



Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

Hosted by Somerset County Council Democratic Services



Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel 25th November 2021 (delayed start at 11:12am) Confirmatory Hearing - Chief Constable

Present:

Local Authority and Independent Member Representatives:

Heather Shearer (Mendip Council, Chair) Richard Westwood (North Somerset Council, Vice Chair), Chris Booth (Somerset West and Taunton), Richard Brown (Independent Member), Asher Craig (Bristol City Council), Peter Crew (North Somerset Council), Gary Davies (Independent Member), Janet Keen (Sedgemoor District Council), Alastair Singleton (Bath and North East Somerset), Pat Trull (South Gloucestershire Council), Andy Wait (Bath and North East Somerset Council).

Host Authority Support Staff:

Scott Wooldridge – Governance, Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer
Patricia Jones – Lead Officer
Andrew Randell – Committee Clerk
Pippa Triffitt – Panel Administrative Support

Police and Crime Commissioner and Support Staff:

Mark Shelford - Police and Crime Commissioner
Sally Fox – Interim Chief Executive Officer
Niamh Byrne – Head of Communications

Constabulary Staff

Sarah Crew – Candidate Chief Constable
Matthew Reed – Staff Officer

1. Apologies for absence

Neil Bloomfield (Somerset County), Nicola Clark (South Somerset District Council), Jonathan Hucker (Bristol City Council), Julie Knight (Independent Member), Franklin Owusu-Antwi (South Gloucestershire) and Lisa Stone (Bristol City Council).

2. Public Question Time

The Lead Officer brought the Panel's attention to the two submissions from Mr Ian Thompson which had been circulated and considered prior to the meeting.

The Panel acknowledged the correspondence and the questioning strategy devised prior to the meeting which enabled members to take the statements into account and fulfil its democratic function and duty to the public.

It was agreed that Mr Thompson would be provided with a copy of the Panel's decision at the end of the hearing.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Confirmatory Hearing – Chief Constable

The Lead Officer outlined the Confirmatory Hearing Process for conducting a Confirmatory Hearing for the post of Chief Constable in accordance with Schedule 38(1), of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. At the request of the Chair, the Lead Officer provided an overview of the recruitment process and the following was noted:-

- A rigorous and transparent appointments process had taken place, managed by an independent recruitment consultant.
- Members of the Police and Crime Panel (Councillor Craig and Julie Knight) participated as observers to provide extra assurance and feedback on the candidates.
- The candidates proceeded to the interview stage.

Councillor Asher Craig was introduced to comment on her report and findings as an observer of the recruitment process, and it was confirmed that the shortlisting process and final selection day was a fair, robust and transparent process. The representation of the external Panel was diverse, and all questioning was agreed beforehand and adhered to.

Feedback was provided, as an observation for future recruitment processes, that candidates should be made aware in advance where filming was due to take place.

The Chair thanked Asher and Julie (in her absence) for their report and observations of the recruitment process.

The Police and Crime Commissioner was welcomed to the meeting. He thanked the Panel for their Scrutiny and welcomed being held to account on the recruitment process and appointment.

The Commissioner advised the Panel that the candidates demonstrated aptitude and skills in a range of areas. As a summary to the detailed information provided in his report to the Panel, the Commissioner confirmed that Sarah Crew (SC) was the strongest candidate and that he had full confidence in her ability to carry out the role of Chief Constable.

SC was then invited to join the meeting and was welcomed by the Chair.

A series of detailed questions were put to SC and these are attached as Appendix A to the minutes. Below is a summary of the responses provided:-

Q: What are the future ambitions for the force?

A: The ambition was to deliver outstanding policing going forward while maintaining public confidence considering recent and past events. The first priority would be keeping confidence and trust in the force safe for the next generation of policing and delivering on the Police and Crime Plan around the areas of technology, insight, and not underperforming or underdelivering on potential. Improved performance was needed on race, representation, youth violence, and violence against women.

Q: The Police do not always make popular decisions. Can you give a recent example of when you have made such a decision? What process did you follow to ensure it was the right one?

