevention is key to protecting our communities. The force now has a dedicated Digital Investigation Unit (DIU), a dedicated Cyber Crime Officer and is developing a new Vulnerable Victims of Fraud initiative. This particular initiative focusses on the crimes that are almost never detected, highlighting the importance of education as a long-term crime prevention approach. The Constabulary regards the victims affected by this crime as a safeguarding issue and practical help can be made available in the form of a review of a niche case or a tailored consultation for a victim or a person at risk. The Cyber Crime Officer can also provide over-the-phone online safety support in relation to telephone scams, romance fraud and software service frauds.

There is Panel oversight potential in terms of the DIU and Councillor Parham will visit the unit in the near future and identify a specific theme for the Panel to progress. This work area clearly provides a valuable way for the Panel to gain insight into who is being victimised, an understanding of the pressures faced by the Constabulary and the steps being taken to tackle cyber crime both locally and nationally.



### Vulnerability – Cllr Roz Willis

The Panel recognises that supporting victims throughout the whole process can lead to a reduction in abandoned trials and better criminal justice outcomes. In support of these

endeavours, a Link Member is currently working with the Victims Recommissioning Board which has been established to oversee the recommissioning process as current contracts come to the end of their duration. This has provided an opportunity for Councillor Willis to review the consultation feedback emerging from the Victims Needs Assessment which was carried out to inform the process and consider the gaps in services which predominantly reflect issues of demand in some areas. It was also possible to feed into the board's Engagement Plan designed to receive feedback on the Commissioner's commissioning intentions and inform the final Commissioning Plan and specifications. The OPCC welcomed and acted on the recommendation that valuable feedback could be provided by bodies with a vested interest in the services such as the Sustainable and Transformation Partnerships, CCGs and Parish Councils - bodies with links and close ties with the local community and voluntary sector that are alert to the services which are vital to the area. Councillor Willis will continue to participate in a series of board meetings in place across 2018 and early 2019 to take this work forward.

Another strand of the work around vulnerability involves service delivery assurance following the tragic and troubling death of a member of the Bristol community in 2013. Councillor Willis was given an opportunity to participate in a Multi-Agency Enquiry Day focussing on the support of vulnerable people, the prevention of victimisation and data sharing between responsible authorities. This achieved its dual purpose of providing assurance that appropriate lessons had been learned and that further work is still necessary in order to realise future opportunities for further improvement.

Councillor Willis was consulted on the Commissioner's final report which includes actions to drive improvements for the future such as the further embedding of good practice and lessons learnt, the removal of obstructions to joint working, and a focus on secure data exchange to encourage openness and foster vital trust between partner agencies.

## Representative Workforce

### Cllr Asher Craig and Cllr Afzal Shah

Councillor Craig and Councillor Shah strongly support measures to ensure a more diverse workforce and successful Black Minority Ethnic progression in the workforce. In 2016, the Commissioner held a series of meetings with the Constabulary to develop plans for this priority and make the service more representative of the communities it serves. A Police Representative Workforce Team was formed and a 'positive action' approach adopted to

identify and remove barriers and issues to the recruitment, retention and progression of people from ‘under-represented’ groups.

The Link Members welcomed the Diversity and Inclusion workshop held to assess all of the Constabulary’s work on Equalities and Diversity, including how to better engage the staff associations around this priority. Progress has been evident in the form of Diversity Champions appointed from within the Constabulary to provide much needed guidance and mentoring to job applicants. A new Scrutiny of Use of Police Powers Panel has been formed with 50% BME members and “Know Your Rights” materials have been refreshed and circulated.

Strategically, more recent achievements include the introduction of a dedicated Diversity Steering Group looking predominantly at police officer recruitment including the barriers and the progress of positive action. This is welcomed and has participation from all the staff associations including the Black Police Association. Participation in the Superintendents Direct Entry is being considered as well as the Fast Track scheme which will focus on BME recruits. The First new Diversity and Inclusion Board took place on in January 2018.



## Business Crime – Andrew Sharman

My experience as a practitioner in the field of business crime reduction has led to my appointment as the link member on business crime for the Police and Crime panel. With a decade of experience in running a business crime reduction partnership, I am still involved in representing and advising police and partnerships through my work as the South West Business Crime Centre; chairing South West Businesses Against Crime; and representing the region on the National Association of Business Crime Partnerships.

Business crime represents almost a quarter of reported to Avon and Somerset, the vast majority of that being theft, particularly against the retail sector. The challenges for Police and businesses alike is how to counter these threats in the face of reduced resources and funds.

Issues such as county lines drug gangs and organised criminal groups are impacting on retail and rural business sectors particularly. The ever present scourge of cyber crime and fraud are also areas that require stronger prevention and reporting from business to enable law enforcement to bring those committing offences to justice.

Policing in our town and city centres has less visibility due to the impact of cuts and this has led to a big increase in concerns around aggressive begging; anti-social behaviour and alcohol or drug related disorder.

