



Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel  
Hosted by Somerset Council Democratic Services



# Annual Report

*April 2022–  
March 2023*

*Providing effective Scrutiny and Support to the  
Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner*



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## Members of the Panel

Each of the Local Authorities in the Avon and Somerset Police area must be represented on the Panel by at least one elected councillor member. It is the responsibility of each authority to ensure that the member appointed has the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience for their role on the Panel. The overall composition of all Police and Crime Panels should form a “balanced appointment” objective which takes account of, as far as is practical, both political and geographical proportionality. Reaching the balanced appointment objective is a collective responsibility of the component authorities and the Panel itself.

In 2022/23 Somerset County Council and the Somerset District Councils each had 1 seat. The former Avon Unitary Councils (Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Bath and North East Somerset) were allocated 2 seats. Bristol was allocated an additional third seat in 2012 based on the city’s population size and comparatively high crime levels.

They are joined by three Independent Co-opted Members, recruited through a competitive selection process, who have the same voting rights as the Local Authority Panel Members. In total there were 16 Panel Members in 2021/22:-

Bath and North East Somerset	Cllrs Alastair Singleton and Andy Wait
Bristol City Council	Cllrs Asher Craig, Jonathan Hucker and Lisa Stone
Mendip District Council	Vacancy
North Somerset Council	Cllrs Richard Westwood (Vice-Chair) and Peter Crew
Sedgemoor District Council	Cllr Janet Keen
Somerset County Council	Cllr Heather Shearer (Chair)
Somerset West and Taunton	Cllr Chris Booth
South Gloucestershire Council	Cllrs Franklin Owusu-Antwi and Patricia Trull
South Somerset District	Cllr Nicola Clark
Independent Member	Richard Brown
Independent Member	Julie Knight
Independent Member	Gary Davies

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## Chair's Introduction

I am pleased to introduce the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel's Annual Report for 2022/23 and reflect on the Panel's challenges and achievements over the last year. Outside of the four-yearly election cycle, the Panel continues to provide the key scrutiny and accountability mechanism for the decisions and activities undertaken by the Police and Crime Commissioner.



The challenges facing the Police are as multi-faceted and complex as ever, and the national picture, particularly the elements oozing out of London, do not make matters any easier. Put simply, the service is facing rising demand from the public and it is a challenge to keep up. A variety of factors are at play including limited resources, an inexperienced workforce and a lack of clarity about the role of the Police in today's society. The number of 999 callers requesting support better delivered by other agencies is an enduring problem.

The Public must have confidence in the Police service, it is pivotal to the Policing model in this country which relies on the public's consent and trust. In recent years there has been a marked decline in public confidence and satisfaction in Policing. The Panel welcomed the Commissioner's recognition in his Police and Crime Plan that there are people and communities in Avon and Somerset who have lost confidence in the Police service and that this needs to change.

Crime recording requires improvement to ensure victims receive an appropriate level of service in areas including rape, vulnerable victims and anti-social behaviour. Numerous surveys have demonstrated that almost half of women have lost trust in the Police and the courts system in the wake of high-profile examples of Police misconduct and following their experience as a victim of violence.

The Constabulary also requires improvement when responding to the public. These present challenges for the Commissioner whose job it is to provide an effective and efficient Police service and hold the Chief Constable to account. It is important for the public to see that there is a clear pathway for overcoming these challenges in the years to come and that is why the role of the Commissioner and the scrutiny carried out by the Panel is so important.

Our job is to support and scrutinise the Commissioner. In 2022/23 outside of our core

responsibilities, the Panel's proactive scrutiny included Identifying Disproportionality in the Criminal Justice System, Rural Crime, an Inquiry Day on the OPCC role in Commissioning and Partnerships, Green Strategy and Integrated Offender Management. It was a robust work programme and I am pleased with our contribution to the accountability mechanism for strategic Policing.

