



Minutes of the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel
Thursday 27th June at 10.00am
John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1
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Present:

Local Authority and Independent Member Representatives:

Councillor Andy Wait (Bath and North-East Somerset), Councillor Ann Morgan (Bath and North-East Somerset), Councillor Lisa Durston (Bristol City Council), Cllr Sibusiso Tshabalala (Bristol City Council), Richard Brown (Independent Member), Gary Davies (Independent Member), Julie Knight (Independent Member), Councillor Peter Crew (North Somerset Council), Councillor Stuart Davies (North Somerset Council), Councillor Brian Bolt (Somerset Council), Cllr Nicola Clark (Somerset Council), Councillor Heather Shearer (Somerset Council), Councillor Martin Wale (Somerset Council), Councillor Raj Sood (South Gloucestershire Council), Councillor John Bradbury (South Gloucestershire Council).

Host Authority Officers Present:

Jamie Jackson	Governance Service Manager – Scrutiny
Pippa Triffitt	Clerk/Democratic Services Officer

Police and Crime Commissioner and Support Staff:

Clare Moody	Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
Alice Ripley	Chief of Staff
Ben Valentine	Senior Performance and Governance Manager
Joanna Coulon	Scrutiny and Performance Manager
Inspector Stuart King	PCC's Staff Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cara Lavan and Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts.

2. Election of Chair

Proposed by Councillor Peter Crew and seconded by Councillor Andy Wait, Councillor Heather Shearer was duly appointed as Chair for the municipal year 2024-5.

3. Election of Vice-Chair

Proposed by Councillor Nicola Clark and seconded by Councillor John Bradbury, Julie Knight was duly appointed as Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2024-5.

4. Public Question Time

None.

5. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Durstan declared that she worked for SARSAS, an organisation that received funding from the OPCC.

Councillors Bradbury and Sood declared that they had recently been appointed to the South Gloucestershire Independent Advisory Group for Avon & Somerset Police.

Councillor Tshabalala declared that he worked with a racial justice organisation, delivered prison services, had experience as a custody visitor, and had previously applied to be a Special Constable.

The Chair suggested the Panel Members completed a skills audit before the next committee meeting.

Action:

- 1. The Clerk to circulate a skills audit to the Panel.**

6. Minutes of the Previous Meeting on 20th March 2024

Julie Knight highlighted Page 13 and asked for and received confirmation that the Budget group would be renewed yearly as a Task and Finish Group rather than becoming a sub-committee.

The minutes were otherwise confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.

7. Matters Arising

The Chair invited the Panel members to comment on matters arising from the minutes and the action sheet that was circulated before the meeting. The following is a summary of the ensuing discussion:

- The Panel thanked the OPCC for providing the cost data for Operation Hemlock, but raised concerns about the length of time it took to provide this information. The Chief Constable had committed to running ten similar operations to make neighbourhood policing more visible to the public; the Panel suggested that the costs of problem-solving activities ahead of these should be tracked to ensure they were included in the final evaluation. The Panel asked whether the OPCC was confident the funding was in place to carry out the operations. The OPCC assured the Panel that the operations could progress as planned.
- The Panel suggested that the process of recruiting Special Constables and police volunteers needed to be reviewed to better show residents how they could play a proactive part in community policing and to provide a pathway into active recruitment. The Panel asked whether there was data to show where the applications were coming from and the breakdown of the volunteers. The OPCC stated that the number of applications had remained static over the previous few years but offered to investigate the data requested.
- The Panel highlighted Page 75 which stated that the number of Special Constables had dropped by a third over the previous two years, largely due to the uplift prioritising the training of police officers. The OPCC confirmed this and stated that they intended to keep the issue under review to ensure retention of Special Constables.
- The Panel suggested the report provided showing the use of police powers, including stop and search, did not show the whole picture, as it was not correlated with crime activity. The Panel requested that the statistics related to stop and search were shown alongside the crime statistics.
- In addition to stop and search statistics, it was also important to compare incidents of crime and the location of CCTV cameras to investigate where there were gaps in coverage due to a lack of cameras or broken equipment, and where areas were over-monitored. The PCC's Staff Officer advised the Panel that the website www.police.uk showed crime incidents in the local areas. The OPCC were aware of the issues with CCTV cameras and the force were encouraging local councillors to contact their local authorities and the PCC if they were not resolved.
- The Panel recalled the Government announcement asserting that police officers should reduce the numbers of arrests made due to the growth