The simplest way to present the key elements of this work area is to list the positive and negatives. Positives include:-

- \* “Local” business crime issues are being dealt with by the Neighbourhood Policing and Partnerships Directorate (NPPD) whilst cybercrime, fraud, and organised crime is being handled by the Investigations Directorate or Regional Organised Crime Units.
- \* Businesses are now able to upload CCTV and report crimes directly onto the police website. This frees officers from time spent collecting and the age old technology issues on playback.
- \* A new national standard for business crime reduction schemes has been introduced. The Metropolitan Police led National Business Crime Centre are pushing all 43 services to participate. It is hoped that through every shop and pub watch demonstrating compliance following assessment, it will enable businesses and police to share data with greater confidence.
- \* The PCC’s Rural and Business Crime Forums continue to meet to bring key stakeholders together to share best practice and problem solve. Recent topics have included violence against retail staff; rough sleeping; and better information sharing.
- \* The National Farmers Union reported a 1% drop in claims for rural crime in Avon & Somerset in 2017.
- \* Recorded business Crime was down 5% year on year, with an obvious exception cited below. Business Crime is notoriously under reported, so a drop may be as a consequence of proactive policing approach or changes in the financial threshold for crimes to be accepted by the service. Research is needed to prove the reasons behind the drop but it is seen as a positive.

The negatives include:-

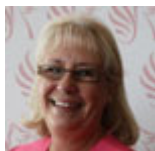
- \* The introduction of the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulations may impact on information sharing. Risk averse businesses and Police services may withhold vital data which will impact on successful prevention and detection. This should not be an issue if the correct processes and security measures are in place, however it could present a major obstacle in cohesive partnership working going forwards.
- \* Lack of co-ordinated and compliant business crime initiatives in operation within the service area. Currently, only two schemes are accredited (Bath and District Crime Reduction Partnership and the Weston Town Centre Partnership). This exposes the service and many of the other schemes, where best practice and compliance may be an issue. Work is needed to assess and ensure that all are compliant to prevent any potential issues.

\* The decision by the Police and Sedgemoor District Council to replace the existing accredited partnership has created many issues for traders in Bridgewater and Taunton. Reports of theft and violence have increased. Losses for traders have increased exponentially. Critical key locations are not participating, as they were previously, exposing community safety vulnerabilities. The absence of information sharing has also been acutely felt. This is reflected in Police recorded data. Business Crime across Avon and Somerset dropped by 5% last year, except in Somerset West where the figure rose by an alarming 5%, a gap of 10% compared to the rest of the service area.

\* Cyber and fraud awareness is still low, despite an abundance of preventative information being readily available. Businesses need to take more action to stop falling victim to such crimes.

## Reflections of Panel Members

I am currently Vice-Chair of the Panel and Chair of the Complaints Sub- Committee. As an experienced Councillor and ex Police officer, I feel it's important to bring a balanced view to the Scrutiny of the Commissioners role. I'm keenly aware of the expectations of the public in terms of visible and Neighbourhood Policing and alert to their concerns around current crime trends. I believe the Panel should support the Commissioner in her elected role and act as 'a critical friend'.



As local Councillors, we are familiar with our own wards and we are alert to the cultural issues within our communities. However, being a member on the Panel is very helpful in understanding the issues across the Avon and Somerset force area. It enables me to fully understand and learn from other colleagues about the issues affecting Bristol down to Minehead, both from a Council perspective and a Policing one.

Panel members know their patches and draw naturally on their collective expertise, experiences and interests to ask probing questions, and challenge, inform, influence and support the commissioner in her role. There are further opportunities to discuss current community concerns, appraise initiatives, give and receive feedback and be updated on particular police matters and trends. The link members have been able to research a number of topics to provide additional information and context. The Panel also needs to agree the police budget and address complaints occasionally made against the Commissioner. We help the Commissioner reflect on community concerns and then scrutinise what the commissioner puts in place with the Police to address these.

Coming from an essentially rural area, West Somerset's imperatives are different to the more urban areas. Those in isolated areas are particularly vulnerable. Shop and shed theft need be far higher up the agenda as it is the kindergarten of criminals where they learn skills and how to circumvent the law. Rural crime is low thanks to the good works of the Rural Crime Team but "Antis" is still able to disrupt some legitimate pursuits. We welcome collaboration in the field of "Blue light" services and our electorate see this year's Council Tax increase for the Police as essential – the Panel has played an excellent role in its scrutiny of the Budget and ensuring value for money. Putting victims at the heart of the criminal justice system can be misinterpreted by the public as downgrading the pursuit and prosecution of criminals, and Cyber Crime is often not seen as the Police issue it is - which is regrettable given the eye-watering sums involved.



"This has been a challenging year with police budgets being reduced, an increasing population and areas of crime greatly increasing such as Cyber Crime which has increased by over 90%. I was pleased to support the increase for the Police precept as I have chaired the Community Safety Partnership in South Gloucestershire for seven years and know what it means to my community to be safe and to



feel safe. I am also delighted that we are maintaining Neighbourhood policing as this is greatly valued by communities, and although we will not see the Bobby on the street we will see them working with new technology in the local supermarkets and Coffee shops in our areas saving them time having to return to base to write out reports. In South Gloucestershire we are welcoming police working within our council buildings throughout the district. This means that teams dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour or Domestic violence and other concerns can be solved in situ rather than setting up meetings and venues outside. This will greatly benefit our residents.”