A: There had been instances of previous experience in making both internal and external decisions which had proved difficult, i.e. decisions around officer and supervisor numbers, closing Yeovil custody, dealing with Operation Remedy which had not been universally popular as part of this, and allowing cameras to film how the force investigates rape. Facing up to decisions such as these was necessary, even when it was not the easiest thing to do. The purpose had to be firstly about public benefit and about consulting the public widely before, during, and after a decision; decisions had to be extensive and evidence-based in order to weigh up threats, risks and opportunities and make the best decisions under the circumstances while being accountable for these decisions. Being accountable for difficult decisions and facing up to local and national media on issues and scrutiny of the force was necessary.

Q: Given the continuing budgetary pressures on the police and other public services and partners, what strategic experience will you draw on to ensure, as Chief Constable of a small force, that you are able to maintain effective policing with less resources and to achieve efficiencies?

A: Having had a leading role in every major change programme in the constabulary, I ensured that changes to the force were better for the public, simpler for staff, and better value for money. Having been a Director for the new operating model, it was necessary to

make difficult decisions that would save £9.9 million; sticking to those principles and protecting PC and PCSO jobs had been a key achievement, alongside being outstanding at efficiency and future planning, leading the digital mobilisation programme, introducing the rollout of phones and laptops to staff which transformed ways of working, and enabling the force to adapt to the pandemic overnight. To maximise innovation, efficiencies and creativity, the team will be asked to be bold, innovative, and work out opportunities.

Q: What have you learnt as the National Lead for Adult Sexual Offences and your experience with victims in the criminal justice system?

As the force Strategic Lead and National Lead, all previous recommendations implemented and improved support have not yet led to the desired outcomes, with less than 2% of these cases ending in a conviction. Using the leverage of national forces, a coalition has been formed with six institutions, measuring against a model which has been developed from an understanding of offending, disrupting perpetrators, and justice theory. Building knowledge and skill in investigating these crimes and maintaining this across officers in the force was a priority. There was deep engagement with staff and stakeholders to improve outcomes of investigations.

The importance of having confidence in the system was highlighted—this included ensuring that the needs of victims were given precedence at all times. An understanding that, due to stereotypes of offence and poor data quality, conviction rates had remained low would enable the development of a theory of change, a new model of investigation, and a rebalance in focusing on suspects. Engagement with CPS had improved, with positive feedback received from independent sexual violence services. This had attracted national attention, with the model adopted becoming a pathfinder for four other forces over the coming months. There was a continued ambition for this to assist and develop a new theory of change and to build stronger cases and confidence around these offences.

Q: What prevention and intervention work will you do to tackle the root causes of crime?

A: Violence Reduction Units were an important part of the process, with early intervention, prevention, and deterrence determining the value of investing in enforcement. Enforcement police had primary roles, being cognisant of reform and rehabilitation options. Serious violence strategies needed to be discussed to consider what's happening in other cities and to enable a co-ordinated approach that ensures no duplication. The prevention and intervention ambition for the force is that no young man born today should lose their life to serious violence or to criminal justice as a result of such violence.

Q: How will an offender focused approach to policing prevent people from becoming victims?

A: There would be a rebalance to focus equally on dealing with victims and locations. The core of the approach is not about enforcement but has prevention as its aim. This would provide pathways out of offending, including housing, jobs, mental health, and drug support, with the net result being fewer victims, following procedural justice theory. There would be a continued review of the lighthouse safeguarding unit.

Q: A vast part of the force area is rural. How do you propose to balance the needs of the rural areas while also facing the challenges of larger towns and cities?

A: Listening to rural communities and their experience and what they seek from ASP is important in constructing a service offer within the limits of what can be delivered; it is necessary to reach out and make a service offer that is acceptable and proactive, with ongoing dialogue on the impact of services. The uplift is for investing and extending reach, including equipping the team with a drone for greater reach and investment in proactivity. The rural team hub provides an improved response for rural communities.

Q: What would you do to prevent offenders from repeating crimes and address the health needs and unresolved PTSD and provide resources to ensure offenders receive the help they need?