What remains very clear to the Panel from their work carried out throughout the year is that Police officers and support staff are very much in the front line and continue to carry out their duties to the best of their abilities for residents across Avon and Somerset.



Heather Shearer, Chair.

## Roles and Responsibilities

In each Police area, there is an elected Police and Crime Commissioner. The role of the Commissioner is to be the voice of the public and to hold the Chief Constable to account. The Commissioner is responsible for setting the strategic objectives of the Constabulary and deciding how funding for local policing and crime reduction activity is allocated. Mark Shelford was elected on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021. It is worthy of note that this term of office will run for three years rather than the usual four year term due to the postponement of the PCC election in May 2020. The next election takes place on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

The purpose of the Police and Crime Panel is to support and challenge the Commissioner's work and the decisions he takes. The Panel is made up of Councillors from the 5 Local Authorities in the force area and 3 Independent Panel Members who bring a variety of skills and experience to the role. Somerset County Council currently acts as the Host Authority for the Panel and is responsible for its administrative and officer support arrangements.

The Commissioner's plans and objectives are set out in a document called the Police and Crime Plan. This is the most important document any Police and Crime Commissioner will produce during their term of office. The Commissioner is required by law to consult the Panel on the plan and other duties connected to his role. A summary of the Panel's core responsibilities is set out below :-

- Review the objectives set out in the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan and monitor performance against his priorities
- Scrutinise and vote on the Commissioner's proposed Council Tax Precept
- Hold a Confirmatory Hearing for the Commissioner's proposed appointment of a Chief Constable and other senior officers. (The Panel has the ability to veto the Chief Constable appointment if this is considered necessary).
- Resolve complaints that relate to the Commissioner's conduct
- Scrutinise decisions the Commissioner makes in connection with the

discharge of his functions and make reports and recommendations to the Commissioner in relation to the discharge of those functions.

The Panel's primary function is to support and scrutinise the Commissioner, but it is important to remember that the Panel does not hold the Chief Constable to account. If the Panel has a particular issue of concern, for example an increase in violent crime or a perceived deterioration in neighbourhood safety, the Panel's role is to establish how the Commissioner is addressing this at a strategic level for the benefit of the public. In turn, the Chief Constable, Sarah Crew, has responsibility for implementation of the Police and Crime Plan and for day to day operational matters in our communities. She is accountable to the Commissioner.

In carrying out the above duties, it is essential for the Panel to stay well informed on policy and issues affecting Policing and the Panel has dedicated officer support and appropriate developmental training to assist with this.

## Key Activities

### **Precept Proposal**

One of the Panel's core duties is to annually scrutinise the Commissioner's proposed Council Tax Precept - the money collected from council tax specifically for Policing. As representatives of the tax payers of Avon and Somerset, the Panel's focus must be value for money that will deliver outstanding performance whilst also recognising the continuing financial pressures faced by our residents following years of austerity and the significant impact of the pandemic.

The Government's continued use of an inequitable funding formula disadvantages this Police area creating an on-going financial dilemma, and the increased performance expectations set out by the Home Office require the Commissioner and Chief Constable to translate often hastily issued government decrees into workable everyday policing.

An inexperienced and growing workforce does not entirely bridge the gap between demand and resources and yet service delivery is not only required to be maintained, but improved upon in terms of operational capacity and capability.

When considering the Commissioner's Precept proposal, the Panel must be satisfied that the increase will deliver an efficient and effective Policing service. As in previous years, we were required to reconcile the effect of the increase against the hardship faced by the vulnerable in our communities, and balance this against the increasingly complex demands of modern policing and the funding needed to deliver this.

It remains a time of great uncertainty, but the Panel was ultimately satisfied that a Precept increase was justifiable at this time and should be supported. The Panel's formal review of the proposal can be found here [Precept Review Report](#).

In 2023/24, to retain oversight and ensure that Panel Members make a tangible, practical contribution to the budget and Precept-setting processes, the Panel will form a Budget Task Group. This aligns with the Panel's proposal following the last Precept to develop a mechanism that will enable members to make an assessment throughout the year of the effectiveness of the Precept investment.