in the prison population; this was retracted shortly afterwards. There were also larger numbers of individuals released from prison without being assigned to probation services. The PCC stated the NPCC had refuted the idea that the police were arresting fewer people. However, it was acknowledged that the prison population was increasing and that it was an ongoing issue.

- The Panel recalled the Chief Constable's assurance that more officers in the neighbourhood teams would be retained with the increase in the Precept by £13. The Panel emphasised that it was important the residents in the force area received the improvements that were promised in return for the increase. It was requested that the OPCC provide better clarity around the numbers of PCSOs retained and lost with consideration to the nuances provided by such actions as removing long-term vacancies.

Actions:

- 1. The OPCC to investigate the numbers and geographic locations of Special Constable applications and share this information with the Panel.**
- 2. The OPCC to provide crime statistics alongside the stop and search statistics.**
- 3. The OPCC to provide more clarity around the numbers of PCSOs retained and lost.**

8. Chair's Business

On behalf of the Panel the Chair thanked Councillors Craig, Hucker, and Stone, the three former representatives from Bristol City Council, for their valuable contributions during their time serving on the Panel.

The Chair advised the Panel that it was operating within a pre-election period and that all Members should keep this in consideration when making statements.

9. Host Authority Membership Report 2024-5

The Chair invited the Panel to note the Report, advising the Members that the new membership aligned with the required political representation balance.

The Panel Members duly agreed the membership for 2024-5.

10. Work Programme Report 2024-5

The Chair introduced the Report, informing the Panel that due to officer availability, the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) presentation could no longer take place on 5th November. It was therefore suggested that the presentation was added to the business of 24th September training day, with a Q&A session taking place on 5th November alongside the business of the Draft Police and Crime Plan.

The Panel approved this change to the Work Programme.

The Chair advised the Panel that the OPCC had requested that two Panel Members were added to the Police and Crime Plan Advisory Board and asked that expressions of interest were submitted.

The Chair informed the Panel that there was an opportunity for Panel Members to visit the Force Communications Centre at Police HQ in Portishead. More details would be provided after further discussion with the OPCC.

The Chair invited comments and questions from the Panel on the Report. The following is a summary of the ensuing discussion:

- The Panel highlighted the Complaints Sub-Committee on Page 33 and asked whether it would be the same three Panel Members who would continue to serve on the sub-committee. The Chair suggested the Panel received confirmation from the Lead Officer. However, since the departure of Cllr Lisa Stone, there would be a vacancy that needed to be filled.
- The Panel praised former Panel Member Councillor Hucker for his invaluable contributions to the Panel and Budget Task Group and suggested that the vacancy on this group should be filled by a Panel Member with similar experience in financial scrutiny. The Chair suggested a decision be made after the skills audit was completed.
- Cllr Tshabalala suggested the Budget Task and Finish Group could be a promising forum to understand the social value of the finances; additionally, a place-based approach could show how core issues in both urban and rural areas could be addressed. The OPCC advised that the Task and Finish Group focused on the budget setting process, and that it was important to distinguish between the Avon and Somerset budget and the OPCC's commissioning budget; the OPCC offered to investigate whether the latter incorporated social value. The Chair suggested the issue of social value of the finances should instead be incorporated into the workshop on 24th September as it covered similar themes. Each part of the budget contained an element of social value, therefore what was important was receiving assurance that this was being cultivated effectively.

With the change to the business on the meeting on 5th November noted, the Work Programme was otherwise agreed by the Panel.

