



## **Minutes of the Avon and Somerset Police & Crime Panel 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022 at 10.30am**

### **The Deane House, Somerset West and Taunton Council**

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#### **Present:**

#### **Local Authority and Independent Member Representatives:**

Heather Shearer (Somerset County, Chair), Chris Booth (Somerset West and Taunton) Councillor Asher Craig (Bristol City Council), Councillor Peter Crew (North Somerset), Nicola Clark (South Somerset), Gary Davies (Independent Member), Councillor Janet Keen (Sedgemoor District Council), Julie Knight (Independent Member), Councillor Owusu-Antwi (South Gloucestershire), Alastair Singleton (Bath and North East Somerset), Councillor Lisa Stone (Bristol City Council), Pat Trull (South Gloucestershire), Andy Wait (Bath and North East Somerset).

#### **Host Authority support staff:**

Patricia Jones – Panel Lead Officer  
Pippa Triffitt – Democratic Support Officer

#### **Police and Crime Commissioner and Constabulary/Support Staff:**

Mark Shelford – Police and Crime Commissioner  
Alice Ripley – Chief of Staff  
Ben Valentine – Strategic Planning and Performance Officer  
Hannah Watts - Constabulary Lead Sustainability  
Superintendent Dickon Turner – Constabulary Lead Rural Crime

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Richard Westwood and Richard Brown.

## **2. Public Question Time**

None.

## **3. Declarations of interest**

There were none.

## **4. Minutes of the meetings held on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022 (AGM)**

The minutes of these meetings were confirmed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the Chair's statement at Item 2 of the minutes (Appendix A).

### **Matter Arising**

It was agreed that the Panel would be resent the link and date of the next meeting of the Performance and Accountability Board.

The Panel referred to the issue of officer retention and number of officers leaving the force raised at the previous meeting. The Commissioner reported that the data on leaver numbers provided on 26<sup>th</sup> September was accurate and that fewer new recruits were leaving in comparison to the previous entry regime. He described this as encouraging but provided assurances that retention remained an on-going priority.

The Commissioner reported that new recruits will enter the Police service in one of three ways from April 2023 following a change in Police Regulations by the government. Recruits will now spend 75% of their time on the job. It was agreed the Commissioner would provide a report to a future meeting of the Panel on the outcome of his discussions with Andy Marsh, who is leading on this work area as CEO for the College of Policing.

The Panel noted that the Annual Report was expanded in order to address road safety in the context of cyclists, specifically data relating to casualties, fatalities and accidents involving cyclists that have resulted in a Police investigation. Attention was drawn to the Commissioner's response to the Panel's report on his Annual Report. Data relating to attribution of fault has been requested (if available).

**Action - Commissioner to provide a report to a future meeting of the Panel on the outcome of his discussions with the College of Policing in relation to training and officer retention.**

## **5. Chair's business**

### **Budget Consultation/Complaints Briefing**

The Chair drew attention to the above briefing scheduled for 12.30pm on 8<sup>th</sup> November at Police Headquarters (agreed by the Panel at its AGM on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022).

### **Host Authority**

The Chair advised the Panel that capacity issues will continue to prevent SCC acting as Host Authority for the Panel in the longer term. However, SCC no longer intended to enforce its resignation which comes into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022, and the intention to refer the impasse to the Home Office had also been set aside. Discussions with the Monitoring Officer would continue regarding SCC's ability to extend its Host Authority term and how this will impact the Panel and its Lead Officer.

**Action - discussions with the Monitoring Officer to continue regarding SCC's ability to extend its Host Authority term and how this will impact the Panel and its Lead Officer.**

## **6. Sustainability Update**

The Commissioner gave a brief introduction to the report, making the point that PCCs and the Police service are at the heart of the decarbonisation agenda in mitigating the risks that it poses. He emphasised the need to balance his duty to secure operational effectiveness, with the challenge of reducing carbon emissions generated by organisational activities.

Attention was drawn to the green housing projects and work experience schemes for prisoners in progress in the South West, and the barriers that can be posed by local planning procedures. The assistance of Panel members was sought where possible.

Hannah Watts, lead officer on the Constabulary's Sustainability Strategy 2021-2026, was welcomed to the meeting. The Panel received a detailed and comprehensive report on progress, activity and performance achievements in the first half of 2022/23. This included:-

- the Constabulary's total carbon emissions fell by 5.1% to 11,308 tonnes with emissions from buildings falling the most
- reduction in emissions from buildings can be solely attributed to a 20% reduction in electricity use. Gas use saw a small increase over the same period
- emissions from fleet increased by 5.1% with a corresponding 27.1% increase in fuel consumption. The impact of this increase is mitigated through the continued

- transition to unleaded petrol and electric vehicles (EV) over time.
- total waste volumes continue to fall based on a rolling 12-month average.

