



Minutes of the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel Tuesday 10th December at 10.00am John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE

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), Councillor Cara Lavan (Bristol City Council), Councillor Sibusiso Tshabalala (Bristol City Council), Richard Brown (Independent Member), Julie Knight (Independent Member), Councillor Peter Crew (North Somerset Council), Councillor Stuart Davies (North Somerset Council), Councillor Brian Bolt (Somerset Council), Councillor Nicola Clark (Somerset Council), Councillor Heather Shearer (Somerset Council), Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts (Somerset Council), Councillor Raj Sood (South Gloucestershire Council), Councillor John Bradbury (South Gloucestershire Council).

Host Authority Officers Present:

Patricia Jones	Panel Lead Officer
Pippa Triffitt	Clerk/Democratic Services Officer

Police and Crime Commissioner and Support Staff:

Clare Moody	Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
Paul Butler	Chief Finance Officer (CFO)
Sally Fox	Director of Performance and Accountability
Ben Valentine	Senior Performance and Governance Manager
Niamh Byrne	Head of Communications and Engagement
Joanna Coulon	Scrutiny and Performance Manager

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Martin Wale and Independent Member Gary Davies.

2. Public Question Time

None.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting on 5th November 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record.

5. Matters Arising

The Chair invited comments from the Panel Members on the Action Sheet that was circulated before the meeting.

Cllr Lavan advised that her query was pending further information, but she was satisfied with the answer provided.

The Chair advised the Panel that it would be receiving further information on Stop and Search and ethnicity as part of the discourse on tackling disproportionality that was scheduled for the Panel's meeting in March.

The Chair informed the Panel that the Panel officers were liaising with the OPCC to confirm a date in Spring 2025 for Panel Members to visit Police HQ.

6. Chair's Business

The Chair thanked the CFO for delivering the Panel's Budget Briefing on 26th November. The CFO welcomed the discussion that took place at the meeting and invited feedback from the Panel Members on the format and content of the briefing for future reference.

7. Final Police and Crime Plan 2024-9

The Chair invited the PCC and the Director of Performance and Accountability to introduce the Report. The following is a summary of the key points made:

- The PCC thanked the Panel Members for their input to the Police and Crime Plan, and thanked Cllr Bradbury and Julie Knight for engaging with and providing constructive feedback to the Advisory Board.
- The PCC acknowledged the questions raised in the Panel's letter to the PCC and offered to clarify any answers provided in her response if needed.

- The PCC stated that the aim of Stage 3 of the process was to create a comprehensive, informative, and accessible Plan that emphasised the five priorities. The delivery of the priorities would be addressed in the subsequent Action Plan as part of Stage 4.
- The Action Plan would have three headlines: actions for the police force (which concerned approximately three-quarters of the ideas submitted during public consultation), actions for its partners, and actions for the OPCC and PCC. The initial creation of the Action Plan would take place over the next three months. It was emphasised that the document would be dynamic and not set in stone.
- The public consultation survey for the Plan utilised free text boxes, and approximately 1,200 ideas were submitted. These had all been read and categorised by the OPCC (with many crossovers) and will be used to create the Action Plan.
- The Panel was advised that Stage 4 comprised three streams of work: communications and engagement, action planning, and performance monitoring. The team would be looking at how Avon and Somerset and its partners could collaborate to implement the Plan effectively.
- It was vital to plan effectively to address the extensive activity and the allocation of resources that would be required to deliver the priorities, in addition to making sure that recommendations from the HMICFRS were considered. It was important to acknowledge that some of the suggestions were not viable in the current financial climate.
- The performance monitoring would look at the baselines and how performance would be measured against them, both quantitatively and qualitatively.
- The implementation stage was due to be finalised around April 2025.
- The PCC thanked the OPCC for their support in creating the Plan and praised the leadership of Sally Fox, Director of Performance and Accountability.

The Chair thanked the PCC and the Director of Performance and Accountability for their presentation and invited comments and questions from the Panel Members. The following is a summary of the ensuing discussion:

- The Panel praised the inclusion of performance monitoring in Stage 4, emphasising the importance of accountability and measuring progress and success. The Panel asked whether each of the 54 objectives in the Plan would be measured separately, noting that many were difficult to measure quantitatively or qualitatively. The PCC agreed that accountability was crucial and stated that an important part of Stage 4 was determining

a baseline against which the objectives would be measured using methods such as internal metrics, survey data, changes in policies, promotion processes, delivery timelines, and internal feedback. It was acknowledged that certain objectives would be more difficult to measure than others, such as activity around prevention, and that there was a need to feed the results back to the public in an accessible way. The Annual Report would be an important medium for this.

