



GLoucestershire POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES of the meeting of the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel held on Tuesday 6 February 2024 commencing at 10.00 am.

PRESENT MEMBERSHIP:

Cllr Ray Brassington	Cllr Martin Percy
Cllr Joe Harris	Cllr George Porter
Kingston Myles	Cllr Steve Robinson
Cllr Sajid Patel	Cllr Brian Tipper

Attended Virtually:

Cllr Flo Clucas

Apologies:

Cllr Philip Burford, Cllr Flo Clucas, Cllr Dr Collette Finnegan and Stella Tams

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 2.1 The minutes were approved as a correct record of the meeting held on the 24th November 2023.
- 2.2 Following the example of other Police and Crime Panels around the country, the Chair asked the panel members if they could trial a fifteen-minute pre-meeting before the next meeting to review the agenda and to help members prepare and focus questioning. The Panel were reassured that this would only be a meeting between Members, supported by Democratic Services, and would not involve any officers from the Commissioner's office or the Constabulary.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 No declarations of interest were received.

4. PROPOSED GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE PRECEPT 2024/25

- 4.1 The Chair invited the Police and Crime Commissioner, Chris Nelson, to introduce this item. The detailed budget papers were taken as read. The Commissioner invited Chief Constable, Rod Hansen, to give an overview of policing in Gloucestershire to give further context to the budget. They were

supported by Ruth Greenwood, Chief Executive of the OPCC and Peter Lewis, Chief Financial Officer, OPCC.

- 4.2 Sophie Benfield, Senior Democratic Services Officer, reminded the Panel of the Precept decision making process.
- 4.3 A Member raised concern that not all documents regarding the use of reserves had been ready for the panel to review. The officers confirmed that they had submitted all documents that they were legally required to for this review process but as well there would be a separate more detailed 'Reserves Strategy' which would be shared with the Panel as soon as possible.
- 4.4 It was stated that the decision to use reserves for this budget had been taken due to funding pressures, that were being felt across the public sector, and with regard to public opinion expressed in the OPCC's Perceptions of Crime survey in Autumn 2023 where 68% respondents felt that they did not believe the police force had sufficient funding. The reserves would be used to fund operational budgets, which would then allow the force to continue to invest in improvement.
- 4.5 The Commissioner highlighted a few projects that would be aided by the use of the reserves and the proposed precept increase, some of these included: maintaining the additional 400 police officers, police community support officers (PCSO) and police staff since May 2021, allowing the Enhanced Operating Model to improve, to improve the Force Control Room and to improve IT including the new records management system, NICHE.
- ACTION** – Reserves and Borrowing Update to be added to the workplan for the September meeting.
- 4.6 Regarding a Member's question about the decreased number of officers listed in the report, the Chief Constable confirmed that on average, the Constabulary lost eighty officers per year, and he confirmed that whilst they had a strong recruitment strategy, due to the nature of policing not all cohorts passed the twenty-five week training program. However, the Chief reassured the Panel that whilst the figures might have temporarily reduced, the overall trend was still increasing.
- 4.7 When asked about new technology being used in the Constabulary, the Commissioner confirmed that £7 million was being invested into a new records management system, 'Niche'. He also listed more technological improvements such as the use of Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras and drones.

- 4.8 Responding to a Member's question about underutilised Constabulary buildings in the county, the officers confirmed that whilst there were no empty buildings, the estate's building usage varied daily due to the changing nature of work patterns since the Covid-19 pandemic. The Commissioner confirmed that a complete condition review of the entire police estate was being undertaken to check the physical condition and utilisation. Changes would be made following the findings of this review.
- 4.9 Answering a Member's question on the Savings and Efficiency plan, it was stated that the OPCC and Constabulary had created a two-phase plan. The first phase would last until 31st March 2024 and would concentrate on delivering sustainable solutions for 2024/2025. The second phase would continue until 30th June 2024 and would have a medium-term focus on delivering sustainable solutions in 2025/2026.

ACTION – To add an item on the Savings and Efficiency Plan to the work plan

- 4.10 Responding to a Member's question about savings achieved in 2023/24, it was confirmed that the savings target of £1.1 million had been reached but included some one-off unsustainable measures. The Chief Finance Officer stated that this was why there was a much greater focus on creating sustainable solutions to achieve the 2024/25 target.
- 4.11 Answering a Member's question about borrowing, the officers stated that a substantial amount of borrowing was made from internal sources, but it was acknowledged that there was a conflict between using reserves and using internal borrowing. The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that they were basing their decision on whether to use external or internal borrowing on what their Treasury Advisors deemed to be the most cost-efficient borrowing.
- 4.12 Referring to information in the Perception of Crime survey, a Member questioned what was being done to tackle vehicle related anti-social behaviour. The officers stated that they had increased the size of their Speed Enforcement team and were working with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) on the Community Speedwatch Plus program. It was emphasised that this type of partnership working, particularly with Neighbourhood police, allowed the Speed Enforcement team to know where to be positioned to catch persistent offenders. However, the Commissioner highlighted that more needed to be done on educating individuals on the effects of speeding.

