

AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

1 FEBRUARY 2024

COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE REPORT

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide the Police and Crime Panel with a summary of key activities of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and his Office (OPCC) since the last meeting to discharge statutory duties and support delivery of the Police and Crime Plan. The report was reformatted earlier this year to align with the four Police and Crime Plan priorities and to include enhanced information on key decisions and national developments.

Police and Crime Plan Delivery

Priority 1

- **Male Violence Against Women and Girls (MVAWG):** Successful Safer Streets 5 bid to improve safety of female workforce and women in the night time economy, rolling out Bristol Women's Safety Charter. Recruitment of OPCC project worker to lead work.
- **Serious Violence:** new appointments in post, Draft Strategic Needs Assessment and Strategy, first Executive Board meeting held, funding confirmed for 24/25; next quarter milestones.
- **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)/Neighbourhood:** success in two partnership Safer Streets 5 bids to tackle ASB. Recruitment of OPCC project worker to lead work.
- **Fraud & Cyber Crime:** communications campaign aimed at people with learning difficulties; new national performance dashboard; bid for specialist support for victims of fraud; successful Christmas awareness and prevention campaign.

Priority 2

- **Engagement:** precept survey update; PCC community engagement activity in Bath, Yeovil and Wells.
- **Victims:** Commissioning Plan and tender documents to be developed following engagement period for recommissioning of victim services.

Priority 3

- **Recruitment:** high level police officer recruitment and leaver figures.
- **Estates:** announcement of new police station in Bath.

Priority 4

- **Inequality & Disproportionality:** first meeting of Independent Scrutiny Board held, update on training arrangements.
- **PCC Scrutiny Panels:** Police Powers Panel scrutiny of Body Worn Video and piloting new online forms; Complaints Panel review of discreditable conduct complaints; Joint ASP/OPCC Out of Court Disposals (OoCD) Panel scrutiny of Domestic Abuse and shop theft cases; Independent Custody Visiting Scheme volunteer recruitment, national quality assurance award, HMICFRS Custody Inspection.
- **Complaints & Contacts:** current contacts themes – lack of police presence, ongoing issues on the Downs, retail crime and hunting offences; update on new contact management system.

Governance & Accountability: overview of PCC oversight boards and links to recent minutes; links to recent HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection reports and PCC responses; overview of progress against PEEL Areas for Improvement.

Key Decisions: Summary of latest decisions: Broadbury Road Business Case, Minehead Outline Business Case.

National Updates: including Police Dismissals Review and Government Response to Fire White Paper.

Police and Crime Plan Delivery

Performance against Police and Crime Plan delivery can be found in the PCC Quarterly Performance Report, which is presented to the Police and Crime Panel and published on the OPCC website.

An update on OPCC activity to support delivery of the Police and Crime Plan is set out below:

Priority 1 – Preventing and Fighting Crime

Male Violence Against Women & Girls

Members will recall that the OPCC has submitted a proposal to the Home Office under round 5 of the Safer Streets funding to reduce male violence against women and girls in the Night Time Economy. The proposal builds on work underway in Bristol through the [Women's Safety Charter](#). A project manager is being recruited – funded by the Safer Streets money, and will be based within the OPCC Policy & Partnerships Directorate to drive this work forward.

Serious Violence

Achievements

- The newly appointed Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) Director, and the Senior Partnerships and Engagement Manager have both taken up post in January. This means the VRP Hub team, fully funded by the Home Office, is now fully staffed following the review that was commissioned with VRP partners in 2023.
- A first draft of the 2023-24 Strategic Needs Assessment and 2024-25 VRP Strategy is being shared with partners and will be submitted to the Home Office by 31 January. These will be iterative documents, which will be further developed by the Director and partnership over coming months.
- The first executive level board – Serious Violence Reduction Partnership Board, chaired by the Deputy PCC, took place at the end of November. This was well attended with good engagement across all Duty Holders. The next meeting will focus on the Strategy and priority setting.
- VRU funding for 2024-25 has been confirmed as part of the Home Office funding settlement. Confirmation of funding in relation to the Serious Violence Duty is awaited.