- The Panel queried the role of external verification in the implementation process. The PCC emphasised her own responsibility in ensuring the Plan was delivered successfully and highlighted the Panel's role as an external verifier. It was stressed that some of the metrics would likely appear to show a negative result, such as an increase in the number of incidents that were reported through the extension of Operation Soteria into domestic abuse. It was also emphasised that some of the objectives would have long timescales, therefore evidence of positive tangible consequences may not be readily forthcoming.
- The PCC encouraged Panel Members to view the recording of the Police Question Time that took place the day before on 9th December where the issue of gender-based violence was discussed.
- The Panel praised the accessibility of the Plan but questioned the discrepancy between the Plan's promise of increased visible policing and the likely shortfall in the Police Funding Settlement. The Panel highlighted the risk to public confidence if the priorities were not delivered as promised. The PCC acknowledged that it was important not to overpromise and underdeliver and emphasised the difficulties of meeting multiple demands within a challenging financial landscape, which the Panel recognised. The Director of Performance and Accountability added that the issue of neighbourhood policing featured strongly in the public consultation, therefore it was an important focus that needed to be addressed, but this had to be balanced with the uncertainties regarding core funding. The Head of Communications and Engagement emphasised that the focus on neighbourhood policing also included factors such as improving the communications between the current neighbourhood teams and the communities they served.
- The Panel asked how many of the 13,000 neighbourhood officers, PCSOs, and Special Constables promised by central government were expected to be allocated to Avon and Somerset. The PCC informed the Panel that this allocation was expected over the course of the Prime Minister's term in office. £500 million in funding had been announced, some of which would contribute to this neighbourhood policing scheme. Central government had yet to provide detailed figures on allocations, and Avon and Somerset had not requested a specific number.
- The Panel raised concerns over the response rate of the public consultation survey, at 1,111 respondents from the entire Avon and Somerset force area. The PCC advised that they had expected fewer

responses than they had received in the past as the free text format required more time and effort to complete compared to multiple-choice boxes. The Director of Performance and Accountability explained that discussions with national counterparts showed the benefits of using free text boxes as they allowed for more qualitative answers of what residents felt was important and what actions could make a difference, compared to multiple-choice tick boxes. Furthermore, the focus groups and forums meant that demographics with historically low levels of engagement were given a louder voice, resulting in qualitative insights from a wider variety of people. The Head of Communications and Engagement added that the team adhered to methods of best practice and adjusted their engagement tactics in response to the public's feedback.

- The Panel noted that individuals from some ethnic and faith groups were underrepresented in the survey responses and suggested that increased engagement with mosques by PCSOs would have been beneficial. The PCC advised the Panel that she had attended the Bristol Muslim Strategic Leadership Group conference and learned they had also experienced low response figures to a survey from Bristol's Muslim community, suggesting it was not a phenomenon confined to the police. The PCC assured the Panel that focused work was conducted to reach out to different groups in the community, and that active engagement with residents across the force area would not cease with the end of the public consultation. The Head of Communications and Engagement added that, as policing was a non-political entity, it was not incumbent on the operational police officers to promote the Plan's public consultation survey.
- The Panel emphasised the importance of geographical equity in terms of police visibility and questioned whether there were disparities in the communication channels and the frequency of communications between the force and the local authorities due to the variation in formats, such as the LCN model in Somerset and the locality model in Bristol. The Panel requested information on the frequency that neighbourhood officers contacted the town and parish councils in different geographical areas across the force area. The PCC agreed that perceptions of policing were important. She advised the Panel that the force area's widely dispersed population over a large geographic area presented challenges to ensuring there were strong two-way channels of communication. The PCC emphasised that the force and the local authorities shared a responsibility for strengthening their connections. The Head of Communications and Engagement suggested that the Panel Members could play a valuable role in this and offered to discuss a strategic level review with the Director of Communications and Engagement to map communication channels across the force area as part of the Action Plan. The Chair highlighted the importance of the Action Plan in making sure that resources were being used appropriately to help both prevent crime and facilitate feelings and perceptions of safety in both urban and rural neighbourhoods.