Actions:

- 1. The Clerk to update the Work Programme.**
- 2. Panel Members to submit expressions of interest for the Police and Crime Plan Advisory Board and the Budget Task and Finish Group to the Clerk.**
- 3. The Lead Officer to confirm appointments to the Complaints Sub-Committee and issue an email to all Panel Members with the appointments for all sub-committees for 2024-5.**
- 4. The OPCC to investigate whether the OPCC's commissioning budget incorporated social value and share their findings with the Panel.**

11. Commissioner's Annual Report 2023-4

The Chair invited the PCC and OPCC to present the Annual Report for 2023-4, advising the Panel that the Report related to the former Commissioner.

The PCC stated she was looking forward to working with the Panel over the next few years. As Commissioner, she intended to be open, accessible, and engage with all groups in the force area, whilst valuing other's input, experience, and advice on how to carry out responsibilities effectively.

The Chief of Staff advised the Panel that this Annual Report was close to a final draft and was presented to the Panel for their comments and questions. The Report followed the revised format first introduced in 2023 which incorporated the Panel's suggestions; it included more detail on the PCC's activities, less jargon, and was more reader friendly. The Chief of Staff thanked the Senior Performance and Governance Manager and the Scrutiny and Performance Manager for their work on the Report.

The Chair thanked the OPCC and asked the Panel for their comments and questions. The following is a summary of the discussion:

- The Panel highlighted Priority 1 which related to preventing and fighting crime. The figures on Page 51 show that the positive outcome rate had dropped from 13.3% to 11.2% since 2019/20. It was suggested that the new Police and Crime Plan should look to improve these figures. Burglary in particular had a very low positive outcome rate, at 5.3%. The OPCC highlighted the accompanying increase in the number of recorded crimes over the same time period but acknowledged the Panel's concerns.

- The Panel emphasised that the increases in the Precept by £15 in 2023 and £13 in 2024 were accompanied by assurances that neighbourhood policing would be improved as a result; however, the current crime statistics did not support this. It was felt that the public were not getting the value they expected from their Council Tax investment, which contributed to the lack of public confidence in the force.
- The Panel were concerned that the lack of public confidence in the police was not sufficiently covered in the Annual Report. Issues such as the low positive outcome rate for burglaries, the length of time it took for police to respond, and the low levels of visible policing particularly in rural areas all contributed to the lack of public confidence. This was augmented by the low attendance rates of PCSOs at parish and town council meetings. There was also little mention of the issue of rural crime engagement as part of Priority 4. It was important that policing was proactive to help rebuild public trust and confidence in the force. The PCC acknowledged the issues around police response times and positive outcome rates, and her role in overseeing the force's strategic outlook. She emphasised the importance of neighbourhood policing teams in ensuring they had a thorough knowledge of the areas they served to assist with these issues.
- The Panel spotlighted the anti-social behaviour case study of Keynsham on Page 63 and informed the PCC that the town had grown by 35% since 2011 but had not seen an increase in policing. The anti-social behaviour was severely disruptive and caused trauma to the victims involved. However, delays in the police response were common. The former PCC attended a meeting on these issues in which the residents expressed their frustration over the issues they faced. As a result, the police worked in partnership with the town council to target troublesome groups. They also worked with Bath to popularise an app where incidents were recorded to alert other shopkeepers in the area. This was a good example of the police working with the community to find solutions. The PCC added that the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) worked with the young people involved to alter their trajectories and reduce the likelihood of reoffending.
- The Panel reflected on the figures on Page 50 showing the number of crimes each day in the force area. It referred to 63 domestic abuse crimes and 7 rapes occurring every day. Historically, reporting rates for such crimes were very low in comparison to the number of victims in real terms. This reflected the lack of trust and confidence in the police response, the rates of justice outcomes, and the long delays in receiving justice. This was a significant issue for the new Police and Crime Plan to address. It was important for the barriers to reporting were removed, particularly for marginalised communities. The PCC acknowledged the point regarding the data. She highlighted the success of Bluestone

Soteria and the increased rate of reporting since its launch. With a positive feedback loop, the increase in reporting would lead to an increase in the positive outcome rates.

