

GLoucestershire Police and Crime Panel

MINUTES of a meeting of the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel held on Friday 18 September 2020 at the Virtual Meeting - Web ex meeting.

PRESENT:

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| William Alexander | Cllr Colin Hay (Chairman) |
| Cllr Ray Brassington | Cllr Karen McKeown |
| Cllr Chris Brine | Cllr Steve Robinson (Vice-Chair) |
| Cllr Jonny Brownstein | Martin Smith |
| Cllr Philip Burford | Cllr Brian Tipper |
| Cllr Collette Finnegan | |

Substitutes: Cllr Rob Bird (In place of Cllr David Gray)
Cllr Andrew Gravells MBE (In place of Cllr Loraine Patrick)
Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE (In place of Cllr David Norman MBE)

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
Detective Chief Superintendent Richard Cooper

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment: -
The last sentence in minute 6.4 be amended to 'It was therefore agreed that a letter be sent to Alex Chalk MP to ask for his support, as a Minister in the Department of Justice and a local MP, in maintaining a Gloucestershire based court system.'
- 1.2 It was noted that a response had been received from Alex Chalk MP and this had been shared with Panel members. It was agreed that it would be important to maintain an overview of this matter, within the context that this matter was outside the Panel's remit. It was suggested that Panel members might wish to raise this matter through their own councils.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER - UPDATE

- 3.1 The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) updated the Panel on activity undertaken since the Panel meeting on 17 July 2020. This included: -
- Discussion of the Gloucestershire court system with Alex Chalk MP,
 - The PCC has been in discussion with the Constabulary about ongoing concerns raised about contacting the police via the 101 number. The Commissioner reminded the Panel that the number was originally established as a non-emergency number for public services but, due to austerity, other partners (nationally) withdrew from the service. The service was, however, still used to report many issues that were not in the remit of the Constabulary. More analysis would be carried out into

non-crime related calls with a view to closer working with relevant partner agencies. As part of this, work was underway to update the customer relations system which would capture those calls to the Control Room that did not result in a call for service (approx. 40% of all calls).

- The public were now able to report non-emergency crime online, and the Police and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) encouraged people take this approach (<https://www.gloucestershire.police.uk/contact/af/contact-us/>). The website channels users into different areas of business and a reference number was instantly provided.
- The PCC had received numerous calls from members of the public concerned about dog thefts in the county. The Commissioner reported that these crimes were taken very seriously in line with the 'Compassionate Approach' priority within the Police and Crime Plan. In a more high profile case the stolen dog had been located and returned to the owners. In another case, numerous puppies were found in a van travelling up the M5. The puppies were headed for a farm elsewhere. Following interventions by the Constabulary, the puppies were seized, received veterinary care and taken to a shelter. The puppies were now being rehomed.
- The OPCC was about to submit a planning application for the refurbishment of the Bamfurlong Operations Centre. This was a strategic site for the Constabulary and the county and refurbishment was long overdue.
- The number of cases on the court waiting list had grown significantly due to Covid-19. Gloucestershire was an outlier with regard to getting cases through the system. It was suggested that the current state of the court estate in Gloucestershire did not help. Domestic Abuse cases were being prioritised and would be heard mostly in Bristol. In an attempt to help alleviate some of the issues within the local courts, the PCC has been in dialogue with HM Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) about reopening Cirencester Court as a 'nightingale' provision.

3.2 In response to a question the PCC explained that with regard to time taken to pick up 101 calls Gloucestershire was not an outlier. Gloucestershire Police was not currently able to identify the number of dropped calls; this would be rectified by the introduction of the new customer relations system.

3.3 Panel members agreed that the Police should not be in the position of having to take calls that would be better managed by other agencies. The PCC explained that during the recent storm there had been 333 999 calls and 108 101 calls; it was not possible for the Police to pick up all these calls. It was also explained that during this period the Police had been involved in removing trees from the highway which was outside their remit.

