



Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

Hosted by Somerset County Council Democratic Services



Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel

Wednesday 11th December 2019

Present:

Local Authority and Independent Member Representatives:

Peter Abraham (Bristol City Council), Neil Bloomfield (South Somerset Council), Richard Brown (Chair/Independent Member), Asher Craig (Bristol City Council), Janet Keen (Sedgemoor District Council), Franklin Owusu-Antwi (South Gloucestershire Council), Andrew Sharman (Independent Member), Heather Shearer (Mendip District Council), Alastair Singleton (Bath and North East Somerset), Pat Trull (South Gloucestershire Council), Richard Westwood (North Somerset Council), Josh Williams (Somerset County Council) Roz Willis (North Somerset Council).

Host Authority Support Staff

Patricia Jones – Lead Officer

Police and Crime Commissioner and Support Staff:

Sue Mountstevens - Police and Crime Commissioner

Mark Simmonds - Chief Financial Officer

Joanna Coulon - Criminal Justice and Commissioning Manager

Ben Valentine – Strategic Planning & Performance Officer

1. Apologies for absence

Chris Booth (Somerset West and Taunton Council), Joseph Mullis (Independent Member).
Afzal Shah (Bristol City Council) and Andy Wait (Bath and North East Somerset Council)

2. Membership

The Panel agreed that the recruitment process to fill the Independent Member vacancy should commence after the Panel's last meeting in March 2020.

3. Public Question Time

None.

4. Declarations of Interest

None.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 8th October 2019

Resolved – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th October 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6. Chairs Business

None.

7. Commissioner's Update Report

The Commissioner thanked Members for prioritising the Panel meeting ahead of the General Election and reported as follows:-

- **CEO OPCC** – the Panel was updated on the recruitment process to appoint an interim CEO pending the PCC elections in May 2020. It was noted that John Smith's last day of service was subject to the start date of the new appointee and that the salary remained the same. It was confirmed that the Vice-Chair Andrew Sharman and Councillor Pat Trull would be participating in the Stakeholder Panel element of the appointments process following an invitation from the Commissioner to take part. The Panel noted that the Confirmatory Hearing to review the proposed appointment (required in accordance with Schedule 1 part 10 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011) would be held on 8th January 2020 and within the statutory three weeks required by the Act.
- **Independent Custody Visiting (ICV)** – the Panel noted that it was proving a challenge to recruit to the ICV scheme which enables volunteers to make unannounced checks on the welfare and entitlements of detainees in the 3 custody units. The Commissioner sought the assistance of the Panel in highlighting the opportunity to get involved with councillor/local authority networks and this was agreed <https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Take-Part/Custody-Visiting.aspx>
- **Reducing Reoffending** – the Commissioner updated the Panel on the Resolve Programme jointly funded by partners to tackle reoffending and develop interventions in Avon and Somerset. It was confirmed that funding for the programme's lead officer (Sophie Baker) had been secured for a further year. The Panel heard that recruitment was also underway for an officer lead on the Regional Reducing Reoffending Board. This was currently chaired by the Commissioner to develop a regional approach which was strongly supported the Ministry of Justice (MOJ).
- **Serious Violence Strategy** – the Commissioner highlighted the delivery work currently underway in the OPCC and at local authority level including the development of Violence Reduction Units formed by a government funding pot of £1.16m. The Commissioner emphasised that partnership working was essential to take this work area forward and invited Panel Members to retain oversight of the work being led by their respective LA contacts (to be circulated by email).

- **National Probation Service (NPS)** - as previously notified to the Panel, all offender management was being brought back into the NPS and the Commissioner continued to represent the South West in working with the Ministry of Justice and NPS to develop the future service. The Commissioner was asked if she was confident that the review of the management of offenders across Avon and Somerset would bring the changes required. The Commissioner stated that on-going work with the NPS and the Community Rehabilitation Company (responsible for managing low and medium risk offenders) was going well and she was confident that the reforms proposed by the Ministry of Justice would bring about the changes necessary to transform the service.
- **Road Safety Funding** - The Commissioner reiterated that road safety was a prevailing priority for local communities and urged Panel Members to point their constituents in the direction of the OPCC and the funding currently available for a range of road safety related projects: <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/apply/police-community-trust/road-safety-fund/>
- **Mental Health Triage Services** – following a recent visit to The Lighthouse which took place as part of the Link Member quarterly briefings process, the Commissioner was invited to comment on the challenges currently being experienced in delivering the mental health triage service based in the control room at Police Headquarters. The Commissioner confirmed she was alert to the concerns around staffing and the OPCC was working with the CEO of NHS Clinical Commissioning Group to remodel the service.
- **Merchandising and Consultation with the Public** – the Commissioner emphasised the importance of working with communities and familiarising young people with the Police. Referring to recent adverse media reports, she stated that she was satisfied that a spend of £12,000 on publicity over an eight year period was a necessary and vital investment to establish and build vital links. This expenditure was supported by the Panel in the context of the overall budget and the benefits gained by strengthening Police ties with the community.
- **Martock** - Councillor Bloomfield advised the Commissioner that the Parish Council remained unanimously concerned about the level of Policing in Martock. He drew attention to the enhanced security presence funded by the Parish Council as an additional resource to address increasing reports of anti-social behaviour, burglary and damage to property. It was suggested that smaller rural communities were suffering from an inequitable allocation of Police resources. It was noted that the Parish Council was considering the feasibility of civil remedies to pursue offenders and the legalities of purchasing a property to house a permanent beat officer. The Commissioner was asked to consider engaging in talks with the Chief Constable to establish if the latter was a viable solution.