Following a detailed discussion and rigorous questioning, the Panel

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

RESOLVED to
Unanimously to support the proposed precept.

Following the precept review guidance, the Chair on behalf of the Panel confirmed this decision in writing with a short summary report, a copy of which is annexed below.

5. UPDATE FROM THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER (PCC)

5.1 The PCC's update was taken as read and there were no questions from the members.

6. WORK PLAN

6.1 It was confirmed that the dates for the visits to the Custody Suite and the Force Control Room would be confirmed by the Democratic Services Officer shortly. A Member did request that the invitation was widened to District and County Councillors, but it was confirmed by the OPCC that numbers needed to be limited due to the venue size. However, it was suggested that if panel members could not attend either of the visits, that they instead send a substitute.

ACTION – Democratic Services

6.2 It was decided that the Reserves and Borrowing Update would be added to September's meeting.

ACTION – Democratic Services

6.3 The OPCC suggested an item on the Police Support Volunteers.

ACTION – Democratic Services

6.4 A Member suggested an item on the Savings and Efficiency Group including an update on the medium-term plan.

ACTION – Democratic Services

CHAIR

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

Meeting concluded at 12.05pm.

To access the full meeting recording, please use this link: <https://gloucestershire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

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Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel response to the 2024/2025 precept

Having received a detailed budget report from the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Panel had an extensive question and answer session.

Members were informed of the results of the Commissioner's 'Perceptions of Crime Survey'. It was stated that two-thirds (68%) of respondents thought that Gloucestershire Constabulary did not have sufficient funding.

It was acknowledged by the Chief Constable and the Commissioner that Gloucestershire Constabulary, and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) continued to work in a challenging environment regarding their budgets.

There were questions from members around the use of £4.4 million from reserves and concern was raised about the impact this could have in future years. The Panel were however reassured that a rigorous savings and efficiency plan was being put in place to manage this long-term. As the more detailed Reserves Strategy Report was not yet available to the Panel, it was agreed that this would be added as an item for the Panel's meeting in September where members could look at the longer-term planning and impact in more depth.

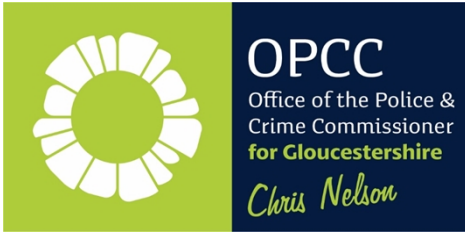
Members were conscious of the cost-of-living impact that raising the council tax precept could cause for residents but felt reassured that Gloucestershire Constabulary and the OPCC had a clear plan on where the additional funding would be spent, and to the benefit of the community as a whole.

Panel members proposed that they accept the recommendations in the paper and endorse the budget. There were no calls to exercise the Panel's power of veto and was therefore

RESOLVED

Unanimously to support the proposed precept.

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13 February 2024

Response to the Police and Crime Panel Comments on the 2024/25 Precept Proposals

Thank you for your report on the Police and Crime Panel's response to my proposals for the Police Precept for 2024/25. I thank the Panel for their consideration of the reports submitted to them, for their probing questions and for their full support for the proposal to increase the precept by the maximum allowed £13.

I note the Panel's comments about the use of reserves and the need for the development of a rigorous savings and efficiency plan. I wish to assure the Panel that I have ensured there are robust mechanisms in place and that they are being developed with input from my Office. As indicated at the meeting, I will ensure that the Reserves Strategy and the savings and efficiencies plans, along with revenue budget monitoring for 2024/25, are presented to the Panel in September.

Like the Panel, I weighed carefully the impact of the precept increase on hard-pressed council taxpayers against the consequences of not providing the maximum funding possible for the Constabulary. I concluded that all the residents of the County will benefit from the investments I am making in the Constabulary, in order to ensure the Chief Constable can deliver the best possible service.

Yours sincerely

Chris Nelson
Police and Crime Commissioner Gloucestershire

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