

GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel held on Friday 24 November 2023 at the Council Chamber - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT:

Cllr Ray Brassington	Cllr George Porter
Cllr Philip Burford	Cllr Steve Robinson
Cllr Joe Harris	Stella Tams
Cllr Sajid Patel	Cllr Brian Tipper
Cllr Martin Percy	

Apologies: Cllr Flo Clucas, Cllr Dr Collette Finnegan and Kingston Myles

Following Full Council's Motion 933, the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel invited all District Council Leaders and Gloucestershire County Council Group Leaders to attend the meeting. The Chair welcomed those that had joined the meeting and gave them the opportunity to ask one question during the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting on the 8th September 2023 were approved as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. HMICFRS IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

4.1 The Chair invited Richard Ocone, Temporary Assistant Chief Constable, to give an update on His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan. This was supported by Chris Nelson, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Nick Evans, the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, and Ruth Greenwood, the Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC).

4.2 The following points were highlighted:

- It was confirmed that Gloucestershire Constabulary had first been placed into 'engage' status (referred to often as 'special measures') by HMICFRS in December 2021 following five causes for concern being identified within the force. The Officer was pleased to report that in September 2023, Gloucestershire Constabulary had been removed from engage.
- The Officer gave an overview of progress made against the five areas of concerns over this period. He stated that the force had been discharged

from four of these areas, but monitoring remained on 999 and 101 response times. It was recognised that more improvement needed to be made in this area, as well as reducing call abandonment rates. The Officer stated that they had developed a robust Force Control Room (FCR) Improvement Plan which included accelerating their plans to recruit further FCR staff.

Questions

- 4.2 Responding to a Member's question about how the number of inspections had affected their efficiency, the Officer confirmed that the Constabulary were inspected more than many public sector organisations. He emphasised that to cope with inspection demands, the force had had to take on more staff. The Officer stated that Gloucestershire's Chief Constable had spoken to the HMICFRS about the amount of inspection that the Constabulary had to undertake and how this affected their performance abilities.
- 4.3 It was confirmed that the current focus was on improving the FCR as it was not performing as efficiently as it should. He emphasised that if the Force got the first point of contact right, it would make the whole process simpler and more effective.
- 4.4 Responding to a Member's question about why there was a lack of detectives in the county, it was highlighted that this was a national shortage that most constabularies were dealing with. He stated that the recruitment of police officers had previously run in cycles with large recruitment drives and therefore, those officers who were recruited during the cycle of drives were all retiring at the same time. In addition, where previously it was common for officers to be employed by the Constabulary for their whole career, they had gone through a period where they had struggled with retention and whilst they had started to recruit more police officers, it had created a young and less experienced work force. The Officer also stated that the process of becoming a Detective was difficult with a lengthy training process, including exams and different financial pressures to consider which may make it less attractive.
- 4.5 When asked about what had been done to motivate and sustain the Constabulary staff through this time, the Officer confirmed that they had invested heavily into their officer wellbeing through early intervention and self-referral schemes. He stated that there was also a team in HR who were focused on identifying areas where the force could improve in this respect.
- 4.6 Responding to a Member's question about staff recruitment in the FCR, the Officer stated that the final baseline figure of officers they wanted to reach was 123.59, and currently they had just under 100 employees. It was confirmed that due to the nature of the job, they lost 1-2 call handlers a month. He confirmed that they had changed their process to block recruit 20 call handlers at a time rather than the previous 8-9 recruits.

- 4.7 The Chair requested that the Committee arrange a visit to the Force Control Room

ACTION – Democratic Services

- 4.8 The Officer was invited to give an update on E-scooters as this was requested by the Police and Crime Panel in the September meeting. The following points were highlighted:

- The Officer stated that E-scooters had been identified as a problem nationally as the accompanying legislation needed to be further developed. He confirmed that as the cost of E-scooters had decreased, the use had increased.
- He stated that 33 E-scooters had been seized in the past 12 months and it is usual practice destroy them once seized.
- The Officer stated that the Constabulary were aware of intelligence relating to the use of E-scooters and bikes for criminal activity. He confirmed that this was being looked into by the Neighbourhood Policing teams and he encouraged the Panel to share any intelligence with the Constabulary if they knew of any ongoing criminal activity where E-scooters were being used.

- 4.9 The Officer was invited to give an update on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) as this was requested by the Police and Crime Panel in the September meeting. The following points were highlighted:

- The Officer stated that there had been an upward trend in the reporting data, but it was believed that this was not due to more offences being committed in the county, but due to increased awareness, more resources and therefore an increased level of confidence in people reporting these crimes.
- It was added that, as the Panel were aware from previous updates, since September 2022, the recording of all crime was far more accurate due to the Crime Standards Bureau undergoing a higher level of training around accuracy.

Questions

- 4.10 Responding to a Member's question about whether the Constabulary interpreted the data as positive or negative, the Officer stated that he felt it was positive because it was evident that there was an increased confidence in women reporting crimes which helped to improve the accuracy of recording offences overall. The Police and Crime Commissioner invited Sarah Mashiter, OPCC Senior Analyst, to speak more in depth about how herself and her colleague analysed VAWG data. She confirmed that each month both analysts looked through the performance data and had conversations with the PCC and the Performance Boards. She stated that she believed that the data should be looked at within its wider context so that trends could be properly understood. Therefore, she suggested that it was

hard to say whether the data would be looked at either positively or negatively because it was dependent on the wider picture.