The Commissioner stated that she respected the private investment in security that Martock had chosen to make and urged Councillor Bloomfield to continue discussions with the Police to find a mutually agreeable solution. She added that a joint parish meeting with the Parish Council, Police and the public was a good idea as this would enable intelligence to be shared and safeguarding concerns to be discussed.

- **Police Pensions and Injury on Duty Awards** – the Chair referred to the update provided at the last meeting setting out arrangements in relation to Police pensions, ill-health retirements and the review of Injury on Duty Awards. There was a brief discussion regarding

the outcome of a successful legal claim brought by Police pensioners following a series of reviews of injury on duty awards. It was clarified that £111k represented the total legal costs emerging from the case. It was noted that the settlement to claimants remained confidential.

Action - an update on the status of the mental health triage service to be provided to the March Link Member briefing.

8. Performance

Ben Valentine, OPCC Strategic Planning & Performance Officer introduced the first of a new performance report with related data which had been developed to enable the Panel to carry out its oversight of performance against the Police and Crime Plan. As agreed, it was confirmed that the report would be prepared on a quarterly basis in line with the financial year and produced by the end of the first month of the next quarter:-

- Quarter 1 July
- Quarter 2 October
- Quarter 3 January
- Quarter 4 April

The Panel examined a range of measures separated into:-

Success Measures- where data alone indicated how well the Constabulary or other service was performing and provided a snapshot of performance during the quarter in conjunction with the trend over a longer period of time. The Panel noted that it translated into a three tier performance grading based on defined ranges of expected performance - exceeds expectations, meets expectations and below expectations.

Diagnostic Measures - where conclusions could not be drawn from looking at the data and required further analysis to understand if any change was good or bad – for example numbers of recorded crimes where an increase could look like more crime was being committed but could also be attributable to better internal crime recording or an increase in public confidence to report crime.

It was noted that a central dashboard of the most important measures underpinned the performance framework and would be reported in full to the Panel on each occasion.

The Commissioner stated that there had been significant improvements in the Constabulary's recording system however noted that positive developments to make recording obligations more victim-focused had also led to the inclusion of crimes that may have limited prospect of successful investigation. HMICFRS's most recent inspection of the Constabulary's performance was not yet in the public domain but expectations were that the Force had moved on from the previous assessment of "requires improvement".

Call Handling

It was noted that the Constabulary's 999 call handling rate was one of the best in the country but the 101 abandonment rate required improvement. It was anticipated that over 28,000 calls would be taken over the Christmas period with a proportion of these calls relating to loneliness

and isolation which invariably tied up the time of call handlers and the local Neighbourhood Teams.

It was accepted that this was a multi-agency challenge and figures by district would be provided to the Panel if this was possible. The approach adopted by staff in the Communications Centre was commended by the Panel as both sensitively handled and reassuring following a recent visit.

Representative Workforce

The Panel noted the work being undertaken to achieve a representative workforce. It was suggested that “going in the right direction” was a more appropriate assessment than “strong”. In favour of setting an incremental target, it was reported that Bristol City Council’s method of performance monitoring required all partner agencies to provide base line statistics and to demonstrate an upward trend at intervals.

The Commissioner advised the Panel that outreach workers had been employed to reach and encourage members of the public from under-represented communities. This was described as a long-term investment and benefits were anticipated over time given the short term would only evidence small improvements in the overall numbers picture.

However, it was accepted that the top line figure was not where it needed to be and discussions were taking place with the Police and Crime Board.

Response Times

In terms of timeliness of response, it was reported that this was weakest area across the performance framework and a high-level priority with a number of strands of strategic review being pulled together to better understand how improvements could be made.

The Panel was advised that the three tier system operated as follows:-

- Immediate – Burglary or assault in progress
- Priority High – Road accident/obstruction
- Standard – Anti-Social Behaviour

The Panel reported that the location of Police estates and fleet were important issues for residents and often prompted questions when these changed. The Commissioner was asked if the location of these resources influenced response times. The Commissioner advised the Panel that the Constabulary adopted a “borderless” Policing approach using mobile laptops and technology. However, estates and vacancies were significant factors because there were fewer officers, greater distances to cover and fluctuations in demand.

More generally, it was noted that demand had strong seasonal trends and the same pattern each year, peaking in July and at its lowest in February

Performance by Outcome

The Panel noted a small reduction in Quarter 2 residential Burglary figures and asked if this trend was likely to continue alongside the general improvement in the positive outcome rate set out as 16.1%, in the report and above the top of the performance range. The Commissioner stated that she anticipated that a further reduction would be evident over time on the basis that Operation Remedy was meeting expectations in terms of residential burglary and a number of persistent offenders had been convicted.

