

GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel held on Friday 3 February 2023 at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT:

Cllr Ray Brassington	Cllr Martin Percy
Cllr David Gray	Cllr Steve Robinson (Chair)
Cllr Joe Harris	Stella Tams
Kingston Myles	Cllr Brian Tipper
Cllr Sajid Patel (Vice-Chair)	

Substitutes: Cllr David Willingham (Cheltenham Borough Council)
Cllr Collette Finnegan

Officers in attendance: Becky Beard, Nick Evans, Kirsten Fruin, Jane Heppel, John Jones and PCC Chris Nelson

Apologies: Cllr Philip Burford, Cllr Flo Clucas, Ruth Greenwood and Cllr Dawn Melvin

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes were approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Page 3, point 5.3:

100 additional voluntary PCSOs

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

4. PROPOSED GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE PRECEPT 2023/24

4.1 The Chair invited PCC Chris Nelson to introduce this item. The detailed budget papers were taken as read and a short presentation of key highlights was given. This presentation is now published and available to view with the minutes.

4.2 A couple of members referred to the adjusted manifesto position within the papers, suggesting that this represented a breaking of promise to the electorate to change a commitment after being elected.

4.3 The PCC reiterated that this position had been explained at length many times. He was unaware of the looming inspectorate report at the time of making his manifesto pledges, which came days after his election and put Gloucestershire Constabulary into special measures. He stressed the sheer

impact and size of a police force being put into special measures as being the scale of something similar to the Covid pandemic. It was a major criticism of the Constabulary, and its level of seriousness demanded a change in approach.

- 4.4 The PCC spoke with the Chief Constable at great length on how this would be addressed over the coming years, and at that point could have insisted that this manifesto pledge was stuck to, but this was not what was needed at that time. The Force needed a different approach which invested in people (police staff and officers), IT and a number of different areas. The PCC stressed that the Constabulary should be judged on its outputs such as crime reduction, and its improvement journey against engage.
- 4.5 A member questioned whether the PCC was committed to tackling persistent speeding and increasing the amount of ANPR equipment available to do so. It was advised that there were over 40 additional ANPR cameras in this budget, and there were plans to do more with police enforcement such as using speed guns and vans. He also referenced the recent Community Speedwatch Fund which was a joint venture with GCC to try and change the behaviour of persistent speeders.
- 4.6 It was noted that there was major investment ongoing for IT improvements. Gloucestershire were currently the only force in the whole of England operating on an old records management system, which had an impact on many different parts of operations. The business case to implement NICHE had been approved which would make a huge improvement. They were exploring opportunities to automate within the force control room and in vetting to help improve timings associated, but critically not lose the quality. It was stressed that the OPCC had a lot more grip and rigour within this capital programme to deliver, as opposed to a wish list of investments.
- 4.7 Noting the £3.8m budget gap identified at 3.4 of the report, a member asked for an expansion on the expected savings that would be required to fill part of this. It was stated that having a budget gap maintained a level of pressure on the Constabulary to continually innovate. The required savings were being drawn from efficiencies made within areas such as improved IT systems, procurement and reviewing vacant posts prior to recruitment. There was also the example of securing external grants to modernise energy systems which would pay savings in the long term. Officers were comfortable with the level of savings required for this budget and reinforced that this Medium-Term Financial Plan improved over the 4-year period, whereas the previous one worsened.
- 4.8 Whilst applauding Gloucestershire for being on the front foot on attracting external funding, a member asked officers to comment on the sustainability/confidence of this forming a key part of the future funding for

the Constabulary. It was advised that the OPCC had made this a priority in recent years, making difficult calls to ensure the resource was available to partake in the bidding processes. Although accepting it was difficult to predict the future, the office would continue to do everything possible to continue to find, source and be successful in securing external funding. It was reiterated that this budget was not risk free but remained prudent.

- 4.9 Point 5.6 of the report referenced Gloucestershire's success in claiming additional Police Uplift Grant which would allow a temporary increase of 25 officers. A member questioned whether this essentially meant Gloucestershire would train these officers up and then they would leave to join larger, metropolitan forces. It was advised that there were currently more officers joining the force than leaving, Gloucestershire remained an attractive area to work. The aim was to keep as many of the new 25 recruits as possible, balancing out against the number of resignations, retirements etc. It was also noted that in order to retain the Uplift Grant, the Force would need to have the same number of officers employed by the end of March 2024.
- 4.10 A member queried whether the consultation results reflected a representative sample of Gloucestershire residents. It was explained that the survey was conducted by an independent firm and advertised using well known techniques. The data provided was very rich as it looked into thematic analysis of open questions as well. The PCC acknowledged that he would like to do more in this area but workload had not yet allowed the resource to do so.
- 4.11 It was explained that the funding formula currently used to allocate the Government grant was out of date and unhelpful and put Gloucestershire in a position of a 50:50 split between central grant and council tax. The formula was focused on the level of crime in urban areas, which meant metropolitan areas were doing much better. The Government had committed to deliver a new formula by the end of this Parliament.
- 4.12 Examining the number of volunteer PSCOs, a member queried what the long term resilience risk was on over indexing of volunteers against paid staff. The PCC expressed his passion for the concept of volunteering and likened this to the Parish Constable concept in that a local, community person was involved in the 'softer' sides to policing e.g., developing relationships in their communities, delivering scam prevention advice. It also enabled capacity for the Force as a whole to deliver against its priorities. The member responded and asked if officers could provide an ongoing RAG rating analysis so the Panel could understand the retention and impact of these volunteer positions.

