

Police & Crime Panel Report for Overview & Scrutiny – July 27 2020

Date of Panel: July 17 2020

Summary

The panel meeting focused on policing activities during lockdown and a review draft of the commissioner's annual report. The panel endorsed the appointment of Richard Bradley as Chief Executive of the OPCC, and also took time to discuss his regular report.

Outside of the panel, the commissioner has recently been reelected as Vice Chair of the Association of PCC's for another year.

Annual item: election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Cllr Colin Hay was elected Chair, Cllr Steve Robinson elected Vice-Chair.

Non-standard item: Covid-19 and policing

The panel heard from senior officers and the commissioner about the constabulary's approach to policing during lockdown. Police conducted themselves with dignity and professionalism across the county, stepping up without any concerns at any point. The commissioner made £1m available to the Chief Constable for pandemic policing, to be used at his discretion. The constabulary focused on the "Four E's" approach – engage, explain, encourage, enforce – and balanced its response to Covid-19 with general policing requirements. A bespoke command structure was established. A planned rollout of technology was accelerated, to enable more home working.

Problems with communications from central government, made the job very difficult in the early stages, such as messages being announced without advanced warning to constabularies.

Resources have been drafted in to look at future issues that Covid-19 may create for the constabulary. This includes changes in crime, changes in command, the impact on resourcing and how resilient the constabulary is to these.

So far during the pandemic there has been an overall drop in crime of 27%. House burglaries and shoplifting are down, but there is an expectation of child abuse and domestic abuse amounts increasing. There has been a small increase across the county but not as much as the national increase. The constabulary has diverted resources into that area as mitigation.

The majority of fines that have been issued were to people from the south east who consciously broke lockdown regulations to spend time in holiday properties in the Cotswolds.

The commissioner is anticipating a surge in crime, potentially due to a surge in reported crime, when schools return.

Standard item: Chief Executive Report

The new Sabrina training centre is operational, enabling new recruits and internal staff to train in a state-of-the-art facility. Latent capacity will be rented out commercially, to bring in extra revenue.

Lydney police station is back open, which has been welcomed by the community.

There is mounting pressure to provide better court facilities in Gloucestershire. Cheltenham's magistrates court is in disrepair and the crown court in Gloucester is not fit for purpose. The commissioner wrote to Alex Chalk MP, who is the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Ministry of Justice, to request that something be done. All MPs in the county received a copy of the letter. So far the commissioner has received no responses. The panel resolved to write to Mr Chalk, expressing its serious concern about this situation.

The panel endorsed a statement from Leadership Gloucestershire, committing to a course of action aimed at eradicating discrimination.

Annual item: OPCC Draft Annual Report

The commissioner's draft report was well received and numerous panel members gave positive feedback.

Non-standard item: OPCC Chief Executive appointment and recruitment process

The panel unanimously consented to the appointment of Mr Richard Bradley as Chief Executive of the OPCC after a full recruitment process. Mr Bradley was previously the interim chief executive, and prior to that the deputy chief executive.