A: Addressing the root causes of criminal behaviour with prevention deterrence, reform, and rehab is necessary, as well as providing pathways for individuals to consider the consequences of their behaviour and working together with partners to look at joint commissioning and pathways. It requires partnership working to help solve problems with respect to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)--moving problems on was not a benefit to communities, nor was the notion that there is low-level ASB.

Solving ASB often requires taking a different approach and meeting families to consider first-hand the impact that low-level ASB has on its victims, including the loss of faith and confidence in policing. Bringing key policing areas and partners together to ensure engagement, visibility and enforcement is necessary. Instances have occurred where individuals experiencing ASB issues have been invited to attend update meetings monthly and become an advocate for the approach and for involving the community in the process.

Q: What would you do to ensure the safety of residents in Avon and Somerset at night?

A: A partnership approach between communities and local authorities is needed to address the issues around safety of women at night. It is recognised that this is a critical point in the role of policing in order to ensure feelings of safety and confidence. The attitudes and appetite of night-time economy, licence holders and politicians to discuss and sign up to a commitment that holds stakeholders to account has been communicated with the Commissioner. A summit was planned in the New Year, and the safety of women would be the first theme that's tackled in order to have a meaningful impact on safety and

look at the force strategy. Operation Headland tackled drink spiking, which has resulted in arrests and charges.

Q: How would you address racial equality, diversity and inclusion programme, to ensure Impactful representation in police force?

A: Taking a leadership role in inclusion and diversity, with the aim to be the most inclusive police force in UK, is the target. There are five big ideas: set out the representation question; enable and support this by culture, practices, and the engagement of communities; create conditions where ASP is an attractive place to work and thrive; analyse data and culture in all processes and systems; and, as part of the Cultural Intelligence programme, address any unconscious bias using cultural intelligence and inclusive policing intelligence to promote this through the recruitment outreach team.

Q: With resources challenged, how can you address hidden crime in BME communities in particular?

A: By opening up to hearing where things have gone wrong, having empathy to listen to members of the black community in Bristol, and increasing community confidence in ASP. Courageous conversations needed to be had to address any institutional racism that's been questioned, to address disproportionate use of stop and search and use of force, and to address the disproportionate numbers of grievances, promotions and misconduct. Also by enabling the force to move forwards in communities in an inclusive way, and by taking forward recommendations of the Lammy review. It is necessary to get to a place where black communities are happy that the powers are used fairly, with black women reporting domestic abuse and sexual assault cases. It is recognised that ASP needs to undertake most of the work to address working with the BME community.

Q: How would you empower a force that makes mistakes and enables learning?

A: By ensuring the workforce is assured and feels equipped and empowered to enable a culture of learning, and by ensuring confidence in the service to the public. There is the accelerator to give the workforce the capability they need to succeed. There is also a fantastic opportunity with junior leaders in taking this enthusiasm and driving outcomes, the success of which would be shown in the data.

Q: What would you consider success factors as Chief Constable?

A: Success factors would include building and maintaining the bond of trust for ASP and rebuilding and safeguarding the service for the next generation to rebuild confidence in BME communities; being ambitious in order to enable positive changes in services for the future; and addressing violence against women and girls in a way which could be world class, with real progress being made in those areas and exceeding the ambitions in the Police and Crime Plan. There is exciting potential for this within the force, and it would be a huge privilege to unlock this.

5. **Consideration of Panel recommendation on the appointment of the Chief Constable**

The Panel resolved to go into closed session to consider its recommendation.

RESOLVED - that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended).

The Commissioner and SC withdrew from the room. The Panel considered the candidate's performance and responses to the questions posed and the background information. All Panel Members gave their respective opinions on the Commissioner's preferred choice of candidate.

Following a full and comprehensive discussion, there was unanimous agreement that SC had demonstrated both the professional competence to deliver the role of Chief Constable and the personal independence necessary to exercise the role.

6. **Panel Decision**

The Commissioner and SC re-joined the meeting and were notified of the Panel's decision.

RESOLVED - that following full and comprehensive discussion and on being put to the vote, the Panel unanimously agreed to endorse and support the Commissioner's decision to appoint Sarah Crew to the position of Chief Constable.

7. **Date of Next Meeting**

9th December 2021

(The meeting ended at 1.14pm)

Chair