Challenges

- The Local Authority Spoke teams are undergoing staffing changes at a leadership level. Together with the planned changes to the Hub Team mentioned above, this will impact on capacity and legacy knowledge within the partnership in the short term.

Q3 Outcomes – will be available for the March report.

Next quarter milestones

- 31 January 2024 will see the completion of the Strategic Needs Assessment and first VRP Strategy as required under the new Serious Violence Statutory Duty.
- The Director will lead on setting a VRP Priority plan.
- A performance framework will be completed for the partnership.
- Funding allocations will be considered with the partnership, dependent on any Home Office announcements.

Neighbourhood Crime & ASB

Safer Streets 5

The OPCC have successfully submitted 2 proposals under the Safer Streets 5 funding envelope that aim to combat ASB in Bristol, Bath City Centre, Weston-super-mare, Bridgwater and Taunton. The proposals include strong partnership working between Local Authorities, Police and Business Improvement Districts. Recruitment is under way for a new Policy, Partnerships and Commissioning Manager to lead this work, funded by the Home Office Safer Streets money.

Fraud & Cybercrime

- The Policy and Partnerships team are jointly designing tailored communications and resources to provide accessible information for people with learning disabilities. This will be delivered in conjunction with the internet safety week in early February.
- APCC General Meeting in February: national leads will present on work that has been delivered over the past year. The PCC will present progress on Economic and Cyber Crime policy.
- The new National ECC performance dashboard will be delivered to the national portfolio group for oversight in the next few weeks.
- The Constabulary put in a bid with the support of the PCC for OP HENHOUSE for the amount of £10k. The proposal is to expedite fraud crimes that are currently being dealt with by Patrol officers, and instead using a specialist resource to achieve a more timely outcome for victims.
- The Constabulary successfully delivered a Christmas related communications campaign, the Action Fraud 12 Frauds of Christmas, to promote awareness and support people to avoid becoming victims of fraud.

Priority 2 – Engaging, Supporting and Working with Communities, Victims and Partner Organisations

Public engagement

- The **Precept Survey** closes on 29 January. Consultation is seeking views on the PCC's proposal to increase the policing part of the council tax, which makes up 41% of police funding. The government confirmed in December that the maximum amount PCCs can increase the precept for next year will be £13 a year for a band D household (4.9% of the council tax bill). A postal survey was also launched in December, in order to reach under-represented groups, and returns have already surpassed the target of 4.3% and the number received last year. Ethnic minority representation is currently below target, so the focus is now on working with local stakeholders to help push the survey through channels that will reach black and minoritised communities before the consultation closes. Support from Panel Members would be welcome in promoting the precept survey through networks and within local communities. The online survey can be found at the following link: www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/forms/ops
- **PCC community engagement activity** continues. Recent visits include:
 - 5 January: visit to community groups and local leaders in Bath and Yeovil. The PCC started the day by visiting VOICES Charity in Bath where he met with staff, trustees, and a woman with lived experience of domestic abuse. VOICES is a charity founded by women with lived experience, dedicated to providing recovery support and advocacy for people affected by domestic abuse. It also facilitates the voices of people with lived experience of domestic abuse to inform and improve service provision, in response to their needs. In 2022, VOICES received funding from the OPCC through the Ministry of Justice Domestic Abuse Uplift Fund, to support services for victims in BANES, and to mitigate the challenges for victims who experience barriers to disclosure and accessing support. The PCC also met with MP Marcus Fysh to discuss local crime issues, in particular shoplifting and anti-social behaviour.
 - 15 December: visit to local community groups, faith groups and local leaders in Wells. The PCC started the day by meeting with the Mayor of Wells and local councillors to discuss local crime issues, shoplifting, anti-social behaviour, domestic violence, burglary, and safety

issues. While a range of concerns was discussed, the PCC also heard that the joint efforts by retailers, the Neighbourhood Police Team and the community have led to a reduction in incidents of shoplifting in the area.

