

## **Development of the 2024-29 Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Plan Panel Members Report**

### **Background**

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has a legal duty to issue a Police and Crime Plan (Plan) for the force area as required by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

A Police and Crime Plan Advisory Board (Advisory Board) was set up by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to oversee and facilitate the creation of the 2024-2029 Police and Crime Plan. An invitation was extended for two Panel members to represent the Panel on the Advisory Board; these two members were Julie Knight and Cllr John Bradbury. This report is intended to inform other Panel members regarding its development and our observations.

### **Governance**

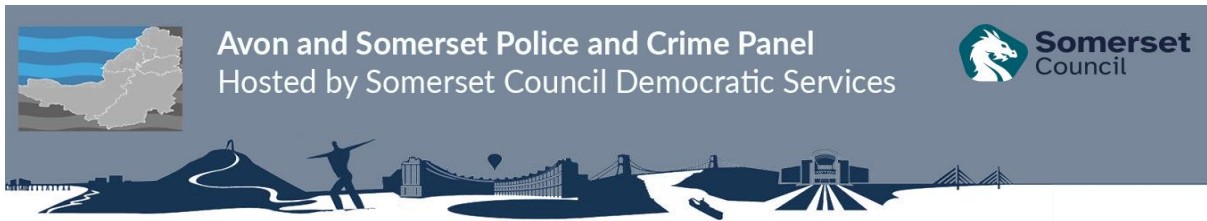
The Advisory Board has strategic responsibility for the creation of the Plan. Working to a Terms of Reference, it exists to ensure that the Plan is developed to the required standards in terms of quality, cost and time.

Launched in August, its monthly online meetings are chaired by the PCC. Membership includes those with a range of knowledge and skills in governance, strategy, performance, finance, communications and engagement. Members include:

- PCC - Clare Moody (Chair)
- OPCC Chief of Staff - Alice Ripley
- OPCC Chief Finance Officer - Paul Butler
- OPCC Director of Performance and Accountability – Sally Fox (Project Director/Lead)
- OPCC Director of Policy and Partnerships – Marc Hole
- OPCC Head of Communications and Engagement – Niamh Byrne
- OPCC Senior Performance and Governance Manager – Ben Valentine
- Violence Reduction Partnership Serious Violence Director – Natalie Lavis
- Avon and Somerset Police – Deputy Chief Constable Jon Reily and Chief Finance Officer Nick Adams
- Police and Crime Panel members

The Police and Crime Plan Steering Group (Steering Group) manages and delivers the activity required in distinct delivery stages. These range from Initiation (Stage 1), Planning (Stage 2), Design (Stage 3), Implementation (Stage 4) to Evaluation (Stage 5).

They formally report to the Advisory Board each month and use a range of supportive planning tools including a Project Timeline, Communication Plan, Consultation Activity Plan, Risk/Issues/Decisions/Learning capture and more.



## Observations from Panel Members

- This Governance structure seems robust. It is Chaired at the highest level with strong, supporting leadership and a collaborative approach within the OPCC.
- There appears to be meaningful and collaborative engagement between the OPCC and the Constabulary through the Advisory Board.
- The Plan Development Timeline (Gantt chart) is a helpful and effective tool.
- Risks and issues seem freely raised, considered and recorded.
- The Advisory Board invited and welcomed our questions and views. Where written responses were required, they responded fully and quickly.

## Plan Content

PCC Clare Moody's five police and crime priorities are:

1. Strengthening neighbourhood policing to provide a visible police presence, engage with communities, and tackle ASB.
2. Reducing violent crime with a focus on male violence against women and girls, and knife crime.
3. Preventing crime, working together with other organisations and the public to build safer communities.
4. Supporting victims of crime to get the help they need when they need it.
5. Improving the standards of policing so that people receive a fair and effective service.

The PCC chose these priorities based on demand issues for the constabulary and from what she was hearing from people during her campaign in the lead up to being elected in May. Through the Advisory Board, the PCC advised that following consultation, if there was an overwhelming response on a topic that has not been included in the Plan then it would be given consideration.

As usual, the Plans development includes the follow prerequisites:

- Observing the Association of Policing and Crime Chief Executives guidance
- Meeting legislative requirements set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

Notably, taking information sources into account that includes:

- PCC's election campaign priorities
- Police and Crime Needs Assessment
- OPCC commissioning and partnership strategies
- Strategic Threat Assessment
- Strategic Policing Requirement
- Force Management Statement
- National Crime and Policing Measures
- Existing national and local strategies related to policing and crime



- Current and future legislation.

### **Performance and Assurance**

An Action Plan will be developed in the Implementation stage (Stage 4). This will have baselines and performance measures to publicly demonstrate the impact of the plan.

The Panel will be updated on the Plans performance as usual, through Panel meetings as a standing standalone agenda item and through scrutiny arrangements that are agreed and planned annually and published at our Annual General Meetings.