- 4.11 A Member asked how the public were informed that the increased reporting of VAWG did not mean that there was more criminal activity. The PCC stated that part of the purpose of the Police and Crime Panel was to bring clarity to these issues. He also confirmed that he tried to attend any event he was invited to so that he could speak about the work of the OPCC and the Constabulary on this issue. He also highlighted his new Advocacy Group Scheme which focused on improving town and parish council communication with the police.

5. POLICE AND CRIME PREVENTION PLAN UPDATE (DRAFT)

- 5.1 The Chair invited Chris Nelson, PCC, to introduce his draft of the Police and Crime Prevention Plan.
- 5.2 The PCC thanked the OPCC team for their work on the Crime and Prevention Plan. He stated that the Plan was created to put the PCC's five election manifestos and the additional VAWG priority into an official document.
- 5.3 It was stated that the delay in creating the PCP Prevention Plan was due to resource pressures for the OPCC and the Constabulary following the HMICFRS engaged measures.
- 5.4 The Plan priorities aim to address 1. Creating safer communities, 2. Tackling VAWG, 3. Strengthening your Constabulary, 4. Targeting the causes of crime, 5. Supporting victims and reducing reoffending, 6. Empowering local communities.

Questions

- 5.5 Responding to a Member's question about the implementation of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras in the county, the PCC stated that they had installed fifty extra ANPR systems within the county. It was confirmed that they had initially had problems with procurement, but this had now been rectified, and the roll out of ANPR cameras would increase.
- 5.6 A Member questioned the PCC on what was being done to stop speeding in the county. The PCC informed the Panel about a new scheme called Community Speed Watch where local communities could bid for road safety interventions in their local area. One of the interventions was a Community Speed Watch camera which would notify speeding drivers by letter if they were caught and if they continued to speed a police officer would be deployed to the area to catch the offender and issue them with a speeding ticket.

5.7 It was stated that whilst ANPR cameras were good, the Community Speed Watch cameras were much cheaper and were just as effective at identifying people who persistently speed. It was confirmed that local areas did not need to prove (i.e., provide data) the need for surveillance in their area to make a bid to this scheme. Community Speedwatch was an initiative overseen by the Gloucestershire Road safety Partnership which is led by Gloucestershire County Council and supported by the OPCC and Constabulary.

5.8 Responding to a Member's question about the old cameras which sent a fine to those who were caught speeding, the PCC confirmed that these cameras had previously been operated by the previous Road Safety Partnership which had been disbanded under the previous Commissioner. It was stated that most of these cameras had stopped working or were at the end of their life and that the OPCC were now focused on using average speed cameras instead as they provided a much wider area of coverage.

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

6.1 The Chair stated that this item was to be taken as read and invited Chris Nelson, PCC, to highlight any key developments. The PCC stated that the major event which had happened since the last Police and Crime Panel meeting was the Constabulary being removed from special measures by the HMICFRS. He also stated that the OPCC were developing their offer for tackling rural crime.

6.2 A Member highlighted a concern that had been raised during discussions at Gloucestershire County Council's full Council meeting on 8th November 2023 regarding a member's interaction with a police officer. The Deputy PCC expressed his concern and apologies regarding the specific issue and confirmed that the Chief Constable was aware. It was emphasised that the new police recruits were given vigorous training around appropriate behaviour and attitudes to victims and witnesses.

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

7.1 The Chair invited Ruth Greenwood, Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, to give an update on activities of the OPCC. The following points were highlighted:

- The Officer highlighted the spike in complaints to the OPCC in May 2023, she confirmed that this was due to a campaign group that mobilised their members to write en masse.
- It was noted that following an action from September's meeting, the wording in the 'Performance Overview' report section had been changed.

- The Officer confirmed that there had been some changes in staff at the OPCC and that there was currently one vacancy for an Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Case Review administrator role following the expanding workload of the OPCC's ASB Case Review Officer.

Questions

- 7.2 Responding to a Member's question about Restorative Gloucestershire's 'Restorative Conversations' video, the Officers confirmed that they were working with Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning (GHLL) to get the video into schools. The PCC confirmed that they had also created lessons plans to go alongside the video which could be used in schools' PHSE lessons.
- 7.3 A Member questioned whether Safer Gloucestershire were working with the Older Drivers Forum on the road safety agenda. The Officers confirmed that they were and that they were particularly focusing on older drivers as they were often the victims of more serious collisions. The PCC also mentioned that they were working with older school children as well to educate them on the risks of driving inappropriately.
- 7.4 Officers confirmed that the lease for the Nightingale Court in Cirencester was due to expire in March 2024, but she confirmed that the OPCC were negotiating a future use agreement. Although she did confirm that they did have other court buildings and would be exploring other opportunities as well.
- 7.5 A Member asked for more information on the complaints listed in paragraph 2.3 of the report.

ACTION – Ruth Greenwood

- 7.6 The PCC stated that he would speak to the Chief Constable to obtain the monthly complaints summary report that was created by the Constabulary's public facing complaints team. He did inform the Panel that this data would not include serious complaints as due to the nature of the complaints, they would be dealt with by the Professional Standards Department and would not be able to be shared.

ACTION – PCC

8. WORK PLAN

- 8.1 The Chair thanked the Deputy PCC for the Panel's trip to the Sabrina Centre.
- 8.2 The Chair asked for a visit to the Force Control Room and the Custody Suite to be arranged for 2024.

ACTION – Democratic Services

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

- 8.3 The OPCC Chief Executive confirmed that she had discussed with the Chair to bring an item on partnership work including Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour and the Serious Violence Duty Team.

ACTION – Democratic Services

CHAIR

Meeting concluded at 12:20.