ACTION: OPCC

- 4.13 There was a question around whether the predicted financial impacts of the pay award and inflation were a little optimistic and concern shared that if these were higher than allocated for, whether this would have an impact on

delivering the budget's priorities. It was advised that the pay increase percentage was in line with predictions from the Home Office, and if this were higher, the PCC would expect support from Government to offset this. Annex B of the report provided a high-level overview of a much more detailed background piece of work around inflation. It was reiterated that this budget did have a healthy risk appetite but did not feel it was over balanced on risk. There remained sufficient reserves to give time for adjustments in the spending plan should one or more of these factors turnout differently.

- 4.14 Members welcomed that for the Commissioner to want to raise the council tax precept, it was because he intended to spend it in full on the priorities laid out in this paper, and not to put into reserves and risk an underspend at the end of the financial year. Whilst noting the Constabulary's Reserves would reduce from 25% of net revenue expenditure to 16% at the end of this Medium-Term Financial Plan, it was accepted that the remaining amount was enough to address any unforeseen expenditures.

Following a detailed discussion and rigorous questioning, the Panel

RESOLVED to

Unanimously to support the proposed precept.

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

- 5.1 PCC Chris Nelson provided a verbal update on activities since the previous meeting but noting a lot had already been covered during the precept discussions. Members noted the following points:
- The PCC reiterated how serious an issue being in special measures was for the Force. He, and the Chief, attended a masterclass for forces who were currently in, or who had just come out of special measures, to enable sharing best practise, and a forum to discuss issues problems. Among a plethora of advice shared, the PCC felt that around the importance of ensuring the force had a performance culture and the need to drive down demand (through prevention etc.) were most related to Gloucestershire's position.
 - The Home Office continued to allow the non-degree route for another year whilst they reviewed the impact of the degree route. This had been a key focus for the PCC for some time to ensure the Force remained an attractive employment opportunity for groups such as ex-military or those for whom a degree was not an option or interest.
 - The PCC continued to ensure time was given to visit officers on the front line and visiting stations across the county. He found these discussions very helpful in terms of his role in governance and monitoring of the Force as a whole and felt in a time of huge change this was important for officers to be able to share though not necessarily via their management.
 - OPCC officers had been working on how to improve their dealings with the Local Criminal Justice Board, and the analysis/interpretation of data

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

received from the Ministry of Justice. A complimentary letter had been received from the Permanent Secretary on this ground-breaking work.

- Work continued on the Community Trigger scheme in addressing persistent Anti-Social Behaviour.
- The PCC was hoping to recruit to a new position within the team which was a dedicated role for councillor contact. The office received a lot of requests from elected members and felt it was important the team were able to provide a dedicated member of staff to ensure they had better route into the Constabulary for help and guidance
- And finally, the Knife Angel was in place at Gloucester Cathedral, a thought-provoking sculpture built from confiscated knives which was aimed at acting as a catalyst to reflect on the dangers associated with knife crime and what explore what communities could do to help deal with this

ACTION: Provide Community Trigger information and contact.

ACTION: Provide a future update on Operation Snap

5.2 It was advised that the new Deputy Chief Constable had a background which related to the forthcoming protect duty known as Martin's Law. They were also the Chair of the Local Resilience Forum which was likely to lead on a great deal of this work.

6. WORK PLAN

A member asked if the Panel could go a visit the Sabrina Centre in Berkeley.

CHAIR

Meeting concluded at 12:30.

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Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel response to the 2023/24 precept

Having received a detailed budget report and an overview presentation from the Commissioner, the Panel had a detailed and rigorous question and answer session.

Members welcomed the principles included in the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan, noting particularly that speeding, anti-social behaviour and violence and intimidation against women and girls were policing priorities raised the most by their residents. They also highlighted the success of attracting external funding such as Safer Streets.

There were questions posed around the level of savings and expected financial impacts such as pay and inflation predicted and allocated for this budget, showing concern at where these savings would be required and higher than predicted percentages impacting the delivery of this budget's priorities.

The Panel were reassured by answers given that Officers were comfortable with the quantities within the budget. The required savings were being drawn from efficiencies made within areas such as improved IT systems, procurement and reviewing vacant posts prior to recruitment. The pay increase allowance was in line with predictions from the Home Office and Annex B of the report provided a high-level overview of a much more detailed background piece of work around inflation. It was reiterated that this budget did have a healthy risk appetite but did not feel it was over balanced on risk.

Members welcomed that for the Commissioner to want to raise the council tax precept, it was because he intended to spend it in full on the priorities laid out in this paper, and not to put into reserves and risk an underspend at the end of the financial year. Whilst noting the Constabulary's Reserves would reduce from 25% of net revenue expenditure to 16% at the end of this Medium-Term Financial Plan, it was accepted that the remaining amount was enough to address any unforeseen expenditures.

Panel members proposed that they accept the recommendations in the paper and endorse the budget. There had been no calls for veto and was

RESOLVED

Unanimously to support the proposed precept.

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