Supporting victims of crime and ASB

The engagement period for recommissioning of victim services in Avon and Somerset opened on 15 November 2023 and closed on 31 January 2024. The team are now reviewing all feedback before publishing a final Commissioning Plan and tender documents, which are due before the start of the Pre-election Period.

Priority 3 – Leading the Police to be Efficient and Effective

Recruiting Officers

At the time of writing there are 3,285 FTE police officers.

	Month of December 2023	(Average) Year ending December 2023
Leavers (headcount)	15	20
Reasons for leaving (% of all leavers)		
Resignation	20%	44%
Retirement	60%	45%
Other	20%	11%

Capability

Estates Update

A new police station for the City of Bath will be opened following community feedback asking for policing to be more visible. The new station, Plymouth House, will be based in Monmouth Street and is scheduled to open in Autumn 2025. The premises will replace current bases at Redbridge House on Lower Bristol Road and the One Stop Shop in Lewis House, Manvers Street, where the Bath police team has been co-located within the city’s council offices. Design consultants for the refurbishment are due to be appointed shortly with refurbishment works expected to start before the end of the year.

Priority 4 – Increasing the Legitimacy of, and Public Confidence in, the Police and Criminal Justice System

Inequality and Disproportionality

The OPCC continues to support the wider multi agency response to the recommendations from the Report on Identifying Disproportionality in the A&S Criminal Justice System. The multi-agency Steering Committee is now established to look at wider progress, co-led by Chief Constable Sarah Crew and Deputy Mayor Cllr Asher Craig, meeting every six weeks as a subsidiary group of the Local Criminal Justice Board chaired by PCC Mark Shelford.

Desmond Brown is the Interim Chair for the Independent Scrutiny Board which will act as the community body scrutinising partners’ delivery of this work. The Board has now been appointed and their first meeting was held on 10 December 2023. Focus for early 2024 will be providing training for

the members whilst defining how they plan to approach their scrutiny of the Steering Committee in relation to multi-agency progress with the recommendations of the plan.

Use of Police Powers – PCC Scrutiny Panels/Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel (ISOPPP)

The December ISOPPP saw its new panel members attend for the second time with strong engagement in the process and valuable feedback which was captured through the new online feedback forms. Changes were suggested to make the forms more user friendly and ensure a streamlined approach to capturing the data and making most efficient use of team resources.

The themes derived from the December panel continue to include the use of body worn video (BWV), and what was considered adequate. The Force Lead attended the ISOPPP to provide an update concerning the review of existing national and local guidance through the lens of using BWV when applying police powers. Work is ongoing to enhance existing force procedural guidance which will be shared with the ISoPPP to seek views before making it live.

Overall, the Panel identified areas of good police practice and areas of learning, all of which is fed back to the individual officers, and senior leaders where appropriate. The March panel will look at themes covering stop search and use of force, including focus on stop-search of Black and Minority Ethnic people in Somerset which was highlighted in the Identifying Disproportionality report as having the highest disproportionality rate in the Force area.

Independent Scrutiny of Police Complaints Panel (ISPCP)

8 out of 11 panel members attended the hybrid quarterly December ISPCP meeting. This was the first time the panel opted for a blended approach, with 7 members attending in person and 1 remotely and this worked well.

The panel opted to focus the meeting on the theme of complaints involving Discreditable Conduct, where members of the public have complained as they feel police officers have behaved in a manner which discredits the police service or undermines public confidence, whether on or off duty. The panel welcomed presentations from the Professional Standards Department who have been delivering training to new police joiners regarding expected standards of professional behaviour. They reported that this training has reached a wide audience and will help to educate staff regarding what is appropriate behaviour and thus reduce the number of complaints received in this area.