### **Recruitment and Retention**

The Panel represents the residents of Avon and Somerset and understands that all communities want a low crime environment where people can feel safe and secure.

Recruitment falls under the Commissioner's Priority 3 – Leading the Police to be efficient



and effective. The Panel continues to retain oversight of Police officer and PCSO numbers by way of a timeline report to each of our meetings on recruitment progress and levels achieved. At the end of 2022/23, there were 3,393 officers in post and 275 more officers than at the end of the previous year. Running parallel to officer uplift, we note the plans to rebuild investigations, develop leaders and lead a cultural that will instill confidence in our communities.

Given the need for training and development, the Panel understands that the full benefits from the uplift in staff will not be immediately realised and is reassured to hear that officer uplift will continue throughout 2023/24.

## Complaints

The Panel is required to resolve complaints from the public that relate to the Commissioner's personal conduct. The Panel delegates responsibility for the initial handling and recording functions to the Monitoring Officer in the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). The Panel remains the final arbiter at all times with an individual Panel Member taking the lead on complaints and advice, guidance and support provided by the Panel's Lead Officer. More serious complaints are referred and managed through the Panels Complaints sub-committee. The lead member provides a filter for the less serious complaints and ensures that meetings of the complaints sub-committee are only held when necessary. The complaints handling process and background information the Panel requires from the OPCC, has been aligned for this purpose for a number of years.

In practical terms, the Panel's objectives are clear and that is to ensure recording obligations are adhered to, delays avoided and appropriate resolutions to complaints reached as soon as possible.

A joint Panel and OPCC complaints process briefing was held in November 2022 to ensure that all Panel members were sighted on the day to day activities of the handling process.

A copy of the Panel's Complaints Protocol can be found here [Complaints Protocol](#)

## Performance Monitoring

National Crime and Policing Measures - Police forces are now ranked in league tables according to their success in cutting serious crime. Forces are now measured according to their effectiveness in combatting six types of crime including homicide, serious violence, the supply of drugs, Neighbourhood crime, cyber crime and improving satisfaction for victims.

This links to the Specified Information Order which places a duty on PCCs to publish certain information within specified timeframes, to ensure the public have the information they need to hold their Commissioner to account at the ballot box. The Home Office now requires PCCs to provide Panels with a narrative on force performance against the Government's crime measures mentioned above. The Panel was helpfully consulted by the OPCC on the format for the presentation of the performance data and has been receiving reports since December 2021.

New Governance Arrangements – in May 2022, the Commissioner introduced new governance arrangements which enables the Panel and the public to see him publicly holding the Chief Constable to account to increase public confidence and transparency. This takes place in the form of a Performance and Accountability Board which a public meeting held via Facebook. The Panel welcomes the introduction of a public meeting and looks forward to giving the Commissioner feedback on the format as this year progresses.

## Proactive Scrutiny

This work tends to take place outside of the core meeting cycle and provides opportunity for greater insight and inform the broader role of a Panel Member. It can also enable Members to draw on their knowledge and expertise and contribute to the work of the Commissioner in key areas of business.

## **Identifying Disproportionality in the Avon and Somerset Criminal Justice System**

In response to the Government's Lammy Review in 2017 which looked at discrimination within Policing and the Criminal Justice system in the UK, a local Lammy Review Sub-Group was set up in 2018 to address disparity in Avon and Somerset.

The Panel requested an update on this review that aimed to bring together regional Criminal Justice Partners to proactively address issues of disproportionality and produce a data picture of the journey of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities through the Criminal Justice System. Based on the findings and recommendations of the emerging report [Identifying Disproportionality in the Avon and Somerset Criminal Justice System](#), we learnt that leaders across Avon and Somerset had formed a new Tackling Disproportionality Action Group for the purposes of creating a multi-agency programme to tackle disproportionality.

