



Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

Hosted by Somerset County Council Democratic Services



Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel

11th March 2020

Present:

Local Authority and Independent Member Representatives:

Peter Abraham (Bristol City 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), Alastair Singleton (Bath and North East Somerset), Pat Trull (South Gloucestershire Council), Andy Wait (Bath and North East Somerset Council), Richard Westwood (North Somerset Council),

Host Authority Support Staff

Patricia Jones – Governance Specialist
Laura Rose – Democratic Services Officer

Police and Crime Commissioner and Support Staff:

Sue Mountstevens - Police and Crime Commissioner
Mark Simmonds – Interim Chief Executive Officer
Nick Adams – Interim 151 Officer
Joanna Coulon - Criminal Justice and Commissioning Officer

1. Apologies for absence

Joseph Mullis (Independent Member)

2. Public Question Time

None.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Minutes of the meetings held on 11th December 2019, 8th January 2020 and 4th February 2020

These were confirmed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor Booth in the list of attendees on 4th February 2020.

5. Chairs Business

None.

6. Video Presentation – Regional Organised Crime Unit

A video created by the SW Regional Organised Crime Unit had been made available by PCCs across the South West and was presented to the Panel. The Panel noted the highlights of ROCU's work during 2018/19.

7. Representative Workforce Team - Presentation on Activities and Progress

The Panel received a presentation from the Constabulary's Representative Workforce Team on the programme of work being taken forward to achieve a diverse workforce. A copy of the presentation material was circulated in advance of the meeting.

This was followed by a question and answer session around the "Big Five Ideas" programme of work created by the Constabulary to accelerate representation of the communities it serves:-

On-going commitment to external accreditation of best practice

This included National Equality Standard, Bristol Equality Charter, Stonewall Diversity Champion and Disability Confident Employer. The Positive Action Alliance also provided opportunity for 42 forces to meet and share their experiences.

Three tier approach for Police Officer Cultural Training

This involved making an assessment of the cultural competency of senior officers in post as part of a formal training programme. A focus on the front line aimed to ensure that junior officers were able to identify different community groups. A Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship route into policing provided opportunity for individuals from all backgrounds to obtain a degree whilst working and earning a full salary.

Strengthening the workforce to attract diverse talent

It was reported that a signposting and problem-solving team of 7 workers from a range of backgrounds and sectors was making great strides through outreach work and community events.

A central email box, Twitter account, posters, business cards and liaison with Local Neighbourhood Teams collectively promoted the work of the team. The message to communities was "How do we Access You". There would be a push to make in-roads in Somerset and South Gloucestershire in the near future.

Recruiting for Difference

It was noted that the process looked at job design, advertising and selection procedures with a focus on Inclusion and Diversity to attract and select from as wide a pool as possible and remove barriers for groups and communities who were currently under-represented.

Mobilising the workforce

This involved a range of projects, workshops and Ride Alongs to ensure that strategies and training programmes were in place to support the workforce.

Councillor Shah commended the PCC's efforts in taking this work area forward and reported that it was making a tangible difference in Bristol communities. However, he suggested that the length of the application process was contributing to the drop-out rate of applicants. It was acknowledged that this was in line with comparable forces but still too long by several months and work was underway to streamline and speed up the process.

It was agreed that the coaching available around the assessment centre part of the process was a valuable and essential part of the support package provided. Unsuccessful candidates were provided with guidance and their feedback was also sought to establish any barriers/blockages in the system.

It was clarified that national level work was taking place to run assessment centres for uplift along with a review of their processes. The intention was to recruit assessors from diverse communities.

The Panel asked if the Three Tier Approach involved Police officers being taken away from duties and if the Police Federation was supportive of the approach. It was reported that the strategy was still being finalised but the intention was for neighbourhood teams to meet on a 4 weekly basis for dedicated training. It was confirmed that staff networks including the Police Federation regularly attended training events.

There was discussion around the visibility of the team and the importance of building trust. The Commissioner reported that the team was in its second year of a two-year contract that commenced in 2019 and she highlighted the importance of regular evaluation to ensure a return on the investment.

The team clarified the evidence-based approach required to meet accreditation standards.

Councillor Wait also welcomed the positive work that was being undertaken. He pointed out that some communities held the unfortunate and prevailing view that the Constabulary was inherently racist and asked if there were strategies in place to safeguard both officers and victims. It was reported that a network was available to employees which offered a variety of support measures - the Employee Assist Programme, coaches/practitioners employed to identify stresses in the workplace, sickness absence policies, trained managers and formal disciplinary action. It was emphasised that the Chief Constable and PCC looked to encourage training and development emerging from frontline issues.