- The Panel referenced the public consultation survey which called for police officers to be visibly and proactively detecting and preventing crime. The Panel's initial response to the PCC's Plan also highlighted the important role played by the Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) in improving positive outcome rates through the gathering of intelligence. Whilst acknowledging the challenges of converting intelligence into positive outcomes, the Panel asked how it could be more successfully translated going forward. The Director of Performance and Accountability agreed that intelligence was pivotal to producing positive outcomes; however, low levels of public confidence often hindered efforts to gather it. The OPCC was working with the Chief Superintendent for Neighbourhood Policing and were seeing promising results from the training of new officers in terms of their ability to build relationships with the communities they served. The PCC added that it was important NPTs were given the time and opportunity to build these relationships, as was the communication of activity and the resulting outcomes to the community.
- The Panel asked whether the retention levels of new police officers had been examined when creating the Plan, and whether the use of the force's operational resources had been considered in the implementation of this strategic plan. The PCC advised the Panel that recruitment and retention had been taken into account, as had the deployment of the force's resources. The Director of Performance and Accountability added that they were working to clarify the expectations and demands of the job at an early stage in recruitment to improve retention rates. In terms of the implementation of the Plan, this was still in its early stages. The OPCC were cognisant of the different approaches required when considering the strategic and operational spheres but assured the Panel that there had been extensive communication and collaboration with the Constabulary throughout the creation of the Plan.
- The Panel advised that Neil Bennett, Director of Communications and Engagement, had attended a meeting of the Public Confidence Sub-Committee in December 2023 to discuss the Constabulary's approach to an overarching communication strategy. The Panel asked when hyper-local communication plans, such as newsletters distributed equally across the geographic area, would be in place for engaging with neighbourhoods, as this did not currently happen. The PCC thanked the PCC for bringing this inconsistency to her attention.
- The Panel advised that there were inconsistencies between local authorities in terms of communications. For example, police newsletters were sent to parish councils in some instances, and the Neighbourhood Watch in others. It was suggested that local authorities should be utilised more effectively to assist with the dissemination of information. The PCC agreed that there was room for improvement in terms of the two-way communication channels between the police and local authorities.

The Chair thanked the PCC and OPCC for their presentation of the Plan, and the Panel Members for their questions and comments.

Actions:

- 1. The OPCC to share with the Panel information on the frequency that neighbourhood officers contacted the town and parish councils in different geographical areas across the force area.**
- 2. The Head of Communications and Engagement to discuss a strategic level review with the Director of Communications and Engagement to map communication channels across the force area as part of the Action Plan.**

8. Panel Feedback – Proactive Scrutiny

The Chair thanked the CFO for attending the most recent Budget Task and Finish Group meeting and for diligently answering their questions. The Panel was reminded that the Group existed to support the Panel's discussion of the Precept and provide it with assurance that the financial accounts had been reviewed across the year.

Cllr Wait praised the value of the Group's discussions in navigating the complexities of the financial accounts before the Precept meeting and hoped that the Panel would find the Group's support valuable.

The PCC added her thanks to the CFO for contributing to the Budget Task and Finish Group and for supporting her in her role.

The Chair advised the Panel that the Public Confidence Sub-Committee was also due to meet in February before the Panel's formal meeting in March.

9. Financial Planning – Budget Process Update

The Chair invited the CFO to introduce the Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan report. The following is a summary of the key points made.

- The CFO advised the Panel that the information provided was not the final Medium Term Financial Plan, but that it demonstrated the current planning assumptions and the current areas of continued uncertainty. The final Report would be submitted to the Panel's Precept meeting on 4th February.
- The Executive Summary set out the key areas of focus. It was necessary for the report to make several assumptions and projections as the CFO was waiting for the release of certain information, such as the police funding settlement and the final projections and forecasts of the local collection authorities.