4. POLICE AND CRIME PLAN REFRESH

4.1 The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) gave a detailed presentation of the refresh of the Police and Crime Plan (for information the presentation slides were uploaded to the council's website and included in the minute book). The Panel was informed that the Plan had been refreshed within the context of the Black Lives Matter movement, #MeToo, the postponed PCC elections and Covid-19.

4.2 It was noted that the Plan had received praised at the national level by the National Farmers Union for its response to rural crime.

4.3 In response to comments about the positive impact of the Children First programme which diverted young people away from the Criminal Justice System (CJS), a Panel member stated that it was important to have clarity regarding the data underpinning the Young People Becoming Adults Priority. They commented that it was important to bear in mind

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that Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) worked with adults; it would be important to ensure that this data was not utilised in this regard. It was also questioned whether there was an understanding of how Gloucestershire compared with other areas with regard to reoffending? They questioned the accuracy of the data quoted by the DPCC.

- 4.4 The DPCC informed the Panel that the Children First initiative was having a positive impact on reoffending behaviour in young people; before Children First there had been a 40% re-offending rate, whereas now this was 13%. This initiative has diverted a lot of young people away from criminality. The DPCC informed the Panel that he was confident in the data.
- 4.5 It was commented that parking on pavements and noisy exhausts were anti social and it was questioned whether the Police did respond to these types of incidents. The PCC informed the meeting that the Special Constables were being very supportive in responding to incidents relating to noisy exhausts, and the Police would respond to parking on pavements if resources were available. It was hoped that agencies could work together on this matter. Panel members were also informed that the government was currently undertaking a consultation on 'Pavement parking: options for change' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/managing-pavement-parking/pavement-parking-options-for-change>).
- 4.6 During the presentation of the refresh of the Plan the DPCC had indicated that there was more detail that would not be available until the public launch of the Plan. The Panel therefore did not feel that it could fully support the refresh without being privy to the full detail. It did however endorse the principles laid out in the refresh, and supported the direction of travel. The Panel looked forward to receiving the full detail at its next meeting.

5. REVISED POLICE OPERATING MODEL

- 5.1 The Panel welcomed Detective Chief Superintendent Richard Cooper to the meeting to present the new operating model for Gloucestershire. The Chief Constable had made the Panel aware that changes were in motion at the Panel's meeting on 17 July 2020.
- 5.2 The Panel was informed that the Constabulary had made these changes in order to make sure it remained at the heart of its communities and delivered on its Police and Crime Plan priorities. It was explained that among the key changes were:
- Enhanced Local Policing Teams across the county with officers who would be the first to respond and investigate crime.
 - More officers based in Gloucester and Cheltenham.
 - New Superintendents for Local Policing Areas.
 - Detective supervisors in each area.
- 5.3 This approach would enable greater opportunities for partnership working at the local level such as with the local Community Safety Partnerships. It was noted that specialist provisions, eg counter terrorism, safeguarding, would remain under central command.
- 5.4 In response to a question it was clarified that training was essential; all officers have to be qualified to do what they do. The complexities of modern policing also reinforced the need for training; this was why the OPCC had established the Sabrina Centre as a centre for Police training in Gloucestershire.
- 5.5 Most members felt that this was a positive step forward, although there were questions related to visibility of officers as these were large geographical areas; in particular what does this mean for a ward/divisional councillor? It was explained that it was not just about visibility but also strong leadership. Relationships would evolve as the model bedded in.

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- 5.6 A member stated that the important factor was outcomes; would this model mean that the response to calls/crimes would be quicker/more effective? The PCC informed the Panel that this was a step in the right direction. A more locally based approach would mean that officers would know their localities and local issues better. It was acknowledged that understanding outcomes was challenging; candid conversations would be required with the public and local councillors could help with this. This was an enduring challenge for the Police.
- 5.7 The Chairman suggested that it could be useful to have a communications strategy which would help all councillors understand who their local contacts were.

6. OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER - CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

- 6.1 The Chief Executive Officer, OPCC, presented their report. Member's attention was drawn to the decision to extend the term of appointment of the Chief Constable for a further three years. This decision had been based on the very successful leadership of the Chief Constable, and to deliver consistency and sustainability at the Constabulary. It was noted that this was not something that the Panel needed to agree as it was an extension to the contract rather than an appointment to the position. Panel members supported this decision and commented that the Chief Constable was doing a superb job.
- 6.2 With regard to complaints it was suggested that previous data be included so that the Panel could identify changes.

(For information - this item had been taken early on the agenda to accommodate the Chief Executive, OPCC.)

7. MENTAL HEALTH REPORT AND POLICE DEMAND

- 7.1 The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) presented the report which was written, in part, by a Masters student from the University of Gloucestershire. He reminded the Panel of Gloucestershire Police's involvement in the BBC series 'Reported Missing' which had highlighted the work of the Police in finding missing people, and the impact on resources; it was important to note that this was non crime related work. On average 10 people a day went missing. One of the episodes had focussed on a person with mental health issues.
- 7.2 The impact of mental health calls on Police resources was significant. The public view was that the Police should focus on crime. However until mental health issues were better supported/responded to by agencies the Police would continue to be the first line of support for mental health issues in an emergency (999) situation.
- 7.3 The DPCC stated that there must be a better way to support people in a mental health crisis. Agencies would need to work together; the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (GCCG) had a significant role as the commissioning body for health services in the county.
- 7.4 In commissioning this report it had been hoped to undertake a time and motion study to identify the number of calls received related to mental health issues and time taken to support them. However the Covid-19 pandemic had prevented this part of the study from going ahead.

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- 7.5 Members agreed that this was an important issue that needed to be addressed; more work was needed across agencies to ensure that better support was available to people in a mental health crisis such that they would not necessarily need to always turn to the Police.
- 7.6 The Panel was informed that Mental Wellbeing was a priority for the Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board (GHWB). This was due to be discussed at the Board's meeting on 22 September 2020; the report would be shared with Panel members. It was agreed that this was an issue that the GHWB needed to drive forward. The Police were only part of the response – all agencies needed to work together on this issue.
- 7.7 The Panel asked that its thanks be shared with the Masters Student for this comprehensive report.

8. SAFER STREETS GRANTS AWARDS

8.1 Some members of the Panel had a robust debate with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on this matter.

8.2 Responses to questions included: -

- The OPCC had received information from the Home Office (HO) on this scheme.
- The HO had instructed the OPCC not to rely on its data but should instead use local Police data which would be more current and granular; this had therefore significantly reduced the number of areas identified by the HO.
- The criteria for this funding had not been included in the initial documentation.
- Burglary was an issue that the OPCC and Gloucestershire Police took seriously.
- It was not appropriate to compare Gloucestershire with other areas in the South West given the differences in population and geography. Comparisons were with Most Similar Group (MSG) which was Forces that were independently deemed most similar demographically.
- Data was submitted to the HO who then undertook comparative analysis with Police areas nationally.
- Not all Police areas had applied for this funding (four out of the eight Forces in the MSG for Gloucestershire)
- Due to a push on burglary by the Police last year this had reduced by 25%. Burglary had reduced by 27.6% since the PCC had taken up office; the national rate was 17.3%
- Once the criteria were known detailed analysis had been undertaken to ascertain/identify whether there were specific areas in Gloucestershire that would qualify for this funding. There were two possible areas: one in Cheltenham and one in Stroud.
- The Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown had had an impact on decision making. The Police were required to work in different ways and respond to predominantly non crime related calls. There had also been concern that given the deadline for use of these funds (31 March 2021) the money would have to be returned to the HO unused due to the focus on the response to the pandemic.

8.3 The Chairman interjected as the discussion between some members of the Panel and the PCC had deteriorated. Having given the matter sufficient time for discussion he closed the meeting.

CHAIRMAN

Meeting concluded at 1.28 pm

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