- The Panel highlighted the data on Page 55 and raised concerns that the average number of days to charge an offender with rape was 626 days in 2023/4, and the figure consistently remained higher than the national average. The positive outcome rates were increasing due to the work of Operation Bluestone, but it was taking a significant length of time to achieve these outcomes due to increased reporting and increased workload.
- The Panel stated that the issues raised on Page 90 relating to data integrity were long-standing, and prevalent for many different crimes. The Panel requested assurance that the issues would be solved. The OPCC acknowledged the importance of this matter and stated that correcting these issues and working to prevent them was a priority.
- The Panel identified that the figures on Page 50 did not include crimes against business. Such crimes were common but often not reported due to a history of poor police responses and a lack of public confidence. However, business crime was an important focus, and it related to other crimes such as anti-social behaviour. A recent incident in South Gloucestershire saw three businesses affected by business crime, however the police deemed the value of the loss too low to provide significant support. The new Police and Crime Plan did not appear to address the concerns of such business owners. The PCC stated she had previously worked with the Retail Workers Trade Union in addition to other such groups and had discussed concerns with high street shop owners. It was evident there were lower levels of business crime in areas where the PCSOs were well known to the business owners. The PCC also stated that she had attended the Retail Crime Forum and made their concerns a priority. The Panel suggested that any business crime strategy should include the business districts in its consultation.
- The Chief of Staff thanked the Panel for the suggestions they had made to improve the PCC's Annual Report and assured them that they would be considered. The Panel were encouraged to contact the OPCC if they had any further comments.

12. Commissioner's Update Report

- The PCC presented the initial ideas for the new Police and Crime Plan. The Plan would be more focused, have fewer headings, and encompass five priorities that would be submitted for consultation by the force and

other partners, the Panel, focus groups, and community groups. The development process included the Police and Crime Plan Advisory Board, the membership of which would include two Panel Members. The priorities were:

- Priority 1 – Neighbourhood policing
 - Priority 2 – Addressing, responding to, and preventing violent crime
 - Knife crime
 - Violence against women and girls (VAWG)
 - Priority 3 – Prevention
 - Priority 4 – Victim focus
 - Priority 5 – Standards in policing
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- The Panel was pleased that the new Plan appeared to correlate with the manifesto and praised the PCC's approach to the Plan and the aim to make it more focused. It was evident that public confidence was a golden thread that connected the five priorities. The Public Confidence Sub-Committee was set up in 2023 in response to the lack of a proactive response to the decline in public confidence in the police. It was suggested that the new Plan should explicitly explain how the five priorities would improve public trust and confidence. The PCC agreed that public confidence should be a golden thread running through the Plan and confirmed that the importance of communicating with the public would be considered when drafting the new Plan.

 - The Panel highlighted Priority 1 and informed the PCC that there was a large disparity in reporting between communities in Bristol; some areas were reluctant to file police reports, whereas other areas formed neighbourhood groups to aid the duplication of reports to provoke a police response. It was also suggested that re-offending could be a promising focus for the new Plan. The PCC agreed, and acknowledged the issues related to reporting and agreed that work needed to be done on this. Neighbourhood policing would be an important factor to ensure there was a proactive response.

 - The Panel emphasised the difference between the communication of the Police and Crime Plan and the police force communicating its strategy to improve trust and confidence; the force should have a strategy and be able to articulate it. There was also a distinction between the PCC explaining her role and the police force explaining its role to the public. The PCC agreed these were important distinctions. The PCC's Communications team worked with the ASP Communications team and were aware of this necessity.

 - The Panel highlighted the increase in the number of technology-based abuses, which often occurred alongside physical abuse and prolonged

the trauma experienced. The Panel asked how this could be included in the data and strategy going forward. The PCC advised that this would likely be included under Priority 2. The Plan would address 'what' was going to happen through the priorities and would be supplemented by an action plan setting out 'how' the priorities would be delivered. This would be the focus of the consultation process. The Panel emphasised that it was important that the new Plan also captured the non-violent elements of abuse.