It was recognised that the positive outcome rate in general terms fluctuated but the trend was considered stable and the Panel was assured that continuous improvement was a priority for the Constabulary.

Although not sufficiently marked to be a trend, the Panel noted the decreasing number of people taking part in Active Citizenship. It was agreed that an update on the different categories of engagement and participation in crime prevention activities would be provided to the Panel where possible.

It was noted that the local public confidence measure was currently 1% point under the performance range and therefore classified as stable but below expectation.

It was recognised that the annual staff survey was as primary measure of how the Constabulary treats its workforce. The Panel noted the key questions asked and the results from this year compared to last which showed substantial improvement. There was general agreement that all employers needed to take active steps to establish the right culture and inevitably this was a challenging exercise.

The Commissioner was asked to comment on the strategy in place to instil the right values and develop the culture. The Commissioner agreed to report on this more fully at the next meeting and made reference to the road shows and talks across the organisation carried out by the Chief Constable.

The Panel drew attention to representations made by a victim support worker at The Lighthouse who felt that one to one meetings with managers were being lost in an effort to clear the backlog of work. The Commissioner stated that the value of one to one meetings had been recognised and the Force was working hard in this area.

Recruitment

Following the Government announcement to fund the recruitment of 20,000 additional police officers over the next 3 years, the Panel was advised that the specific allocation of officers to Avon and Somerset had been announced as 137 by the end of the next financial year. In total, 360 officers would be recruited each year over 3 years and the organisation's vision and culture would be embedded as part of their training. This opportunity for real progress was welcomed by the Panel.

The Chair stated that it would be useful for the Panel to understand the specifics of the performance range and clarity about boundaries and timescales given it was not apparent what data was used to state that an incident would be attended within a particular timeframe or why a Positive Outcome rate of 16.1% across all offences exceeded expectations.

The Panel was advised that it was important to understand that targets were not used but the measure was taken from how the Force had performed over the last year. The aspiration was to be better than 16.1% but the Constabulary was not setting performance targets and instead aimed to tap into a continuously improving performance ethos. The goalposts would move accordingly as performance improved.

The Panel suggested that useful comparisons could be made with a similar force such as Devon and Cornwall and was advised that only a small amount of data was available to compare.

Action:-

- (1) An update on the different categories of citizen engagement and participation in crime prevention activities to be provided to the Panel where possible.**
- (2) Additional information/strategy in place to instil the right values and develop the culture within the organisation to be provided to the next meeting.**

9. Complaints Sub-Committee

Following the submission of a report to the last meeting, the Panel gave consideration to its role in handling complaints against the Commissioner and how the governance of Complaints Sub-Committee should work on a practical level in future in the future.

Based on detailed discussion at the Panel's Pre-Meeting, the Panel:-

- Noted the amendments to the Terms of Reference based on amendments agreed at the 8th October Panel meeting
- Determined that membership should comprise a minimum size membership of 3 Panel Members to include Andrew Sharman, Heather Shearer, ? and the Chair
- Formally appointed Andrew Sharman to the role of Link Member for complaints.
- Endorsed the future process for the complaints handling system following a meeting with the OPCC on 5th October 2019 as set out in detail in the report

It was noted that the opportunity for dip sampling agreed between the OPCC and the Panel in 2012 remained open to any Panel Members who may have concerns about any complaint and wished to view the relevant files.

10. Standing Complaints Report

The Panel considered and noted a report of the Chief Executive (OPCC) providing an overview of all complaints made against the Commissioner.

Andrew Sharman provided a status update on live complaints and this was noted.

Changes to the Complaints System

There was a brief discussion relating to the reform of the complaints system and enhanced PCC responsibilities Under Part 2 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 which included an explicit function of Commissioners to hold their Chief Constable to account in relation to the force's handling of complaints locally and to review complaints heard internally by forces.

The Panel noted that essentially if a complainant was not satisfied with outcome of force's handling, they now must appeal to the PCC (not to the Chief Constable, as currently happens). Whilst the Home Office has said that the guidance will make clear there would be no further right of appeal to Panels, there was general agreement that complainants would still seek to

follow this route and the number of appeals to the PCC as a result of the increased responsibilities will be reflected to some degree in the number of appeals to Panels.

The Panel noted that the new legislation and duties would take effect on 1st February 2020 in accordance with the update provided to the last meeting.

11. Work Programme

The Panel noted the work programme.

12. Video Presentation

The video created by the SW Regional Organised Crime Unit and made available to Chief Constables and PCCs across the South West to show at their respective Police and Crime Panel meetings would be shown at the Panel meeting on 11th March 2020.

13. Date of Next Meeting

8th January 2020 at 10.30am (Confirmatory Hearing) and 4th February 2020 at 10.30am -The Deane House, Somerset West and Taunton Council

(The meeting ended at 12.30pm)

Chair