### **Observations from Panel Members**

- The draft Plan is more direct and succinct than its predecessor and this is welcomed. It provides a clearer, narrower focus and mandate to those charged with its delivery so better performance outcomes should be more realistic.
- Each priority itself is clear, and its description is informative to the public along with the outcomes that are expected. This will help the Panel to understand its impact and help to inform the focus of our scrutiny.
- We welcomed the flexible approach that may need needed should an overwhelming response to another aspect that's not included in the plan be received during consultation.
- The priority around strengthening neighbourhood policing is important. Concerns about the Neighbourhood Teams capacity due to frequent abstractions have been repeatedly raised over many years at Panel meetings with examples of its impact (e.g. the 4-month long demand management operation over the summer period). In addition, the panel are aware that PCSO numbers have declined during the current financial year as recruitment is being held due to the financial position. These 2 high level aspects may harm performance in terms of the successful delivery of this necessary priority and we would welcome those concerns being allayed.

### **Communication and Engagement**

The consultation approach was guided by a detailed Communications Plan that set out their engagement activity over an 11-week period. This included

- A Survey
- Public forums
- Focus groups

Some of the consultation objectives were to

- Increase overall total participation in the survey from 6,518 in the last survey (5,530 online and 988 postal),
- Ensure that responses are proportionately representative in each local authority area



- Seek representative participation from black and minoritised people across the force area
- Seek ideas on how police and partners can deliver against the priorities

Multiple channels were used to raise awareness, including mainstream and social media to seek a wide range of participants including community groups/organisations/forums including youth and faith groups. It also included PCC commissioned and commissioned services, MPs, local councillors, agencies including police (and their channels, e.g. Independent Advisory Groups), local authorities, Integrated Care Boards, NHS England, Criminal Justice agencies, Partnerships (including Community Safety Partnerships, Criminal Justice Board, Violence Reduction Partnership), Police and Crime Panel along with those with 'lived experience'.

### **Survey**

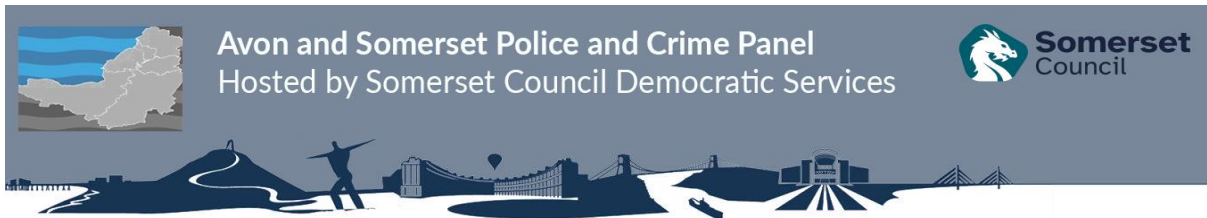
The Police and Crime Plan and Police Funding Survey was launched on 15<sup>th</sup> August, marking the start of an 11-week public consultation period that ended on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024. This is the first double handed consultation they have run. It sought views on the police and crime plan and its priorities and views on how much of an increase, if any, they would support in the council tax policing precept in 2025/26. The rationale for this approach was that they considered that running two separate consultation campaigns may dilute their messaging and make the information more difficult for the public to engage with. The online version was hosted on the PCCs website, and 20,000 paper surveys were created as postal surveys and sent to specific areas that were identified as having low engagement or underrepresented communities.

The online survey was structured around the five priorities and asked how these could be achieved, offering free text opportunities to respond. This vastly differed from the previous approach in 2021 as this was a seemingly more leading tick box structure with no free text options. In addition to including the precept question, it also included a tick box satisfaction consideration of the levels of confidence in both the PCC and the Police.

Once the consultation for the Plan closed, the Precept element of the survey will remain open until Christmas. This will close in time for analysis and reporting to the Panel in February when the Precept is considered.

### **Public Forums**

Six public forum events with a capacity for 100 people were held across the force area between August and October. One was held in each local authority area with two in Somerset given its geographic size. Stakeholders and the public were invited to sign



up for the events through the PCCs website. Hosted by the PCC, it was supported by her office and the local policing teams.

The 1.5-hour long forums gave participants the chance to hear about each priority and they had the opportunity to guide on how they felt they could be achieved to which the PCC responded. Any specific concerns that needed attention were helpfully managed by the police on site or her office.

Participants received an email following the forum to encourage participation in the survey.

### **Focus Groups**

Seven focus groups were facilitated by either the OPCC or an independent body to specifically hear from target audiences. These included:

- Young people
- Black & minoritised people
- Faith communities
- Women
- Victims
- People living in socio-economically deprived areas where crime rates are higher
- Rural communities where people can feel isolated

Participants were selected through networks known to the OPCC such as OPCC's Youth Engagement Apprentice who had developed contacts with the Youth Council/Youth Parliament and other networks like the Faith Forum. Other participants were sought through commissioned services or through organisations that the PCC had engaged with.