Below is a summary of the questions and issues raised by the Panel:-

- the Panel welcomed the reduction in emissions from buildings.
- The Panel queried why the increase in fuel consumption of 27.1% had been only marginally mitigated by the purchase of 20 EVs. It was reported that the 27.1% increase was not a reflection of investment in the petrol/diesel fleet, but an indication of a significantly greater response rate. It was acknowledged that the force does not currently have an electric vehicle suitable for response that complies with the national purchasing framework or that provides the performance range of petrol and diesel cars. Data and analysis help ensure that the fleet is being utilised efficiently.

The Panel recognised the need for high performing fast vehicles, but the point was made that not all business activities required this. What is the proportion of electric vehicles in the fleet?

HW agreed to provide detail around leaded/unleaded/diesel vehicles. Assurances were provided that the coming years would see an investment in 100 EVs. Plans to develop a model were being considered which could see electrification reach 40%.

- The Panel asked for further information on the refurbishment of Broadbury Road Police Station in Bristol and why investment in an Air Source Heat Pump was not considered viable. The Panel was advised that a solar PV will provide a micro source of renewable energy and a more efficient boiler would be installed, but essentially the design of the building and finances posed constraints to a pump.
- The Panel noted that 4 'priority' UN Sustainable Development Goals have been identified as areas of focus to define the current Sustainability Plan - Climate Action, Responsible Consumption, Sustainable Communities and Partnerships for the Goals.

More information was requested on the consultation methods with local communities. The Panel was advised that an operational directorate had been established to support ambitions in this area and a PCSO had contributed at board level to the drafting of the Sustainability Strategy drawing on the community engagement work he undertakes. Work was also underway with a consultant to identify a decarbonisation programme.

The Commissioner added that he had discussed his long term aims with the portfolio lead and specifically how to change the emphasis in ASC to ensure that sustainability and environmental implications feature in everyday business.

- The Panel commented that E10 fuel was less efficient, approximately 10%-20% less to the gallon.
- Reference was made to Bristol's collaborative approach and the formation of an Environmental Board which saw all businesses and organisations signing up to net zero by 2030. An invitation was extended to Hannah Watts to join the collective efforts of the Environmental Board and discuss a solution for Broadbury Road.
- It was confirmed that ASC had invested substantially in electric bikes and agreed that the numbers would be confirmed.
- It was acknowledged that sharing the vision and engaging staff plays a key part in delivering objectives. The Commissioner emphasised there was a balance to be achieved – for example in holding physical and virtual meetings and requiring people to be on-site in Police stations.
- The Commissioner advised the Panel that cost of living and energy crisis had not reached critical status in terms of service delivery and budgets. A project around spend and save has been put in place in collaboration with the Chief Constable. More detail would follow in the Panel's private budget briefing on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

**Action:**

**(1) HW agreed to provide detail around leaded/unleaded/diesel vehicles in the context of business requirements.**

**(2) An invitation was extended to the Constabulary to join the collective efforts of the Bristol Environmental Board and discuss a solution for Broadbury Road.**

**(3) The investment in electric bikes/numbers purchased to be confirmed.**

## **7. Rural Crime Assurance Report**

This report was requested as an assurance piece by the Panel and introduced by Superintendent Dickon Turner, Constabulary Lead for Rural Crime.

The importance of understanding the difference between rural crime and crime that occurs in a rural area was emphasised when considering the data and content of the report. The point being that a burglary at home in contrast to a burglary at a farm are likely to have a considerably different impact on the livelihood of the victim. The definition of rural crime was noted as follows:-

*"Any offence occurring in a rural area which directly or indirectly affects a farming or rural business or the rural communities, where 'rural' is given to mean 'a close association with or dependence upon the land' within that location."*

DT reported that historically, rural communities were not the focus of criminals. However, these communities were now the subject of criminal gangs with access to a range of vehicles, looking for soft targets. The objective was to work with partners on prevention and make rural communities a safer and more crime free area in which to live and work.

It was noted that the service level agreement for rural and urban areas were the same.

