

# Adult Social Care & Communities Scrutiny Committee

## Community Safety Directorate

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Living our values every day  




Accountable



Integrity



Empower



Respect



Excellence



# The Community Safety Directorate Consists of:

- Coroner's Office
- Trading Standards



# Coroner's Service

## General overview

Administered locally by the GCC. However, the Coroner's Service is not a department of the Council, but more so it is an independent, locally administered branch of the National Judiciary, dealing with all deaths that require a Coronial input.

Three key issues for discussion today –

- - Operational Overview.
- - Current Resilience Position.
- - Current Budgetary Position..



# Coroner's Service Key Issue 1

## Operational overview

- 208,400 deaths were reported to Coroners in 2022. Highest level since 2019, up 7%.
- Representing 36% of all registered deaths.
- 90,200 post-mortem examinations ordered by Coroners in 2022.
- Gloucestershire have carried out 450 autopsy examinations since 1/1/23.
- There has been a significant decline in the number of trained pathologists across the UK (those retiring not being replaced) consequently the risk to the service of the deceased having to unnecessarily wait for a PM is an ongoing threat to the Service..



# Coroner's Service Key Issue 1 Contd

## Operational overview

- During 2022, 20% (18,465) of all post-mortems included the taking of histology, whilst over the same period 24% of all post-mortems included the taking of toxicology - continuing the consistently rising trend.
- Gloucester Coroner's Service currently deals with 2500-3000 death referrals per year. 300+ inquests per year with a target date of 22 weeks from referral to inquest and produces c.1000+ Coroner Authority forms to support a GP, or hospital doctor issuing the death certificate if certain circumstances are met..



# Coroner's Service Key Issue 2

## Operational Resilience – Mortuary Services

- Current storage capacity for 62 deceased.
- Running at almost maximum capacity.
- Temporary pop-up fridges secured for 12 deceased which are in constant use.
- Deceased becoming more bariatric and this increases risk of injury to staff when manually handling.
- Staff working to full capacity / Senior APT now also Designated Individual under HTA.
- Equipment - trolleys, hydraulic lifting, PM tables etc coming to end of natural shelf life after 12 years..



# Coroner's Service Key Issue 2 Contd

## Operational Resilience – Coroner's Officers

- Establishment is 6 Coroner's Officers (1 Senior CO and 5 COs)
- Role of Senior Coroner's Officer (SCO) created 2015, in line with rest of Service.
- SCO recently appointed to new role of Coroner's Operations Officer (COO).
- Recruiting to backfill this post.
- Each officer is currently managing c.50-60 investigations / inquest files.
- A funding bid requires consideration to re-establish the original establishment to mitigate some of the pressure on staff and to provide the necessary fail safe in term of cover for leave, sickness or other abstraction..



# Coroner's Service Key Issue 3

## Current budgetary risks – Short term

- Cost of pathology work i.e., PMs for year ending 2022 = £165k.
- Histology and Toxicology costs in 2022, have seen inflationary increases (£128k) alongside everyday Mortuary consumables (£28k) required to operate the Service.
- Uplift in 2022/23, budget provided to cover above is predicted to fall short of the costs already being experienced during the first two quarters of 2023..





# Coroner's Service Key Issue 3 Cont'd

## Current budgetary risks – Medium Term

- Both revenue and capital costs are predicted to increase over the medium term as the Coroner's Service looks to increase establishment in critical business areas to meet significant increased demand and to keep pace with consumable price rises.
- Necessary / critical improvements to the building and replacement of some of the infrastructure due to the age / condition of equipment and machinery to maintain the throughput of deceased as the only County Mortuary.
- MTFS bids are likely to have to be made in the medium term to cover any shortfall..



# Coroner's Service Key Issue 3 Contd

## Current budgetary risks – Longer Term

- Raising the profile and importance of the Coroner's Service to key Corporate players so that there is an understanding / appreciation of the work of the Coroner's Service.
- Highlighting any reputational risks associated with the option of 'doing nothing' if shortfalls in establishment become prolonged and when the ongoing requirement of the service is to place the bereaved families at the heart of everything we do.
- Highlighting the provision of Sec 24 of the Coroner's & Justice Act 2009 to secure the provision of resources to carry out Coroner's role..



# Trading Standards

## Overview

Delegated through the Council's constitution, Trading Standards is tasked with upholding legislation designed to protect consumers and support businesses within Gloucestershire.

Three key issues for discussion today –

- Resources and succession planning.
- ICT and work systems.
- Managing emerging..



# Trading Standards

## Operational overview

Priority areas of work for 2023/24

- Animal welfare and disease control in farm animals.
- Food Standards.
- Product safety.
- Scams and fraudulent home/garden work..



# Trading Standards Key Issue 1

## Resources and Succession Planning

- Net budget £995,951 FTE 19.08
- Aging staff profile 50% aged 50 or over, 15% currently aged 55 or over.
- Foreseeable loss of skills and experience over the next 5 year.
- National shortage of qualified and competent officers.
- Succession planning dependant on 'growing our own talent'..



# Trading Standards Key Issue 2

## ICT and Managing Information Systems

Existing work management software is –

- Outdated and only fully functional on citrix layer.
- Server based.
- Not GDPR compliant.

Impacts effectiveness and efficiency of staff..



# Trading Standards Key Issue 3

## New Threats and External Pressures

- **Growth of online sales** – investigator skills deficits, incomplete market knowledge, and lack of consumer awareness.
- **Food Standards Agency** – delivery of statutory official food controls.
- **Emerging issues and new burdens** – under-age sales of disposable e-cigarettes, single use plastics legislation, clean air requirements for kiln dried logs..



# Any Questions?