A planning meeting will take place in January and the next ISPCP is scheduled for 7 March 2024. Quarterly reports relating to both panels can be found located on the website [Volunteering overview | OPCC for Avon and Somerset \(avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk\)](#)

Joint ASP-OPCC Out of Court Disposals Scrutiny Panel

The Out of Court Disposals Scrutiny Panel met in December to review Domestic Abuse Conditional Caution cases and cases relating to shop theft.

Avon and Somerset is one of a number of Forces which has been granted dispensation by the Director of Public Prosecutions to allow use of Conditional Cautions in Domestic Abuse cases. Annual scrutiny of these cases is a requirement of dispensation. A total of 16 cases were reviewed. Three cases were found to be appropriate, eight appropriate with observations, and five considered inappropriate due to the severity of the circumstances. Development of a Decision Making App, incorporating the gravity matrix used to assess severity, will assist in addressing this.

The theme of Shop Theft cases was selected in recognition of the rise in shoplifting nationally exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, the perception portrayed in national media that cases are not being dealt with robustly enough, and a move to treat shoplifting as a 'high harm' crime with the introduction of a new national police intelligence unit to crack down on shoplifting perpetrated by organised gangs. A total of 14 cases were reviewed. Two were found to be appropriate, seven appropriate with observations and five inappropriate. The common theme was that cases are frequently dealt with via a blanket ban on entering the shop in question, with a lack of consideration of the underlying factors and vulnerabilities that may be driving behaviour.

The Panel said farewell to Magistrate representatives Mike Evans (Panel Chair) and Giles Brown. Mike had served on the Panel since its inception in 2014 and Giles has served on the Panel for the past 9 years. Both Mike and Giles were thanked for their invaluable contribution to the Panel over the years. Replacements will be selected in the new year.

A planning session will be held in January, and the Panel will meet in March to review Terms of Reference and participate in a training and development session.

Reports are published at the following link: www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/reports-publications/out-court-disposals-reports/

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) have continued to conduct weekly, unannounced paired visits at each of the 3 Custody Units to check on detainees' rights, entitlements and wellbeing. Four new ICVs have joined their respective teams and are well established. The OPCC relaunched a focused ICV Volunteer Recruitment Campaign at the end of November and have already seen a good amount of interest and applications.

On 27 November the ICV Scheme was recognised for a national award. The Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) - the national membership organisation that supports, leads and represents ICV Schemes – has developed a quality assurance framework to assess how well schemes comply with the code of practice governing custody visiting. The Avon and Somerset PCC ICV Scheme was presented with a Code Compliant quality assurance award by ICVA at a ceremony in Birmingham.

HMICFRS inspected the Constabulary custody provision in January and the OPCC attended the 'hot debrief' at the end of the two weeks. As part of this the ICV Scheme Manager(s) will be interviewed to discuss the running of the Scheme in A&S.

Future ICV meetings will take place in February, July and November 2024.

Additional information about the Scheme can be found at the following link: [The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme | OPCC for Avon and Somerset \(avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk\)](http://The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme | OPCC for Avon and Somerset (avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk))

Contacts/Complaints Oversight

The OPCC continues to monitor contacts coming in from local residents, and to raise complaints and issues at the most appropriate level within the Constabulary. The team also identifies trends and

themes from contacts as well as the PCC and DPCC's engagement to assist the PCC in holding the Chief Constable to account through the Performance and Accountability Board.

Residents have contacted the PCC around a lack of police presence, ongoing issues on the Downs, retail crime and hunting offences.

Go live of the new iCase management system is still delayed. The OPCC plan to start using the system once the ASP Legal Services Team go live which is expected in 2024. Enquiries are being made at a regional level to establish if there is any appetite for a jointly procured contact management solution.