A rural crime survey was undertaken in 2021 to ascertain what communities need, how well the Constabulary responds to reports and how the force can improve. Below is an overview of the data retrieved from 1300 respondents:-

21.91% of the respondents had been a victim of rural crime (282 individuals). Of these 282 individuals, 19.5% had been a victim of theft and 18.8% of hunting offences, the two highest scoring crime types. Arson, wildlife interference and dwelling burglary were the three lowest scorers. Of the 282 individuals who were a victim of crime, 61% reported the crime and 38.43% did not report the crime. The most common method of reporting was via 101. 175 participants answered the question of "How satisfied were you with the service from Avon and Somerset Police?" indicating that communities lacked confidence.

Attention was drawn to the Rural Affairs Delivery Plan attached as Appendix A to the report. The Panel noted that a new rural affairs plan and strategy had been developed aimed at training, awareness raising, investigations, remedy, intelligence, communications and response. A network of 80 champions was in place across the force.

A focus on DNA technology aimed to prevent and deter criminality. A bid for additional resources has resulted in investment in a drone and 2 additional PCs. A South West Regional Affairs Rural Group has been formed to share best practice/OCG intelligence.

Below are the principal points made by members in the discussion that followed:-

- The report was welcomed and provided a clear understanding of the concerns of members representing rural areas.
- The Panel was advised that a national rural affairs network did exist, however it was not as active as other areas of Policing business. Some thematic work was on-going around thefts, machinery, poaching, and hunting.
- The crime prevention strategy had not been evaluated using predictive analytics to establish who might be the next victim.
- Reference was made to a visit from the Environment Minister and discussions around the hardwiring of tractors with GPS equipment that cannot be easily removed.
- The Panel recommended following up on surveys one month later to establish how the messages landed and if there had been any material difference. This will demonstrate victim care and will establish if the advice/measures have been implemented to help prevent them being repeatedly targeted. It may also serve to encourage people to act on the advice given.
- The number of holdings signed up to the Farm Watch Scheme could not be provided, however farmers were routinely asked to join through social media outlets.
- The Panel suggested that letter-based engagement was generally more appropriate for rural communities. It was reported that the rural affairs page on ASC's Twitter page was the most popular. It was accepted that farmers were busy and therefore the team's attendance at shows and markets was regular.
- The Panel reported that Parish and Town Council Meetings had not been routinely attended by the Constabulary in the last 5 years. Members were advised that there were 140 staff to cover 300 parish councils, but the aspiration was to improve the level of service and communication. A new Local Community Network would facilitate this. The PCC added that he and the Chief Constable were in agreement that the expectation was that a Police report should go to every meeting followed up by attendance at intermittent meetings.
- The Panel drew attention to social deprivation in rural areas and the connection between this and crimes against the person. The increasing trend of not being able to fill places on parish councils in certain wards was also a concern. The Commissioner agreed that rural deprivation should be a focus for politicians and weight brought to bear on crimes that are hidden/unseen. The levels of domestic

abuse were extremely high in both urban and rural areas and needed to be addressed by enforcement, charities, and education.

- The Panel discussed the criminalisation of hunting and lack of Police enforcement. It was suggested the Police needed to do more given offences were being committed. The Commissioner explained that in accordance with a strategic policy decision, enforcement action will be taken against all illegal hunting if it is reported. The Local Neighbourhood Team should respond, and individual Police officers should deal with the practicalities.

Superintendent Turner added that prosecutions will result if the evidence is there. It remained legal to get on a horse with a group of dogs without the intention of actively pursuing wild animals. If, during a drag or trail hunt, a hound inadvertently picks up a fox's scent and it is killed, they are not breaking the law.

**Action – Panel recommended following up on surveys one month later to demonstrate victim care and establish if the advice/measures to help prevent them being repeatedly targeted, have been implemented.**

## **8. Urgent Business – Performance Summary, National Police and Crime Measures**

With the consent of the Chair, this item was considered as Urgent Business under the provisions of Section 100(B) 4(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 due to the late circulation and publication of the report.

The Chair invited Ben Valentine, Strategic Planning and Performance Officer, to present the performance update. Below is a summary of the update:-

- It was acknowledged that there were some formatting issues which misconstrued the data unless the document was viewed in PDF format.
- In reducing serious violence, ASC was benchmarking well against its most similar group of forces (MSG)
- Disrupt Drugs Supply and County Lines - the force has a lower rate of drug trafficking offences per 1000 residents, compared to the MSG forces. This may indicate less proactive identification of the offending and has been flagged with the Constabulary. There was a significant increase in recorded disruptions in the latest quarter linking to intensification as part of Operation Scorpion.
- Reducing Neighbourhood Crime – recorded neighbourhood crimes were impacted significantly during the COVID lockdown periods, and as a result saw large reductions. Crimes are anticipated to return to normal levels and the outlook is based on this. Although Avon and Somerset has higher robbery rates, but this isn't a force-wide problem, it is a Bristol problem. Bristol specifically had experienced sudden movement in robbery offences.