The Commissioner gave us assurances that this piece of work was a catalyst for change and that he aimed to effect change by ensuring the recommendations were implemented, and efforts thus far become everyday business. As part of the strategy, Chief Constable Sarah Crew is leading a strategy sub-group of the Criminal Justice Board to ensure the action plan remains on track.

In the context of producing a data picture of the journey of BAME people through the Criminal Justice System, the Panel suggested that collaboration and benchmarking of current data across partner agencies is critical. In response, we heard that obtaining a complete data picture was a current focus in proactively tackling disparity in outcomes for BAME people and in monitoring success. Moving beyond statistical data is of course important and Panel Members feel that it is possible to glean equally important insights and feedback from qualitative data around lived experiences and everyday realities - for example Stop and search.

It is our view that allowing minority communities access to power and wider employment spaces is integral to progress.

The Panel sought further information around racial disparity in sentencing and asked if this was connected in any way to the quality of legal representation. This data was not available, however we understood that Youth Offending Team (YOT) reports almost certainly impacted sentencing.

This prompted a discussion around the reduction in YOT funding and whether there was a correlation between this and the ability of YOTs to provide sentencing reports and

support offenders to move away from the crime. The Panel was advised that increased funding was unlikely to make a difference as the focus was not on the right issues- the animosity and mistrust prevalent amongst Black boys towards the Police was based primarily on their personal experiences and largely their experience of stop and search.

Black communities are described as over-policed and under-protected and it is important to address the policy around stop and search in the context of drug searches. The importance of Leadership and intelligence led Policing in achieving the right tactical outcomes should not be under-estimated and we therefore posed the question - how can the leadership be influenced to bring about positive change?

The Commissioner provided assurances that the Chief Constable was creating the right values and culture for the force by ensuring their agreed strategy and principles were hardwired into the leadership. A new operational Leadership Programme would prepare officers before they were promoted into first line manager roles.

The Panel suggested it would be useful to establish if ethnicity factored in the low literacy abilities evident amongst prisoners and we learnt that there was evidence of this. High school exclusion rates of Black boys and girls are frequently found to be unwarranted, creating disaffection with the education system and learning. This accentuates the importance of getting upstream, before someone is incarcerated.

Accessing education data is an historic challenge. The data is available but is not being shared consistently or effectively and government intervention is likely required to move this on. Evidently, academies in the same trust experience issues around information sharing.

The purpose of sharing data is not to expose or identify racism but about ensuring that children have the same opportunities and better outcomes in the future. It is very disappointing if the absence of local accountability is hampering progress.

### **Green Strategy/Sustainability Presentation**

All councils in the force area have declared a climate emergency and in line with ever greater public awareness of environmental issues and potential impact on the environment, the carbon footprint of the force must be regarded a key issue.

In March 2022, the Commissioner gave assurances that every opportunity to reduce the environmental impact of the service and promote sustainability in its widest sense, was being taken through the estate's strategy, procurement decisions, commissioned

services, community engagement and partnership working. Underpinning it all, is the aim to ensure an efficient and effective policing service.

Later in the year, the Commissioner facilitated a presentation for the Panel from the Constabulary's Sustainability lead which enabled the Panel to discuss the approach to date and plans for the future. Further information can be found here [Green Strategy~Sustainability Presentation](#)

### **Integrated Offender Management**

The Panel requested a follow up report on Integrated Offender Management (IOM), a strategy designed to bring a cross-agency response to crime and reoffending threats faced by local communities. Its aim is for the Police and the Probation Service to prioritise and manage the most prolific and problematic offenders with the support of other partner agencies through the commissioning of services (including Local Authorities).

We were keen to see if progress had been made, particularly in relation to referral pathways. The Panel's scrutiny of IOM can be found here [Integrated Offender Management](#).

### **Rural Crime**

Historically, Panel Members representing rural areas were keen to know more about the strategy to tackle rural crime and this report was requested as an assurance piece by the Panel.