- This report had been produced using the assumption of a £10 increase in Council Tax for the average Band D property in each of the next three years, and thereafter continuing at 2% per annum. All forces nationally had been asked to follow this model to provide for consistency across all PCCs.
- There was a forecasted deficit of £2.6 million in the revenue plan for 2025/6. A Precept of £14, which was the cap, would be worth approximately £2.4 million, which would almost put the following year into balance, on current assumptions.
- There was an estimated deficit in the capital plan over the next five years of £18.4 million; around £17 million arose from mandated government policies.
- It was highlighted that the target figure of 3331 police officers related to headcount, and not full-time equivalents (FTE).
- Over the course of the MTFP, the influx of new officers would build inflationary pressures into the system; the cost of a police officer increased by 25% between their 1st and 5th years of service.
- In terms of revenue funding, this was primarily formed from core grant funding and Council Tax contributions. Whilst the core grant would help to cover pressures from pay awards and NI cost increases, Council Tax currently comprised around 40% of the funding and its proportion would continue to rise; the Precept was required to absorb the extra cost pressures.
- The public consultation on the Precept levels had taken place online, by telephone and by post to elicit the widest possible response.
- Several inflationary pressures had been identified, such as electricity, gas, fuel, and IT. It was emphasised that making estimates in terms of inflation was challenging.
- Several cost pressures had also been identified, such as National Insurance (NI) contributions, overtime, kennelling costs, and regional collaborations. The two-year Police Constable Entry Programme was included in the list as it could not be funded by the apprentice levy.
- The OPCC budget would see increases due to the pay award and NI increases, and the planned recruitment of a full time Deputy PCC.
- In terms of the savings plan, a dedicated workstream had been in place since December 2022 to identify and scope savings from both pay and non-pay budgets.

- As police officer numbers were mandated, the most significant savings came from reductions in police staff and PCSO numbers. However, due to central government's neighbourhood policing guarantee, there remained residual risk around savings from PCSOs. Despite the reduction in PCSO numbers by around 100 so far, Avon and Somerset maintained comparatively high numbers nationally. It was hoped that the central government baseline recognised this to prevent the associated costs of reinstating PCSOs. The CFO acknowledged the conflict between the financial need to reduce PCSO numbers and the operational need to improve neighbourhood policing. It was noted that savings were also made from the reduction in numbers of police staff investigators.
- To finalise the MTFP and Precept proposal, Avon and Somerset were relying on the confirmation of the approved 2025/26 tax bases across the local authorities, confirmation of central government's main police grant funding for 2025/26, confirmation of the share of any surplus or deficit on the collection fund across the local authorities, and confirmation of their savings plans. The Panel Members were encouraged to ensure their respective Section 151 Officers had submitted the necessary figures.

The Chair thanked the CFO for the update and invited comments and questions from the Panel Members. The following is a summary of the ensuing discussion:

- The Panel noted that many PCSOs moved on to become police officers, which did not incur an additional cost to the force. The PCSO teams were, however, depleted as a result. The Panel also suggested that improving the recruitment process would improve the retention rates. The CFO advised that the role of PCSO provided good experience for police officers, and that this pipeline could not be restricted to increase the retention of PCSOs. Furthermore, the vacancy left behind would be filled by the recruitment of another PCSO. However, it was recognised that it was important to monitor the overall retention rates. The PCC added that the leaver numbers per month were stable. The Director of Performance and Accountability advised the Panel that the first tranche of changes under the Police Dismissals Review that been implemented, and that the government had confirmed the go ahead for tranches 2 and 3. This was part of the management of underperformance going forward and the improvement of retention rates.
- The Panel requested clarification on the investment process. The CFO advised that it was largely dictated by varying cash flows. Funding such as the Police and Crime Grant and Council Tax was received in instalments, and funding such as the Pension Grant was received once a year. The funding was invested at the best investment rates possible to make the best use of funding and ensure cashflow throughout the year.
- The Panel raised concerns that the reduction in PCSOs and police staff was impacting neighbourhood policing and the public's perception of safety. The Panel asked what plans were in place if savings could not be made from reductions in PCSOs due to central government's plans to

improve neighbourhood policing. The CFO advised that this was the topic of an active conversation with the Constabulary CFO. If, for example, 100 PCSO roles needed to be reinstated, this would remove £3-4 million from the savings plan. More information regarding the core grant was needed before firm plans could be made.