- Improve Victim Satisfaction with a Focus on Victims of Domestic Abuse - Bluestone was highlighted as a strong positive project that is now being rolled out nationally. Overall victim satisfaction was reported as stable.
- You Said/We Did theory – the Panel emphasised the need to have two-way communication between the Constabulary and Councillors, so feedback can be provided to constituents who regularly raise policing issues. The Constabulary's Race and Legitimacy video was described as impressive and could be shared by councillors across social media platforms to reach more people. It was suggested that the public might not fully engage with the complexities of the report/jargon etc. but if they do want to know more, the OPCC would be happy to help out so Councillors can feed back the appropriate information to their communities.
- Police and Crime Plan Priority 2. Engaging, supporting and working with communities, victims and partner organisations – evidence of a slow but steady decline which has been highlighted with the Constabulary.
- Special Constables and Citizens in Policing – reported as a story of 2 halves. ASC is managing a reduction in the number of Specials and focusing on the development and contribution of those who have volunteered. The Panel enquired if the number of actual Special Constables would be increased at some point. It was confirmed that there were no plans to change the numbers at present.
- The Criminal Justice System – whilst the time taken to charge someone is longer for ASP compared to national, this has reduced from 2019 to 2021 and is just above MSG average. The time it takes to finalise Crown Court cases has increased although the growth is smaller than nationally.
- Reducing Reoffending – the proportion of offenders who reoffend has decreased nationally but the decrease in ASC has been even greater and the local levels have been lower than national for the last four years. However, the average number of reoffences had increased for several years until recently. This may indicate the difficulty in stopping the most prolific and entrenched offending behaviour.

The Panel made the following comments in the discussion that followed:-

- An excellent report/good work around Violence Against Women and Girls.
- The Panel sought clarification on “benchmark not available”. It was explained that some information was drawn from the local survey and surveys were undertaken differently in other areas. It was therefore necessary to draw comparisons, but a national comparison was not always possible.
- The point was made that anecdotally, much cybercrime goes undetected. The Commissioner was therefore asked how representative are the figures of the

true picture and how much confidence does he have in the information that is disseminated to forces by Action Fraud?

The Commissioner reported that there was a lack of transparency around evidence thresholds and constraints around the extent to which the victim can input and state their case. A mechanism to improve the victim's contribution needed to be hardwired into the processes. It was also evident that the public is not reporting all fraud, for a number of reasons including capacity and vulnerability. Imaginative and creative ways were needed to protect these people.

- The Commissioner discussed the work underway to reduce reoffending including a package of 48 days accommodation and opportunities for employment. He emphasised that education programmes and opportunities to learn new skills are vital. There were some workshops available to women prisoners prior to release.
- It was acknowledged that disproportionate numbers of women are incarcerated for a first offence. Work around this was important because of the impact this has on families. Reference was made to halfway house type prisons where female offenders are allowed to go home to their families at night.
- The Panel made the point that public confidence in the Police service has been on a downward trend in recent years. Has this been recognised by ASC and what actions are being taken to overcome this? The Commissioner provided assurances that this has been recognised and work had taken place to create capacity on the front line to focus on visible policing and support Neighbourhood Policing teams in engaging with the public.

The Panel sought further clarification – is data available to assess the public's perception of ASC? Is the lack of confidence specific to local issues that needed addressing? Is there an action plan? The Commissioner confirmed that data was available, analysis is taking place to identify whether concerns are local or national, and whilst there was currently no overarching action plan, a range of work is underway to address confidence levels.

- Special Constables - the Panel welcomed the focus on duty hours and not targets.
- Operation Scorpion – has there been any data analysis of the targeted disruption activities undertaken in March 2022 and do we understand its impact 6 months down the line? The Commissioner undertook to provide a response to the Panel.

- The Panel emphasised the importance of a good public engagement strategy in order to get messages out locally and to limit the negative messaging that can result when information is not forthcoming.

The Commissioner referenced his reliance on previous military information campaigns as opposed to reactive communications which did little for public confidence. The Panel was also advised that public engagement was a topic of conversation at the next Performance and Accountability Board meeting. Members were reminded that this was the Commissioners new on-line governance mechanism for holding the Chief Constable to account in public, and all members were welcome. The dates and links to future meetings would be circulated to the Panel.