To improve engagement with rural areas, the Panel recommended following up on surveys one month later to establish how communications from the Police land and if crime prevention advice has made any material difference. The hope is that this will demonstrate victim care and establish if the advice has helped in preventing victims being repeatedly targeted.

The Panel highlighted the importance of Police attendance at Parish and Town Council Meetings. The aspiration to improve the level of service and communication is welcomed and we hope the new Local Community Network has the desired effect of developing a network of communications with rural communities across the whole of Avon and Somerset in a manner which meets the needs of the communities.

We drew attention to social deprivation in rural areas and the connection between this and crimes against the person. 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 are 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 and suggested the Police needed to do more given offences were being committed. The Commissioner assured the Panel that in accordance with strategic policy, enforcement action will be taken against all illegal hunting if it is reported.

## Reflections of Panel Members

### **Jonathan Hucker (Bristol City Council)**



Having been elected to Bristol City Council in May 2021, my first two years as a representative on the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel has been an interesting and enlightening experience. The power of the Panel is limited to a few specific areas. We are invited to comment on the PCC's draft

Police and Crime Plan and have an opportunity to provide input to it before it is finalised. We confirm senior appointments within the OPCC and have a right of veto over the appointment of the Chief Constable.

We are also consulted on the annual Police precept and have a right to veto the PCC's proposal. The first consultation on the Budget in November 2022 was led by the OPCC Chief Finance Officer in the form of a presentation followed by member questions. This was followed by scrutiny of the Budget and Draft Medium Term Financial Plan in December 2022. The formal review and approval of the Budget and precept proposal took place in February 2023. The Panel has agreed to set up a Budget Task Group to provide close scrutiny of emerging financial results to inform our deliberations on the Budget and precept setting process for 2024/25.

Although the Panel's powers are limited and specific, the Panel does carry influence beyond those powers. In overseeing the work of the PCC, the collective opinion of the Panel does carry weight and is considered by the PCC. Until recently the PCC and the Panel had a constructive and mutually respectful relationship.

Panel membership consists of people from across Avon and Somerset (i.e. the historic County of Somerset, plus South Gloucestershire), which is a large and diverse area. Both urban and rural communities are represented. Panel membership consists of elected Councillors from each local authority, together with independent members. The composition of the Councillor membership is based on political proportionality and deliberations of the Panel are usually non-partisan and mutually respectful. At the time of writing there is a vacancy for a Green Party representative from the City of Bristol.

Panel meetings often include briefings on a variety of relevant topics, including operational matters by senior officers. As an elected Councillor, I have found that these briefings have provided me with a valuable insight into how our communities are policed. This has strengthened the relationship I have with the neighbourhood police team in my ward, and I continue to meet and work with them on emerging issues. I have communicated the messages I have received from these meetings to my constituents. I believe my membership of the Panel has helped me to serve my constituents more effectively.

The Panel has had another very busy year. We received the results of the latest assessment by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The results presented a mixed picture, with the force requiring improvement in responding to the public, investigating crime, managing offenders and crime recording. There were no areas for which an inadequate rating was given. The good news is that the force was rated as outstanding in engaging and treating the public with fairness and respect. It is difficult to reconcile this finding with the declaration by the PCC that the Avon and Somerset force is institutionally racist. Avon and Somerset are the only force in England and Wales to have made such a declaration. This came as a surprise to me, especially as in the two years that I have been on the Panel the PCC had never once indicated that this was an issue. I have asked him to provide the evidence for this, but so far I have not received a response with any meaningful content.