- In terms of asset disposal, the Panel queried whether methods of generating revenue using the current stock had been factored into the budget, and whether the force was looking at the income generation of the current estate. The CFO advised that the estate had changed significantly over the previous decade to create an estate fit for purpose, therefore little change was expected. There were some savings to be made, but from small properties only. However, the estates team regularly reviewed the estate to ensure its utilisation was maximised.
- The Panel requested information on the current transformation projects in terms of investing to save, to reduce dependency on external sources. The CFO advised that a number of transformation projects were in progress, particularly in IT; for example, many forces across the country had identified savings in terms of Command and Control.
- In terms of the digital infrastructure, the Panel referenced the impacts of the priority areas on communities through the Joint Needs Assessment. The data had a significant impact on residents; therefore, it was important this data was collected effectively to showcase the impacts of the interventions. In light of the QLIK data software, the Panel was interested in the priorities and their indicators, the outcomes expected, and whether there would be an equality impact assessment alongside each priority that linked with the force's delivery partners, to explore the supply chain and workforce diversity. The CFO advised that, in terms of the equality impact assessment, it was challenging to assess new technologies due to the lack of historic data. It was therefore incumbent on the force to monitor the use of new technologies and to conduct a post-implementation assessment. The OPCC was liaising with South West Procurement over the supply chain, and the new Procurement Act would help to facilitate this. There was a push from central government to maximise spending power, and the force was waiting for government announcements on how efficiency and effectiveness should be addressed nationally. Supply data, however, remained a challenge. The PCC added that there was a continuous tension between the government's desire to make national savings and the value of local procurement models and the social value of local contracts. Furthermore, the OPCC was working to improve its methods of data sharing across the office in order to better monitor delivery against the Plan.
- With regards to workforce diversity in terms of the supply chain, the Panel emphasised the importance of ensuring the qualitative outcomes were understood. The Panel queried how the OPCC looked at workforce diversity in the organisations that were commissioned to address diversity in the force as a whole. The Director of Performance and

Accountability advised the Panel that they were reviewing the equality impact assessments and conducting work on commissioned services as part of the procurement process, looking to work with staff networks and those with lived experiences to draw their insights into the process. They were also encouraging collaboration between agencies to deliver on the Plan and ensuring that services were procured from those that understood the issues the force were tackling.

- The Panel questioned why, year after year, the capital programme figures presented to the Panel were stable for the following few years before they tailed off. The CFO advised the Panel that plans were continually implemented to mitigate impending issues, such as drawing down on loans, but that there were inevitable consequences of such actions that must be acknowledged.
- The Panel requested information on what the OPCC were proposing in terms of cost control measures by the operational staff when delivering on the Plan. The Panel also asked for clear figures on how many posts were secure and occupied, how many were secure but vacant, and how many were due to be deleted.

Actions:

- 1. The OPCC to share with the Panel information on what they were proposing in terms of cost control measures by the operational staff when delivering on the Plan.**
- 2. The OPCC to share with the Panel clear figures on how many posts were secure and occupied, how many were secure but vacant, and how many were due to be deleted.**

10. Commissioner's Update Report

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

- The Panel praised the extension of Operation Soteria into domestic abuse, and asked how the impact of the by-stander training to reduce violence in the nighttime economy would be evaluated, and how individuals would be held to account with regards to performance against the women's safety charters. The PCC advised that the Panel would be provided with a written response to these questions after the meeting to ensure the correct information was given.
- The Panel emphasised the importance of maintaining a focus on tackling cybercrime and fraud, in addition to business crime. The PCC assured the Panel that these issues featured heavily in discussions with residents. The PCC advised that she had attended a retail crime forum the previous week, and that it was featured in the Police and Crime Plan;

it was also an important part of neighbourhood policing and emphasised the importance of the working relationship between businesses and their local PCSOs. The force's fraud team also worked to educate residents on prevention. The Director of Performance and Accountability added that the majority of crime was cyber dependent or cyber enabled, and the digital aspects of crime presented a challenge, as did the high demand in terms of digital forensics. The PCC stated that she had visited the National Crime Agency the previous week and learnt about the work done nationally to disrupt organised online crime.