**Action – dates and links to future Performance and Accountability Board, meetings to be circulated to the Panel.**

**Action – The Commissioner undertook to provide a response to the Panel regarding outcomes from Operation Scorpion.**

## **9. Commissioner's Update Report**

The Commissioner introduced the report, setting out key governance and scrutiny activities and OPCC/national business updates since the last meeting. The Commissioner drew specific attention to:-

**OPCC Office Review** – conducted by Chief of Staff Alice Ripley, a full presentation would be provided to the Panel when it meets on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

**Estates** – the demolition of Trinity Road Police Station received planning approval on the 24<sup>th</sup> August, enabling the scheme for a social housing scheme/smaller Police station to now move ahead.

**Tackling Disproportionality in the Criminal Justice System** – to support this work, an independent transformational change consultant has been tasked to put in place the necessary structure, resources and governance required to successfully deliver the work and facilitate the early stages of delivery. A workshop to launch this work area was taking place on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

**Serious Violence** – a Home Office Violence Reduction Unit bid was successful. £2m allocated to Avon and Somerset over 3 years would see important work continue with £1.17million devolved to the 5 local authorities.

The Panel was thanked for its report on Serious Violence/Rape and Serious Sexual Offences.

**National Economic & Cyber Portfolio** - the Commissioner provided an update on national and local activity including a fraud prevention awareness initiative and the National Fraud Safeguarding Conference in Bristol. This prevention piece would focus on initiatives to protect vulnerable adults and how the public, charities and businesses can be more resilient.

Below is a summary of the discussion that followed on the report as a whole:-

- The Panel welcomed the planning consent for Trinity Road and described it as an excellent initiative.
- Referencing the new HMICFRS publication, Finding Time for Crime, it was recognised that this was not ASC specific. The Panel asked the Commissioner how much of it was relevant to ASC and how he was going to respond.

The Commissioner committed to providing the Panel with a copy of the response which would focus on the principles of prevention, detection, and investigations.

- The Commissioner was asked for assurances that ASC was on course to meet its target recruitment numbers by March 2023. The Commissioner reported that he was as confident as he could be in the Constabulary achieving 60 officers over the establishment aim of 3,291 by March 2023.
- Independent Custody Visiting Scheme – the Panel noted the examples of good practice from other forces. Specifically, that warrant-related arrested people are now taken directly to Court, benefitting both the arrested person in bypassing custody and the Custody Unit too.

It was agreed that the Commissioner would confirm if this was now the practice in Avon and Somerset.

- Super Complaints - the Panel noted that Police use of Stop and Search had been identified as eligible for investigation. The Commissioner commented that the use of this power was an important tool but emphasised that it needs careful management in terms of its impact on communities.

The Panel drew attention to another complaint and the alleged reluctance of the Police/courts to impose bail conditions, leaving victims of domestic

abuse at further risk. There was a brief discussion in relation to the Victims Code of Practice (VCOP) and compliance.

It was agreed that a report on both matters would be provided to the Panel in the near future.

**Action:**

**(1) HMICFRS Finding time for Crime publication – Commissioner to provide the Panel with a copy of the response which would focus on the principles of prevention, detection and investigations.**

**(2) Warrant related arrests – update on the practice adopted in Avon and Somerset to be provided.**

**(3) Super Complaints – updates on both matters to be provided to the Panel in the near future (bail conditions and VCOP).**

**10. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved – that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of Item 11 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of Exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

Reason: Exempt Paragraph 1 Information relating to any individual.

**11. Complaint Update**

The Panel considered a new complaint matter.

**12. Standing Complaint Report**

The Panel considered a report from Alice Ripley Chief of Staff, providing a rolling summary of complaints made against the Commissioner.

It was noted that 2 complaints have been recorded against the Commissioner since the last Panel meeting.

The OPCC also continued to receive comparatively high volumes of complaint review requests, however turned these around efficiently and significantly quicker than the MSF and national average.

### **13. Work Programme**

Panel Inquiry Day – OPCC role in Commissioning and Partnerships

It was agreed that this would take place on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023 (half day).

### **14. Date of Next Meeting**

8<sup>th</sup> December 2022 at 10.30am. It was noted that a venue was needed for this meeting. ***Post meeting update: The next meeting will start at 11.15am.***

**(The meeting ended at 1:40pm.)**