The Commissioner added that there was growing confidence of colleagues calling out bad practice and a knowledge within the organisation that certain behaviours would not be tolerated.

Councillor Franklin stated that the programme of work was a significant initiative with good prospects ahead. He suggested that Panel Members could commit to championing and spreading the message in their respective wards.

Officers advised the Panel that regular performance monitoring data was produced on a variety of areas as part of the evaluation process – by tranching staff and processes, it was possible to keep track of a person and monitor how they were proceeding within the system. Feedback was vital.

The Commissioner added that the force needed to “look” different. It was emphasised that by not having targets, the aims of the strategy were non-negotiable and more likely to be delivered. An increase in BME representation to 3.4% was described as not good enough. BME representation across the force area was 7% and the aim was to move steadily towards this.

8. Commissioner’s Update Report

The Commissioner provided the following summarised report:-

- **Recruitment Update** – the FTE establishment as at 31st March 2020 was 2793. It was noted that the figure emerging from the Government’s definition of “headcount” would make this 2881. The Commissioner highlighted the importance of always measuring FTE.
- **Meeting with the Home Office** – a summit of PCCs and Chief Constables. The Panel was advised that the non-negotiable message from the Home Office was recruitment had to be delivered for extra resources to be released. It was also reported that the remit of the Policing Minister, Kit Waterhouse, straddled 2 departments – the Home Office and Criminal Justice. Come the end of 2020, a new alcohol monitoring requirement would be introduced which meant alcohol monitoring tags for people who should be alcohol free.
- **County Lines and Organised Crime Groups** – these were being heavily targeted resource-wise. Liverpool and London were predominantly responsible for the lines in the Avon and Somerset force area.
- **Safer Streets** – £25 million would be made available by the Home Office to tackle situational crime prevention in areas most disproportionately affected by acquisitive crime/hotspots. The Panel noted that the OPCC was submitting two separate bids. In order to maintain a consistent strategic direction, the focus was on residential burglary when choosing the hotspots and this had led to the primary bid for Southmead in North Bristol and a secondary bid for an area in Weston-super-Mare. Although the bids were being co-ordinated in the OPCC they were effectively being led by the Community Safety Partnerships and LA colleagues.

The Commissioner asked Panel Members to take the opportunity to encourage participation.

- **A&S Criminal Justice Transformation Programme** – the Commissioner drew attention to a meeting she attended with a group of rape survivors. Whilst the perpetrators had been convicted in these cases, the women felt they had been failed by the agencies involved in the criminal justice system – Police, CPS, Courts and probation. It was noted that work to transform the criminal justice service continued through a number of key strands including proposals to

improve the criminal justice response to Rape and Serious Sexual Offences cases (RASSO) and a review of governance arrangements following recommendations considered at the A&S Criminal Justice Board meeting in December 2019.

Asked what learning had emerged from the group meeting with survivors, the Commissioner reported that she was leading on a national piece of work and hoped that a Royal Commission with the right terms of reference could look at the failings and drawbacks in the current system.

- **Coronavirus** – as at 10th March 2020, 382 cases and 6 deaths has been recorded and work was underway both locally and with national policing agencies. Local emergency planning was being led by Assistant Chief Constable Nikki Watson who was also heavily involved at national level. Regular Government COBR meetings were taking place. The public appeared to be divided as to the threat it posed in the longer term but the expectation was that numbers were set to increase exponentially. The Commissioner stated that the Government was walking a fine line and going its best with the information available.

The following is a summary of the issues and questions raised by Panel Members:-

- In his capacity as Chair of BCC Licensing Committee, Councillor Shah drew attention to a blockage in information sharing which was preventing the committee from seeing alcohol related ASB data held by the Police for hot spot areas. He reported that this was holding up a review. The Commissioner agreed this was unfortunate but made the point that Licensing Committees also chose to disregard Police evidence when taking material facts into account at licensing applications. She highlighted the cost of Police time at licensed premises allowed to continue to operate by LAs.

Councillor Wale stated that objections lodged by the Police were taken extremely seriously. He emphasised that South Somerset's Licensing Committee continued to reach evidence-based conclusions and ensured that both the Police and public were served by its decisions.

The Commissioner advised the Panel that she anticipated a tightening of licensing regulations particularly around the extension of hours.

Councillor Shah stated that the responsibility on licensing authorities to produce a Statement of Licensing Policy setting out how the authority intended to promote objectives such as preventing crime and disorder would be greatly assisted and made more effective if the data held by the Police was made available.

Action – *Mark is it possible to follow up Cllr Shah's point about licensing data please ??*

- **Business Crime** – Andrew Sharman invited the Commissioner to comment on the future of the expired Joint Business Crime Strategy which had been launched in 2016 by the Commissioner and Chief Constable. The Commissioner was asked if any evaluation had taken place to assess if the aims of the strategy had been achieved as assurances had been given that this would be picked up in the Annual Report and it had not.

