



Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

Hosted by Somerset County Council Democratic Services



Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel

23rd June 2020 (11:00) ('Remote' meeting held under the provisions of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

Present:

Local Authority and Independent Member Representatives:

Peter Abraham (Bristol City Council), Chris Booth (Somerset West and Taunton Council), Richard Brown (Chair/Independent Member), Asher Craig (Bristol City Council), Janet Keen (Sedgemoor District Council), Joseph Mullis (Independent Member), Franklin Owusu-Antwi (South Gloucestershire Council), Afzal Shah (Bristol City Council), Andrew Sharman (Vice-Chair/Independent Member), Heather Shearer (Mendip Council), Alastair Singleton (Bath and North East Somerset), Pat Trull (South Gloucestershire Council), Andy Wait (Bath and North East Somerset Council), Martin Wale (South Somerset Council), Richard Westwood (North Somerset Council).

Host Authority Support Staff:

Scott Wooldridge - Monitoring Officer
Jamie Jackson - Strategic Manager, Democratic Services
Andrew Randell - Senior Democratic Services Officer

Police and Crime Commissioner and Support Staff:

Sue Mountstevens - Police and Crime Commissioner
Mark Simmonds - OPCC Interim Chief Executive Officer
Paul Butler – Interim Chief Finance Officer
Ben Valentine – OPCC Performance Officer

1. Apologies for absence

An apology was received by Councillor Josh Williams

2. Election of Chair

Proposed by Councillor Shah and seconded by Councillor Shearer Richard Brown was duly appointed as the Chair

3. Election of Vice-Chair

Proposed by Andrew Sharman and seconded by Councillor Asher Criag Councillor Heather Shearer was duly appointed as the Vice-Chair

4. Panel Membership

The Monitoring Officer introduced the item detailing the Panel Membership of the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

At the June 2019 AGM the Panel agreed the Panel Membership report for 2019/20, however within that report it was noted that some panel members were entering the final year of their second term on the Panel. Therefore 2019/20 should have been their last year on the Panel, however due to the exceptional circumstances with the current pandemic and the cancellation of many Local Authorities Annual General Meetings in May, making new nominations and representatives impossible, the Panel was asked to endorse an extension of the current term of office of Councillor Willis by one year through to June 2021, with a further Panel Membership report to be considered at the next AGM. Detailed within the report was the background context to the Panel's membership. Subject to the Panel's endorsement, approval would be sought from the Constituent Authorities as this required an exception to the Panel's Operating Arrangements.

Panel support was unanimous for the temporary exception to allow Councillor Roz Willis to continue to be appointed to the panel for a further year.

RESOLVED that:- The Panel supported the request to the Constituent Authorities to agree an extension of 1 year to the Panel's current Membership as detailed in Annex 1 and a 1 year exception to the Panel's current Operating Arrangements to provide continuity in order to make the membership extension possible. Temporary exception was agreed for Councillor Roz Willis to continue to be appointed to the panel for a further year.

5. Public Question Time

There were no Public Questions

6. Declarations of Interest

There were no additional Declarations of Interest.

7. Minutes

The minutes of the 23rd April were approved.

8. Chairs Business

The Chair made reference to the protocol in dealing with the press. The document had been circulated previously to the panel around this.

9. Commissioner's update Report

The following briefing provides an update for Panel Members on key activities since the last Panel meeting on 11 March 2020 and builds on the update letter sent to Panel Members on 21st May 2020.

Oversight of the Constabulary Response to COVID19

COVID19 contingency and recovery planning has been the recent primary focus of our oversight and scrutiny of the Constabulary and in holding the Chief Constable to account.

The agenda of Police and Crime Board meetings in April and May was changed to enable robust scrutiny of COVID19 issues.

Council Tax precept We are concerned that a severe COVID recession in the UK will adversely impact many households, reduce council tax base, reduce council tax collections and put great financial pressure on many of our residents. This means we expect to budget for a collection fund deficit in the next few years which will immediately impact 2021/22 planning and also the MTFP income assumptions. We expect a lower than forecast tax base and lower than currently forecast collection rate than previous MTFP assumptions in the next 3-4 years.

Government finance and next CSR In addition, the unprecedented level of national government borrowing is an emerging national risk and we fear some inevitable future restrictions on public sector funding as a consequence. This will be announced in future budgets and the CSR in 2022. 2021/22 will be the third year when the CSR has been delayed and we will have a further one year settlement. Whilst the commitment to the uplift in officer numbers appears unchanged we do expect the pressure on central government budgets to be reflected in future settlements.

The report highlighted further areas such as workforce health and wellbeing and provision of PPE alongside MOJ Covid-19 Extraordinary funding, criminal justice, community engagement, Violence Reduction Units and a recruitment update.

Appended to the report were the PCP Estates Summary and Operation Remedy Annual Review.