## Challenges ahead and looking to the future

As the Commissioner’s primary “check and balance” in between elections, the Panel is

aware of its important role in challenging and supporting the Commissioner on your behalf. Our shared objective for the future is to influence and impact positively on the decisions that matter. There are still improvements to make in the area of proactive scrutiny, but we have worked constructively with the Commissioner in recent years and supported her in the implementation of strategic priorities.

### **A review of Police and Crime Panels**

A national assessment undertaken by Grant Thornton looked at challenges and opportunities for Police and Crime Panels. Their survey found that 96% of Panels assessed themselves as being at least moderately effective and 82% of Police and Crime Commissioners considered Panels to be at least occasionally effective in challenging and supporting their work. The national findings also suggest that the main barriers to Panel effectiveness are limited powers and its funding from the Home Office. The report promotes the use of sub-groups and “Issue Champions” both of which we have developed for the Panel’s complaint function and to strengthen our scrutiny of the Police and Crime Plan.

### **Representation for Police and Crime Panels**

As PCC responsibilities grow, our ability to operate effectively and maintain public confidence is key and we feel now is a good time to assist Panels in developing and stepping up to the challenges that lie ahead. Following a review and discussion at the fifth annual Police and Crime Panel Conference, we have supported the formation of an LGA linked Special Interest Group that will build on existing strengths and provide a channel through which collective concerns and representations can be made to Government. This will achieve a greater representative voice to the Home Office, improve collaboration and networking and assist with cost effective training.

### **2018/19 Work Programme**

A work planning meeting takes place annually with the OPCC. In addition to our statutory responsibilities and building on Link Members roles, the Panel is keen to look in more detail at the Constabulary’s Neighbourhood Policing model, performance strategies around Stop and Search and the growth of cyber-enabled crime, together with strategies being developed to reduce this offence. A Panel training day is also being organised for September 2018 and will include Fire Authority governance and the reform of the Police complaints regime (see below).

In December 2017, the Commissioner informed the Panel that £3.2m in Home Office funding had been secured to carry out a multi-agency data analytics project in Avon and Somerset. Using computer systems, this will mark a change in the way the Constabulary manages its data to draw conclusions and identify patterns. This marks a further step in collaboration with other agencies and the Panel welcomed an invitation to contribute to this work area and developing the role of a new Link Member.

The Government’s Serious Violent Strategy was published in April 2018 emerging from round table discussions with the Home Secretary, PCCs and the Policing Minister. It covers all serious violent crime including knife crime and it is the Government’s intention to ensure

that PCCs evidence their response to serious violence in their Police and Crime Plans. The Home Office has advised that this workstream is currently being scoped out and data will be made available later in the year to assist Panels in holding PCCs to account.

### **Stop and Search**

Use of stop and search is subject to close scrutiny through national inspection regimes and local oversight arrangements which means this is a key work area for the Commissioner. At a Panel briefing which looked at the powers, rights and performance with respect to stop and search, the Panel was advised that despite a significant drop in the use of stop and search as a tactic in recent years, the inappropriate or disproportionate use of powers remains a concern.

Used appropriately, it is apparent that stop and search powers provide an effective tool to protect the public and prevent and detect crime. There is a key role for the Commissioner to provide robust oversight of performance and appropriate use of stop and search, and promote information to provide transparency, improved practice and increased confidence in the communities of Avon and Somerset. The Panel welcomed the briefing provided and has requested a more detailed breakdown of performance data and outcomes to assist in the scrutiny of this work area.

### **Police and Crime Act 2017**

The reform of the Police Complaints system will result in the Commissioner having an explicit statutory duty to hold the Chief Officer to account for the performance of the complaints system locally. She will also be required to take on responsibility for handling appeals by members of the public which are currently dealt with by the Chief Constable.

Assurances have been provided by the Home Office that there is no policy intent for Panels to take on any additional responsibilities, either as a further appellate body for the public, or to hold the Commissioner to account on any wider issues than currently fall within a Panel's remit. However, the reform introduces a duty for the Panel to retain oversight of how this function is being delivered. Given the enhanced role of the Commissioner, it is also possible that the Panel will see a rise in the number of complaints it receives against the Commissioner. For example, individuals who are not content with the outcome of their appeal through a genuine belief that the appeal has been dealt with improperly. As a Panel, we will be required to decide which complaints we accept as complaints about the Commissioner's conduct in accordance with our complaints remit, rather than dissatisfaction with an appeal decision made by the Commissioner.

In the meantime, the Government has announced its intention to provide guidance to clarify the definition of a complaint and the parameters of how the Panel should seek to resolve them. This will include the introduction the power of investigation for Police and Crime Panels in relation to non-serious complaints.