The Commissioner advised the Panel to contact the new PCC at the appropriate time before any new plan was developed. She urged the Panel to make assaults on shop workers a focus of their scrutiny.

- **Operation Remedy** – there was a brief discussion in relation to residential Burglary figures and the Commissioner’s previously stated aspirations to see a reduction over time. This was based on Operation Remedy meeting its expectations in this area and the conviction of a number of persistent offenders. The Commissioner stated that there were now 10-14 fewer burglaries each week year on year so fewer victims.

Offences taken into consideration (TICs) by the CPS for the purposes of sentencing was raised by Councillor Wale. The Commissioner confirmed that victims were routinely informed if an offender admitted to a crime and the CPS decided this should be treated as a TIC offence for the purposes of sentencing. The Commissioner acknowledged the importance of follow-up by the Police in these circumstances.

- **Mental Health** – the Panel recalled that Councillor Shearer in her capacity as Link Member for Strategic Priority 1 had identified that the pilot Mental Health Control Room Triage was struggling to perform as intended and therefore making it a challenge for it to continue in its current form. Contributing factors included the service had evolved to receive written referrals from call handlers rather than verbal advice over the phone in real time as intended. The service was over-loaded and it had been hard to retain mental health practitioners. The service was also commissioned across several organisations which made accountability and oversight unclear.

The Commissioner reported that work had continued to remodel the service led by the OPCC and working closely with the Constabulary and the provider Avon and Wiltshire Partnership. It was noted that since the beginning of December a number of process changes had taken place, in particular streamlining the referral process so they could only be made by phone. Further work would evaluate the impact of this change and consider the best physical location for the service moving forwards.

The Panel was advised to pursue continuing concerns and observations with the new PCC.

Action – that an update report be provided in the new year.

- **Independent Custody Visiting Scheme** – the Panel observed that there was a shortage of volunteers for this work area. It was noted that a follow-up action for Councillor Shearer in her Link Member role was to establish how mental health support was provided at the custody suites.

Action - an update on the scheme and any gaps in the scheme provision would be brought to the next meeting.

- **Seizure of assets and proceeds of crime** – the Panel noted the significant delay which can occur in collection of funding. It was also difficult to predict what the figure might look like year on year.

9. Avon and Somerset response to the Lammy Review

The Panel deferred their consideration of this report due to the non-availability of the Chair of the Avon and Somerset Lammy Review Group, Desmond Brown.

10. Work Programme Report

The Panel noted that it had delivered its work programme for 2019/20 with the exception of the report at Item 9 above.

Strategic Priority Briefings

Introduced for the first time this year, the intention was for this mechanism to be an informal opportunity for Members to carry out proactive scrutiny work and bring greater depth and insight to inform the broader role as Panel Members.

Following a review at the pre-meeting by the members who took part, it was apparent that some SP briefings lend themselves more easily to the mechanism than others. There was general agreement that although the assurance reports gave further insight into performance, the reports could be both dense and impenetrable documents that do not necessarily align with the interests of Panel members from a community/ward perspective. It was agreed that the Lead Officer would continue discussions with the OPCC about a suitable way forward for 2020/2021.

11. Standing Complaints Report

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

Referencing her enhanced duties in the Police complaints regime and new role as appellate body for appeals previously heard by the Chief Constable, the Commissioner expressed concern that this would have a knock on effect in terms of complaints submitted to the Panel.

The Lead Officer agreed this was a valid concern and a subject of debate for Panels across the country. Some guidance from the Home Office was now available.

12. Date of next Meeting

- 10.30am 23rd June 2020 at The Deane House, Somerset West and Taunton Council
(John Meikle Room)

The Panel thanked the Commissioner for her unstinting service over the last 8 years. It was recognised that the tension between the Commissioner and Panel role was inevitable, necessary and constructive. Acknowledging the disappointments on both sides at times, there was general agreement that the governance arrangements for policing introduced in 2012 were new territory for all concerned and accentuated by a backdrop of year on year financial pressures and reduced services and staff.

Overall, an inherent desire to work together for the benefit of communities in Avon and Somerset had remained the priority in the years that followed.

The Commissioner talked about her personal aspirations around Reducing Reoffending and rehabilitation and the impact on vulnerable people if this agenda was not prioritised. She expressed specific concern the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences and the damaging chronology of events that could be predicted for vulnerable children without positive life-changing interventions.

She thanked the Panel and urged members to be supportive to her successor.

(The meeting ended at 12.30pm)

Chair