**Cllrs Alastair Singleton and Andy Wait (Bath and North East Somerset)**



The last year has been a mixture of change and the bedding in of the changes made in the previous twelve months. Our last report recorded both the election of Mark Shelford to the role of Police and Crime Commissioner (PPC) and also a new Chief Constable in Sarah Crew. Both have now had time to appreciate the tasks they have taken on. To that end, the PPC has appointed a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Claire Hiscott. Claire has little to do with the Panel, but is able to take some of the workload from the PCC, so giving him more time for strategic thinking. Sarah is a most caring Police officer, with her emphasis on victim support as well as being a nationally recognised authority on rape crime. She is also brave, making a public statement a few months ago that Avon and Somerset Police was institutionally racist. Quite a comment, and one that requires swift action in order to regain public support as this is not where we want to be.

The major change for the Panel was caused by the local elections in May when some members chose to stand down. This is particularly sad in B&NES as Alastair Singleton did not seek re-election and has been replaced by Ann Morgan. Although all those who left the Panel served with distinction and many for several years, a name that stands out from the list of absentees is Richard Westwood who was the Deputy Chair of the Panel in the last term. He always spoke candidly and was very skilful at the task of scrutiny. He will be sorely missed by the new Panel.

One of our great dilemmas is deciding which matters are operational – and therefore beyond our remit – and what is strategic – which is not. Our job is to scrutinise the work of the PPC. His job, in turn, is to scrutinise Avon and Somerset Police. In many of our meetings, it is difficult to be precise as to when strategy ends, and operational matters begin. A good example of this difficulty is scrutiny of the Constabulary's accounts. It could be argued that this is operational and nothing to do with the Panel. However, one of the main powers is retain oversight of the overall draft Policing budget and its proposed allocation and to consider any increase in the Policing Precept. It is clear that in order to do that, the Panel needs access to accurate financial information throughout the year.

Fortunately, the Panel is blessed with some members who can add up and take away, so we have formed a new Task Group whose job is to scrutinise the Constabulary accounts of Avon and Somerset Police across the year, so that when the PCC asks for a rise in the percept - which they have done every year since the PCC role was created - the Panel will be in a far better position to agree with or challenge the increase.

The roles of the Police and Crime Panel, the Police service and the PCC are evolving. Our task is to seek clarity and transparency so that the general public can have confidence in all three parts.



**Julie Knight (Independent Member)**



I am one of 3 non-political independent members and I'm now entering my third year as the recently elected Vice Chair. 2021/22 was a busy year for the Panel as the Commissioner developed his Police and Crime Plan that we

reviewed, and he appointed to several senior positions. This included the Chief Constable, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and these necessitated public Confirmation hearings by the Panel. With the Plan and key posts established for 2022/23, I was particularly interested to see progress on the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan and the Commissioners vision of putting the emphasis back on preventing crime.

The Plan is clear that 'prevention work is one of the main functions of Neighbourhood Policing'. I have asked how Neighbourhood Policing is fulfilling this function when officers are seemingly abstracted for extended periods due to high demand over the summer period. We're due to receive a report to the Panel in September's meeting that I'm keen to see.

Throughout the year, the Commissioner has updated us on progress and challenges. The new governance structure to deliver the recommendations from the 'Identifying Disproportionality in the Criminal Justice System' report seems impressive. It really needed to be, especially following the Chief Constable's recent declaration that Avon and Somerset Police is institutionally racist in accordance with Baroness Casey's Review criteria. The Identifying Disproportionality report was commissioned in 2018 and whilst I felt that advancement seemed slow to establish, I hope that the necessary improvements are progressed with pace to start creating a fairer system for all.

I was delighted to hear that much more would be done to feedback to communities about what the Police is doing to tackle issues in their neighbourhood as this has an impact on public confidence. When asked what the biggest challenge for policing is during my interview for a place on the Panel back in 2021, I said confidence in policing. Last November, Councillor Nicola Clark and I took part in the annual national conference for Police and Crime Panel members. It focused on the growing concerns about confidence in policing following several high profiles cases with some very insightful presentations. A clear message was one that the police can only do their job effectively if they have the trust and confidence of the public. Rightly, it's reflected in the Commissioners foreword in his Plan, stating that 'Legitimacy and confidence are the backbone of our model of policing by consent, without which it does not work.' I wholeheartedly agree.