Governance and Accountability

Oversight Boards

The PCC holds two Boards with the aim to:

- Hold the Chief Constable to account for delivery of policing that is efficient and effective;
- Enable the PCC and Chief Constable to openly and publicly demonstrate accountability, transparency and value for money over police functions, decisions and national publications and inspections;
- Demonstrate progress made against the policing and crime objectives set out in the Police and Crime Plan; and
- To further support the requirements of the Specified Information Order by enabling the PCC to openly hold the Chief Constable to account in relation to performance against the National Crime and Policing Measures.

The **Performance and Accountability Board (PAB)** is broadcast live on a monthly basis, and focuses on the PCC holding the Chief Constable to account with the aim to increase public confidence, transparency and engagement. Reports and broadcasts of PAB meetings held since the last Panel meeting can be found at the following link: www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/reports-publications/oversight-boards/

The **Governance and Scrutiny Board (GSB)** takes place on a monthly basis, and is a forum for formal decision making by the PCC, and for the PCC to scrutinise the work, performance, key projects and budget of the Force. Minutes of GSB meetings held since the last Panel meeting can be found at the following link: www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/reports-publications/oversight-boards/

HMICFRS – PCC responses

Since last reported, the [PCC response to one HMICFRS report has been published](#):

- Avon and Somerset – National child protection inspection

There are currently two HMICFRS reports requiring a response:

- [An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales](#)
- [Meeting the needs of victims in the criminal justice system](#)

There is also one recommendation for the PCC to respond to from the [Report on the Criminal Justice Alliance's super-complaint - Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and independent community scrutiny of stop and search](#).

PEEL Areas for Improvement (AFIs)

The following chart shows progress against the Areas for Improvement identified in the most recent Avon and Somerset PEEL Inspection.

PEEL Grading	Progress Tracker: HMICFRS PEEL 2021/22 AFI's (All Level 3)	Business Lead	Not Started	Metrics Identified	Work Ongoing	Improving	Complete
Requires Improvement	AFI 1 – CDI: The constabulary needs to improve the accuracy of recording rape crimes and incidents of rape.	Maya Munden					
Requires Improvement	AFI 2 – CDI: The constabulary needs to improve recording of crimes which involve vulnerable victims.	Maya Munden					
Requires Improvement	AFI 3 – CDI: The constabulary needs to improve how it records crime where anti-social behaviour is reported.	Maya Munden					
Requires Improvement	AFI 4 – The constabulary needs to improve how it records equality data.	Ed Yaxley					
Adequate	AFI 5 - The constabulary should consistently evaluate and share effective problem-solving practice.	Lisa Simpson					
Adequate	AFI 6 - The constabulary needs to ensure that neighbourhood policing officers have access to structured training.	Lisa Simpson					
Requires Improvement	AFI 7 - The constabulary should respond to calls for service within its published time frames based on the prioritisation given to the call. Where delays occur, the rationale should be recorded, and victims should be updated.	Becky Tipper					
Requires Improvement	AFI 8 - The constabulary should reduce the number of abandoned 101 calls.	Becky Tipper					
Requires Improvement	AFI 9 - The constabulary should make sure that repeat and vulnerable callers are routinely identified.	Becky Tipper					
Requires Improvement	AFI 10 - The constabulary should introduce effective processes for timely allocation of crimes of rape and other serious sexual offences to reduce the backlog.	Ed Yaxley					With HMICFRS to review and confirm completion
Requires Improvement	AFI 11 - The constabulary should make sure that an auditable record is kept if a victim withdraws their support for an investigation, and whether an evidence-led prosecution is considered in all such cases.	Ed Yaxley					
Requires Improvement	AFI 12 – The constabulary needs to improve the quality assurance and supervision of investigations.	Rachel Shields					
Adequate	AFI 13 – The constabulary should ensure that risk assessments are effectively supervised, quality assured, and checked for compliance.	Ed Yaxley					
Adequate	AFI 14 – The constabulary should reduce the backlog of applications waiting to be processed.	Victoria Caple					
Requires Improvement	AFI 15 – The constabulary should reduce the time taken to conduct visits and risk assessments on registered sex offenders.	James Turner					
Requires Improvement	AFI 16 – The constabulary should ensure its enforcement action against offenders accessing indecent images of children is robust and conducted in a timely manner.	James Riccio					
Requires Improvement	AFI 17 - The constabulary should ensure it has the capacity and capability to manage demand in the Internet Child Abuse Team (ICAT) and ensure backlogs are subject to a review process.	James Riccio					

