

Police and Crime Panel Report (3 February 2017 meeting) For O&S Committee

Police and Crime Plan. As members may recall the draft Police and Crime Plan for 2017-2021 was considered and approved at the November meeting of the Police and Crime Panel. The Plan has now been published and is available to view on the Commissioner's website. At our meeting on 3rd February, the Panel considered the delivery plan for the six priorities within the Plan. On the whole the Panel was content with the Plan and was particularly pleased to see the emphasis on Neighbourhood Policing and the revitalisation of Neighbourhood Watch. However, the Panel was concerned about the ambitious target to double the number of special constables within the period and will be closely monitoring progress over subsequent meetings.

The Chief Executive's report contained a great deal of data and statistics and it was gratifying to see that the number of complaints against the police had dropped dramatically in Cheltenham. There was also praise for the borough's work on modern slavery, hate crime and the night-time economy. Concern was expressed by the Panel regarding the HMIC report on Legitimacy and Leadership within the Force (both requiring improvement). A full report from the Commissioner has been requested for the next Panel meeting.

Estates. Contracts have been exchanged on the sale of the former HQ site in Lansdown Road and the Constabulary have taken up a three-year lease on the former Tourist Information office in the Promenade. This maintains a police presence in the town centre and will be primarily used during major events and for officers working at night.

The Police and Crime Act came into force on 31 January and has two particular impacts on the Constabulary.

The first is a duty to cooperate between all three emergency services and it proposes two different models for cooperation between the police and fire services.

1. The PCC to take governance of the Fire Service where there is local agreement.
2. PCC representation on the Fire and Rescue Authority with voting rights.

The Commissioner reported that currently there is an unwillingness on the part of the County Council to enter into discussions on these options.

The second impact is regarding the handling of complaints to "make the police complaints and discipline systems simpler, more transparent and more robust". There are three different models of which the first is mandatory and will be implemented in summer 2017. Model 2 covers powers, governance and super complaints and Model 3 covers models of investigation, whistle-blowing and outstanding recommendations from the Chapman review. There is currently no guidance on when the Commissioner needs to make a decision on which model(s) to adopt or whether a decision once made is set in stone.

Budget. The total Home Office Grant for the Police Service nationally for 2017/18 has increased by 1.7%. However, much of the funding has gone to national initiatives meaning that the grant to Gloucestershire has actually reduced by 1.4%. MTFS planning is difficult as no indicative HO figures were provided for future years. Under current Government methodology, the PCC may increase the precept by less than 2% without a local referendum. He therefore proposed an increase of 1.99% meaning that funding would be the same as last year in "flat cash" terms, ie: not taking into account wage increases and inflation. However, there will be extra income due to the increase in the number of households (1% assumed) in the county. The PCP agreed both the budget and the 1.99% rise in precept.

Police Grant Funding Formula. In October last year the Government asked for views on factors which should be taken into account in devising a new formula. The PCC and PCP submitted a joint response requesting the population should be the main factor in any new formula. Having considered the responses received the Government is expected to conduct a public consultation on their proposal imminently. It is not known how long the consultation period will be, when the Government wish to introduce the new formula or whether transitional arrangements will be put in place.

Cllr Helena McCloskey
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