

GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel held on Monday 8 February 2021 at the Virtual Meeting - Web ex meeting.

PRESENT:

William Alexander	Cllr Colin Hay (Chairman)
Cllr Ray Brassington	Cllr David Norman MBE
Cllr Chris Brine	Cllr Loraine Patrick
Cllr Philip Burford	Cllr Steve Robinson (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Collette Finnegan	Martin Smith
Cllr David Gray	Cllr Brian Tipper

Substitutes: Cllr Flo Clucas (In place of Cllr Jonny Brownsteen)

Officers in attendance: Simon Harper – Democratic Services Manager
Martin Surl – Police and Crime Commissioner
Chris Brierley – Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Ruth Greenwood - Head of Policy, Performance and Strategy, OPCC
Richard Bradley – Chief Executive OPCC
Peter Skelton – Chief Finance Officer, OPCC

Apologies: Cllr Karen McKeown, Cllr Jonny Brownsteen

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting on Friday 6 November 2020 were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendment: -

Minute 3:-

Police Officer numbers – It was anticipated that there would be close to 1200 officers in place by the end of March 202, be changed to 'it was anticipated that there would be close to 1200 officers in place by the end of March 2021'.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. PROPOSED GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE PRECEPT 2021/22 - TO FOLLOW

3.1 The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) gave a detailed presentation of the report. He took the opportunity to thank the NHS and other emergency services for their response to the pandemic.

3.2 The PCC reminded the Panel that Gloucestershire Constabulary has always been graded good, by HMICFRS, for financial management. He discussed how the increases agreed last year had been realised, drawing particular attention to the additional 46 officers (part of the uplift programme) and the opening of the Sabrina Centre. There were also more officers in the safeguarding children and serious and organised crime teams. Investment in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software had helped to relieve the pressure on the 999 and 111 system.

3.3 The consultation with the public closed on Friday, 5 February 2021 and the Commissioner provided the Panel with information from an interim report (dated 04/02/21) in lieu of the final report. The responses indicated that a significant number of people agreed that there

should be an increase, although also there were also comments that there were always efficiencies that could be made. In combining the overall responses 46% of respondents had indicated that they were willing to pay more. However it was important to note that a significant number of people had indicated that they could not afford to pay more. The Panel was informed that the responses received were representative of the demography of the county.

- 3.4 The PCC informed the Panel that he had given the consultation responses a lot of thought when considering setting the precept. He explained that the process of the annual settlement figure from government did not help when trying to undertake long term planning. Core grants had all been frozen and there had also been a cut in capital funding. The PCC discussed resource pressures and what could and could not be afforded with the Chief Constable. They were in agreement that a significant factor for the Constabulary was the need to improve the technology used by Police Officers to better support them in their role(s). The PCC has asked that the Constabulary's Transformation Programme be reviewed with a view to delivery being within a more timely way.
- 3.5 The Panel was informed that the PCC had considered linking the precept increase to inflation but it this would have resulted in cuts. The PCC had also considered increasing the precept to the maximum allowed without recourse to a referendum, but had reflected on and recognised the financial struggles faced by some people in Gloucestershire. He stated that this had been the most difficult budget setting process in eight years. He had finally decided to set the increase in precept at the lowest level possible without stalling the progress made since coming out of austerity measures; he was clear that a return to austerity was not viable.
- 3.6 The PCC stated that he understood the burden on the tax payer, and was clear that for the Gloucestershire Constabulary every crime mattered and every contact counted. He indicated that he was in a position to pay more, and would like to do more, and would therefore be taking a reduction of 10% in his salary; this money would be directed to the Commissioners Fund.
- 3.7 He informed the Panel that he was confident that his proposals would continue to restore the damage from the years of austerity, and support the development of a police service fit for the future. It was also important to look after the welfare of officers; they had had a tough year, working primarily single crewed. He was setting aside £100K to support the welfare of officers.
- 3.8 The Panel was informed that having taken everything into consideration the proposal was to set the precept at a 4.99% increase. The PCC asked the Panel for its support.
- 3.9 A member informed the PCC that a group of parish councillors in Cheltenham had come together to address concerns about the lack of youth facilities. It was hoped that a pilot could be commissioned linked to the Borough Council's No Child Left Behind initiative to work with young people across the town. It was hoped that the county council would also support. In response to a question the PCC indicated that this was something that the Commissioner's Fund could potentially support and that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) would be happy to discuss this matter.
- 3.10 It was questioned as to what the increase in precept the previous year had delivered. The PCC informed the meeting that any increase in the precept had to be set alongside the reduction in funding from central government. The PCC listed the areas that had benefitted from the precept increase, these included the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), additional adults at risk coordinators, two out of court disposal officers, investment in the

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

Force Control Room, and an increase in the number of analysts. Of most significance was that the crime rate in the county has decreased; Gloucestershire was now the 6th lowest area in the country for crime. The PCC also reminded the Panel of the revised operating model, delivering enhanced local policing areas which came into force in September 2020.

- 3.11 In response to a question it was clarified that burglary crimes had reduced by 25%. It was also explained that arrest rates were not a good measure as guidance from government was to arrest only if necessary. It was noted that it was good to see that the nightingale court at Cirencester was now open.
- 3.12 Members asked questions related to the visibility of the Police. The PCC explained that it was important to get a balance between what people saw and how safe they felt. The cornerstone of this was the neighbourhood teams, how well they got to know/understand their communities.
- 3.13 It was noted that the county council had been leading on parking issues through a Cabinet Panel which would be presenting its report to Cabinet in due course.
- 3.14 In response to a question the Chief Finance Officer for the OPCC explained that reserves remained within the required level of 3 to 5% (3.7%) of the overall budget. There were no plans to rebuild the reserves.
- 3.15 The Chairman of the Panel noted that there had been no calls to veto the proposed precept. Panel members agreed that they could support the proposed precept; they had found it to be proportionate, and that the PCC had taken into account the needs of the constabulary, and the views of the general public through the consultation process.
- 3.16 The PCC thanked the Panel, and also thanked the general public for taking the time to respond to the consultation.

4. COVID 19 ENFORCEMENT

- 4.1 The PCC informed the Panel that both he and the Chief Constable had always been determined that the response would be proportionate. He was of the view that the Gloucestershire Constabulary had got it about right.
- 4.2 Panel members had no questions on this matter.

5. OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER - CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT - TO FOLLOW

- 5.1 The Chief Executive, OPCC, gave a detailed presentation of the report. He drew member's attention to the forthcoming retirement of the Chief Finance Officer (CFO), and explained that the OPCC had appointed an interim CFO for a period of six months. He confirmed that when appointing to the permanent position the appointment would be brought to the Panel as required by legislation.
- 5.2 The Panel thanked the CFO for his work in helping them to understand the complexities of the Police budget, and wished him well in his retirement.

6. POLICE AND CRIME PLAN SUMMARY UPDATE - TO FOLLOW

- 6.1 The Deputy PCC gave a detailed presentation of this report.
- 6.2 Panel members welcomed and noted the report.

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CHAIRMAN

Meeting concluded at 11.52 am