Key Decisions

The Commissioner is under a statutory obligation under the terms of the Specified Information Order to publish a record of decisions of significant public interest. The Governance and Scrutiny Board (GSB) is the forum for formal decision making by the PCC. Links to minutes can be found in the Governance and Accountability section above. Decisions are published on the Commissioner's website at the following link: [Decisions log | OPCC for Avon and Somerset \(avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/decisions-log)

Key decisions since the last Panel meeting are as follows:

Date	Summary of Decision	Link to Decision Notice
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadbury Road Business Case: appointment of preferred contractor for the refurbishment of Broadbury Road police station. 	Broadbury Road Decision Notice
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minehead Outline Business Case: approval to purchase and refurbish the Seahorse Centre as an operational police base in Minehead. 	Minehead Decision Notice

National Updates

Police Dismissals Review

In January 2023, the then Home Secretary launched a review into the process of police officer dismissals, designed to ensure that the system is fair and effective at removing those officers who are not fit to serve. Following completion of this, the Government announced a series of reforms to strengthen the disciplinary system on 31 August 2023 and published the [final report on 18 September](#).

The delivery of these reforms will be split into 3 separate tranches, set out below. Tranches 1 and 2 will be delivered through secondary legislation, whereas tranche 3 will require changes to both primary *and* secondary legislation.

- Tranche 1 – Changes to the composition of misconduct panels.
- Tranche 2 – Wider changes to police misconduct, vetting and performance.
- Tranche 3 – Enabling chief officers to appeal to the Police Appeals Tribunal (as well as Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) where the officer concerned is the chief officer).

Work has started in relation to Tranche 1 which will see the misconduct panel composition change from:

- a Legally Qualified Chair, a police officer of Superintendent rank or above and a lay Independent Member, to
- a Chief Officer Chair, 2 Independent Members (one with a specific skill set in organisational standards and disciplines, senior leadership or HR) and a Legally Qualified Advisor (who will act as advisor to the panel only and not be considered a decision-making role).

The Home Office have scheduled the changes to come into effect from April 2024. Recognising the short timescales, the OPCC are working at pace to adhere to this where possible.

Fire White Paper

The government response to the **Fire White Paper** has now been published and can be found at the following link: [Response to the fire reform white paper \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Content is as expected and includes:

- Planned legislation to give operational independence to Chief Fire Officers
- Delivery of a College of Fire
- Governance – no mandating to PFCC model, but government remain supportive of transitions.

No Place to Hide: Serious Organised Crime Strategy 2023-2028

The Home Office has published the 'No Place to Hide: Serious Organised Crime Strategy 2023-2028'. The new strategy refreshes the 2018 Serious Organised Crime (SOC) strategy and sets out the role of PCCs, local forces and Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) within the fight against SOC, as well as covering multi-agency working and a whole system approach. The strategy can be found at the following link: [CP 992 – No Place to Hide: Serious and Organised Crime Strategy 2023-2028 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Reducing the Harm from Illegal Drugs - Public Accounts Committee Inquiry

Following the government's introduction of its [10-year Drugs Strategy](#) (From Harm to Hope), the Public Accounts Committee launched an [inquiry](#) which sought to examine progress to-date in

implementing the strategy. The APCC has submitted written evidence, which can be found at the following link: committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/126593/pdf/

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