- In terms of neighbourhood policing, the Panel emphasised that it was important for PCSOs to have a full understanding of their own patrol area. The Panel asked whether there was a core purpose statement for neighbourhood policing and a defined set of required skills and abilities for PCSOs. The Panel also asked whether records were kept of activities such as the numbers of stops and searches to ensure they were held accountable. The PCC's Staff Officer confirmed that some statistics were recorded relating to police visibility. The PCC suggested these queries were investigated and the answers shared with the Panel.
- The Panel asked whether the Race Matters Annual Report mentioned on Page 129 would be entered into the public domain. The OPCC confirmed that it was scheduled for publication after the General Election in July and agreed to share it with the Panel once published. The Panel also questioned why there was not a link to the rationale behind the Treasury Management Strategy decision on Page 133. The OPCC agreed to investigate this.
- The Panel noted that the force was undergoing a PEEL inspection this September, and that the OPCC had provided a chart to show their progress against the action items given in the PEEL inspection of 2023 on Page 132. The Report stated that there had recently been an inspection of A&S custody suits; the Panel sought assurance that they would be informed of such inspections and of the progress of the force's responses. The PCC agreed that tracking the progress of inspections and following them up was crucial. She informed the Panel that she had recently met with the Leaders of both Somerset Council and North Somerset Council to discuss the outstanding system issues following the recent Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI).
- The PCC informed the Panel that the Performance and Accountability Board was to be renamed Police Question Time and would be relaunched with a new format in mid-July.

Actions:

- 1. The OPCC to investigate the statistics recorded relating to police visibility and share these with the Panel.**

2. **The OPCC to circulate the Race Matters Annual Report to the Panel.**
3. **The OPCC to investigate the rationale behind the Treasure Management Strategy decision and share this with the Panel.**

13. Performance Monitoring Report

The Chair invited the Panel to present their questions and comments on the Report to the OPCC. The following is a summary of the ensuing discussion:

- The Panel highlighted the figures on Page 138 and raised concerns over the increased rate of homicides. The OPCC agreed this was an important issue, advising the Panel that their scrutiny of this with ASP had indicated that the increase was due to an anomalous spike in these serious incidents. The OPCC assured the Panel that they were confident the appropriate plans and resources were in place to address the issue.
- The Panel highlighted the table on Page 143 showing that four out of the five categories for victim satisfaction had a reducing trend. The Panel asked whether victim satisfaction would be a priority going forward. The PCC confirmed that this would be covered under Priority 4 of the new Police and Crime Plan.
- Referring to the Actions on Page 149, the Panel requested more details on the task and finish group set up to review the use of compliant handcuffing within ASP. The OPCC stated this related to the use of handcuffs on individuals who were complying with the police and therefore did not need to be handcuffed. This issue was scrutinised by the Independent Scrutiny of Police Powers Panel to check for the unnecessary use of handcuffs during stop and searches.
- In relation to the distribution of drugs and County Lines, the Panel asked whether the focus leaned towards organised crime or petty crime. The OPCC stated that crime targets were based on the level of harm inflicted, so targeting the suppliers and organisers was the priority.

The Chair thanked the Panel for their questions and the OPCC for the Report.

14. Panel Annual Report 2023-4

The Chair introduced the Panel's Annual Report, advising the Members that it was submitted to Somerset Council's Full Council AGM in May.

Councillor Bradbury asked whether the Report was similarly presented to all the relevant authorities, as it was important that they were aware of the activities

of their representatives on the Panel. The Chair informed the Panel that it was not formally submitted to the member authorities, but the Panel Members were encouraged to circulate it to the relevant individuals at their authorities.

The Report was otherwise noted.

15. Standing Complaints Report

The Chair introduced the Standing Complaints Report and invited the Panel Members to ask any questions they had.

- The Panel highlighted point 15 on Page 177 and asked whether the OPCC had taken a sample of the reviews handled by the complaint review manager for assurance checks. The OPCC stated that the PCC read and signed off each review and report.
- The Panel noted that complaint number 99 was listed as 'closed' on Page 179, yet the commentary on Page 176 suggested the complaint was ongoing. As the lead member of the Complaints Committee, Gary Davies agreed to investigate this discrepancy.

The Report was otherwise noted.

Actions:

- 1. Gary Davies to investigate the discrepancy related to complaint number 99 on Pages 176 and 179.**

16. Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 5th November 2024.