### **Survey, Forum and Focus group outcomes**

At the time of writing, we have yet to learn of the outcomes as the activity has recently taken place and the next Advisory Board is imminent. The PCC will update the Panel directly on 5<sup>th</sup> November when she presents her Plan. Analysis from the first 300 survey responses provided 312 ideas and suggestions that will be screened for feasibility. Early signs indicate that the five priorities have been supported, with notable consistency at the public forums in respect of strengthening neighbourhood policing (priority 1) and road safety (within priority 3) as ones that people really engaged with.

### **Observations from Panel Members**

- The Panel considered that the consultation questions for the 2021-25 Plan were too leading and limited the participant to ticking a box with no free text opportunity. This was reflected in our formal feedback. This time, the approach was reversed for free text only. The OPCC explained in Septembers Panel meeting that they expected fewer responses due to the open 'free text' question style as perhaps responding requires a little more effort than ticking a box. The Advisory Board was advised that just under 700 online survey responses had been received, so they



were focusing on encouraging more take up in the remaining 3 weeks of the consultation period.

- The rationale for running a double handed consultation seems like a reasonable approach in terms of preventing public confusion and consultation fatigue. Hopefully, more Precept responses can be sought as it will immediately direct to that question. We welcome the Precept survey continuing to run until Christmas and the analysis being ready for the Panels consideration of the Precept proposal in February.

The early consultation on the Precept may pose a question that the public are being asked a financial consideration ahead of budgets being known that may better inform financial planning and forecasting. We appreciate that this is very fluid, and the timescales would be challenging.

- The Panel considered that more engagement with young people was needed in the consultation for the 2021-25 Plan and this was reflected in our formal feedback. The OPCC consequently put more resource and focus into face-to-face engagement, and this was welcomed.
- Similarly with the last process in 2021, early indications show low survey responses from constabulary staff as reported to the Advisory Board 3 weeks from the surveys closure. Given that they are pivotal to the plan's successful delivery, senior officers have taken actions to address this. If the overall outcome remains low again, it would be advantageous to understand why going forward.
- The venues for the Public Forums were chosen as they could accommodate 100 participants. Members have attended with John Bradbury having attended 2 (Bristol and Weston) where the audience was half of that or less.

As is often the case in public meetings, there may be people who need and want to have their say that may not fit with the agenda. For example, when asking what can be done to achieve a priority, then leads to people sharing their concerns so the question isn't in full focus. It may be more fruitful to hand out Post-its and pens and task the audience to respond directly to the question. This may also encourage participation from those who are shy to speak so they are heard too.

Of note, a participant in Weston asked about the timing as a 6pm start may be a bit early for some people. The date/time/place may be worthy of future consideration to see if more people can be encouraged to attend.

- There was a consideration in the Communications plan for livestreaming the forums. This may extend their reach but presents a risk that some people may not attend a meeting in favour of that. An opportunity for a live online event as a complementary approach may engage those who would struggle to attend a meeting due to care arrangements, or fear of speaking publicly, or prefer the virtual approach.
- The survey asks respondents to tick a box to indicate how confident they are in their PCC and police. Given the ongoing decline in public confidence (that led to the creation of a sub-committee within our Panel), perhaps there was an opportunity to ask why the respondent had made their assessment as it may have revealed some useful insights. The Advisory Board explained that work was being done around the confidence measure that would be more helpful going forward.



### **Next Steps and Key Dates**

- The draft 2024-29 Police and Crime Plan will be presented by the PCC to the Police and Crime Panel for consideration on 5th November 2024. This is an opportunity for members to raise questions and then make a report and recommendations on the plan.
- The finalised Plan will be formally presented at the Panel on 9th December. The PCC will also outline the approach for the local Police and Crime Plans at area level.
- The Advisory Board will continue to run for a short time as the action plan to deliver the Plan is formulated.

### **Acknowledgements**

We acknowledge that a vast amount of critical work has been undertaken by the PCC and her Office that has met tight timelines.

Julie Knight represented the Panel on the 2021 Advisory Board where the 2021-25 Police and Crime Plan was developed. Then, the leadership, direction and control were impressive, noting that this was a new task for some of the leaders in the OPCC. This year's approach has felt even more impressive for several reasons. The Advisory Board was chaired at the highest level by the PCC who was actively engaged in overseeing the proceedings, and the planning itself appeared to be efficient and more seamless under Sally Fox's direct leadership.

We also acknowledge the engagement, support and obvious commitment to task by the Constabulary.

The Panel were grateful for the opportunity to have been included in the Advisory Board.

Julie Knight (Independent Panel Member) and Councillor John Bradbury

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024