- The Panel referred to the PCC's responses to the HMICFRS inspection reports, specifically the inspection of police custodys. The inspectorate report had a Cause for Concern and a Recommendation, along with 10 Areas for Improvement. The report was critical of some aspects of the force's management of risk in custody. The PCC was asked whether she was assured that the Constabulary was responding to the inspectorate appropriately, and whether independent custody visitors played a role in this. The Director of Performance and Accountability informed the Panel that there was assurance that the recommendations had been recognised and the concerns were being addressed. The OPCC had a senior manager on the Internal Custody Board, which was led by the Constabulary, and the OPCC had a statutory responsibility to have independent custody visitors conduct welfare checks on those in custody; an independent national body oversaw this work. At present, the information presented at the internal custody board was correlating with the feedback from the independent custody visitors. The Panel were advised that the HMICFRS recommendation updates were due in December.
- Cllr Andy Wait thanked the PCC for attending a meeting of the Keynsham Youth Council, which had praised the volume of positive policing that was taking place. In relation to the work undertaken as part of Priority 3, the PCC was asked how she would improve relations with those groups and organisations that had historically proved resistant to working with the police. The PCC stated that the first step would be to identify such groups, and to identify those that were willing to work alongside with the force. The public consultation process demonstrated the proactive efforts to reach out to, and encourage engagement from, a wide variety of people.
- The PCC had been appointed as the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners' (APCC) Joint Lead for Prevention and Children and Young People. The Panel asked what assurance the PCC had that victims were receiving sufficient support in the interim before the new code of practice was implemented. The Director of Performance and Accountability advised the Panel that Lighthouse was one of their commissioned organisations, and it had significant insight into the experiences of enhanced victims. A piece of work had been commissioned to investigate the force's response to such victims and this would inform processes going forward, with an aim to produce a

more collaborative approach to supporting victims. Further information could be provided to the Panel by the Director of Policy, Partnerships and Commissioning.

- The Panel praised the anti-social behaviour hotspot patrol activity and advised the PCC that it was proving successful in Weston, where the town council staff were also involved. The PCC thanked the Panel for this positive feedback.

Actions:

- 1. The OPCC to provide written responses to the Panel's questions on how the impact of the by-stander training to reduce violence in the nighttime economy would be evaluated, and how individuals would be held to account with regards to performance against the women's safety charters.**
- 2. The OPCC to provide the Panel with further information on the work of Lighthouse and the PCC's assurances on child safeguarding.**

11. Performance Monitoring Report

The Chair invited the Senior Performance and Governance Manager to present the Report.

The Panel were advised that, in terms of the planned action around reducing murder and other homicide, both the PCC and the Senior Performance and Governance Manager had attended a meeting of the Homicide Prevention Review process and had found it invaluable in determining themes and ideas for prevention strategies.

Comments and questions were invited from the Panel; the following is a summary of the ensuing discussion.

- The Panel raised concerns regarding the graph on Page 7 of the Report which showed a consistently higher rate of personal robbery in Avon and Somerset compared to the Most Similar Group of Forces (MSG). The Senior Performance and Governance Manager advised the Panel that a task force had been created, in which the PCC was involved. The PCC added that the task force included ten forces nationally and was due to hold its second meeting in January to investigate the issues in detail.
- The Panel requested an update on the commentary on Page 9 of the Report for the next Panel meeting that confirmed whether the low rates of drug trafficking offences were due to less proactive identification of offending or poor recording of drug crimes.
- The Panel queried whether a victim satisfaction survey for victims of domestic abuse would be implemented in Avon and Somerset. The

Panel were advised that the Constabulary had attempted to introduce such a survey last year, but it had proved very challenging to capture the victims' experience. A new victim satisfaction survey was due to be launched, but it would not cover domestic abuse until an effective method of capturing its complexities had been formulated.

- The Panel questioned why the charge rate for rape cases had stabilised since September 2023. The Senior Performance and Governance Manager advised that, whilst the rate appeared to stabilise, Avon and Somerset had the highest rate of rape recordings nationally, and the charge volume was increasing. The PCC added that Operation Soteria had been extended to cover domestic abuse, and the rate of reporting would likely see increases as a result.
- The Panel asked whether there was scope to assign volume numbers to the report, alongside the rates. The Senior Performance and Governance Manager agreed to investigate this. The PCC added that Avon and Somerset were the only force nationally to separate personal and business crime in this collection of data; such variabilities often made comparing data nationally more challenging.

Actions:

- 1. The OPCC to update the commentary for 'Disrupt Drugs Supply and County Lines' to confirm whether the low rates of drug trafficking offences were due to less proactive identification of offending or poor recording of drug crimes.**
- 2. The OPCC to assign volume numbers to the Report.**

12. Standing Complaints Report

The Panel noted the Report.

13. Work Programme

The Chair requested that the Panel Members submit potential topics to the Lead Officer for the Panel's Work Programme for 2025/6.

14. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for 10:30am on 4th February 2024 at Deane House, Taunton.