During the discussion the following points and questions were raised:-

- Following the update around the Black Lives Matter demonstrations, the Covid-19 impact on the BME community was discussed, the response and investigation of raves arranged in Somerset against Covid-19 restrictions were also considered.
- There was an anticipated spike in hate crime and work was being undertaken with communities to take instances seriously.
- Police would have less and less involvement as lockdown restrictions continued to ease, it was recognised that these were challenging times in policing.
- Concerns were expressed over finance implications of the impending recession alongside the reduced council tax base and collections.
- The planned uplift in officer numbers would continue with finance remaining available to support this; although it was recognised that further funding was required long term.
- Crime levels were anticipated to return to normal with the easing of lockdown.
- New powers are reviewed regularly in relation to Covid-19 powers. An increase of mental health issues due to lockdown measures was expected alongside domestic and child abuse crimes increase anticipated. Resources were being made available to address this.
- £500k funding had been allocated by MOJ to address Covid-19 – related costs from 24th March.
- A reported backlog of 40,000 Crown Court and 500,000 Magistrate cases due to delays around the Covid-19 period needed to be addressed, courts would need to have a radical rethink to clear cases which could be delayed for years in some instances with virtual remand courts being considered.
- Broad support was given around the decision of how the Black Lives Matter demonstrations were policed in the context around the unrest in St Pauls. It was considered the overall approach taken was proportionate. The actions by the police were commended and there was an online petition recognising this.
- A greater understanding of the use of force and arrest was required. The Panel would be educated on the understanding of this, detailing the 2014 national guidance, a commitment was made for Tony Blatchford to present this at a future panel meeting. Political neutrality and impartiality was considered important in public order situations, to provide reassurance and peace of mind in securing public safety
- Good practice where identified is referred to officers in instances of demonstrations. Bodycam footage is used for training on good practice to assist officers.
- Through lighthouse system supported victims of crime with trials ongoing, arrests were still going through and remanded if they haven't been given bail. Some cases won't be heard for 2-3 years due to the existing delays. It was recognised that this could lead to a fear that victims could be less likely inclined to prosecute.
- Judiciary decision to tackle the backlog of court cases would be flexible, weekend court openings were being considered, concerns were expressed over the impact on victims. Avon and Somerset Police were working with victim charities and

support groups to address this as a system approach. Nightingale Courts considered, with civic buildings utilised that could accommodate these.

- The Panel thanked the Commissioner for her update report and the work undertaken by Avon and Somerset Police under unprecedented circumstances.

RESOLVED that the report be noted

10. Commissioner's Annual Report

The Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner presented her report and set out updates around the following areas:-

- Setting the budget and precept
- Strategic Policing Requirement
- Partnership Working
- Grants and Commissioning

Further information set out the Performance against the PCC Priorities in the 2019-21 Plan.

Annex 1 set out the Summary of Grants Issued and Commissioned Activity in 2019-20.

During the discussion the following points and questions were raised:-

- Concerns around staff survey were expressed with less than 50% of staff feeling valued. Improvement on this was anticipated at the next panel meeting. Roadshows had improved employees sense being valued and had a positive impact.
- Managed offender scoring was discussed, scores increased depending on the offender management cohort increasing or decreasing and entering the programme.
- Capacity of the organisation to respond to support funding in the future was requested. The Police and Crime Commissioner committed to take this away and explain demand at a future meeting.
- The increase in crimes linked to Modern Slavery were a concern. This was being tackled in partnership with local authorities and partners.
- It was accepted that there were opportunistic and drug related burglaries. The PCC would look at research to do as much as possible to tackle these instances. It was determined that the Covid-19 reduction in crime nothing to do with police being responsible in the reduction of crime.
- Operation remedy set out a March figure of 80.4% - further information was requested to drill down into the crime types and elaborate on the examples.
- Recommendation 10 was referred to around the appointment of data forensic investigator in place. This remained an Operational decision which had not been progressed at this stage, further details around this would be reported back.

- Recruitment progress was ongoing despite the Covid-19 pandemic with PCSO recruitment ongoing. Background of manage attrition rate in the recruitment of police officers and existing PCSOs being recruited as Police Officers.
- As part of the Performance update there remained the continual message around challenges. Whilst the force is effective at reducing crime and keeping people safe, the extent to which positive outcomes result from investigations was considered to be in need of improvement by the Panel. The need was emphasised for more training and partnership working and to understand better investigative techniques to deal with complex issues such as domestic abuse, honour-based abuse, child sexual exploitation, hate crime and modern slavery violence. Given the Commissioner's responsibility for the totality of Policing, the Panel urged that appropriately trained people are put in place to deliver an increase in positive outcomes to which other would aspire.
- Performance would be continually scrutinised and it was acknowledged there was room for improvement particularly in terms of the positive outcomes for rape and people trafficking. The long Term approach to this required responsibility to address issues with training and improve performance around the reality of policing complex areas.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

11. Work Programme

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

12. Standing Complaints Report

A complaint had been circulated in the pack in relation to alleged Fraud and PCC failing to investigate. Complainant was not not satisfied by the explanation, which could be brought to the panel for consideration.

Three of the contacts for the Black Lives Matter protests had been recorded as complaints against PCC, these were being dealt with in the normal process.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was still to be determined and communicated in due course.

(The meeting ended at 12.48)

Chair