The seemingly steep decline in public confidence over the past 2 years as measured by the Constabulary and reported in March's Panel meeting is deeply concerning. Whilst the Commissioner assures that the whole Police and Crime Plan is about raising confidence, I believe that the plan is very broad and covers most aspects of policing so

it's all a priority. When there are so many priorities, what is a priority? Given that backdrop, the Panel is setting up a Public Confidence Sub Committee and I look forward to being involved. This will give us the opportunity to specifically focus on key areas as a part of our support and challenge function to the Commissioner.

The Panel's membership had been fairly consistent since I joined. This new year sees 7 new members, all councillors from different areas so we can welcome a wealth of different expertise and special interests as we move forward.

## Challenges ahead and looking to the future

### **Work Programme**

As the Commissioner's primary "checks and balance" in between elections, the Panel is aware of its important role in challenging and supporting the Commissioner on your behalf. Our shared objective for the future is to influence and impact positively on the decisions that matter.

The Panel has a work programme that is reviewed every 4-6 weeks as part of the agenda planning process with the Commissioner. As would be expected, the work programme covers the statutory responsibilities of the Panel, alongside other key issues which the Panel wishes to scrutinise. The Chief Constable attends a Panel meeting at least once each year to provide an update on key issues.

Below are some of the work areas the Panel will be reviewing as part of our Work Programme for 2023/24:-

- review of the Commissioner's Annual Report
- scrutiny of meaningful performance reports and data
- presentation on Crime Prevention and progress against the Police and Crime Plan
- monitoring of the strategy to recruit, train, retain and lead a workforce which reflects the communities it serves
- consideration of a formal report on the Estates Strategy
- scrutiny of the Commissioner's Precept proposal and oversight of the draft Policing budget and its proposed allocation
- to retain oversight and ensure that Panel Members make a tangible, practical contribution to the budget and Precept-setting processes, the Panel will form a Budget Task Group. This aligns with the Panel's proposal following the last Precept to develop a mechanism that will enable members to make an assessment throughout the year of the effectiveness of the Precept investment.

#### Public Confidence

Public confidence has been on a downward trend in recent years. Trust is not only based on the competence of the Police in tackling different crimes, but also on how the public perceive that they are treated by the Police.

The Chief Constable's recent announcement that the force is institutionally racist undoubtedly reached a variety of audiences. The message is likely to be welcomed by some and give others cause for concern. The Commissioner has assured the Panel that he fully supports the Chief Constable and has confidence in her leadership and ability to change the culture, and we understand that a culture change is not something that happens overnight.

The Panel recommends that the public will benefit from positive proactive publicity to help with their understanding of the strategy and sensitivities behind the approach of the Commissioner and the Chief Constable. It is important for the public to see that there is a clear pathway for overcoming these challenges in the years to come.

To get some insight into the Commissioner's strategic understanding of serious violence across Avon and Somerset in the context of Domestic Abuse and Rape and Serious Sexual Offences, the Panel held an Inquiry Day last year. This year we will continue to maintain oversight of performance. We welcome the specialism afforded by Operation

Bluestone and its specially trained officers, however a positive outcome increase from 4.7% to 8% does not represent significant progress and we will continue to monitor performance and outcomes of the Bluestone approach.

In January 2023, the Home Office announced that all Police forces must check their workforce against national databases to mitigate against the risk of important information on an individual being missed on their employment. We will continue to seek assurances from the Commissioner that he is satisfied that Avon and Somerset is compliant with this requirement and has appropriate vetting mechanisms in place that the public can have confidence in.

The Panel will form a Public Confidence Sub-Committee in 23/24 to support and challenge the Commissioner as he responds to the decline in public confidence and the areas for improvement emerging from the last inspection of the force by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. His strategy to proactively improve public confidence, maintain the reputation of the force and importantly, to communicate this to the public, is key in our opinion.