

Police and Crime Panel Report for Overview & Scrutiny – November 2 2020

Date of Panel: September 18 2020

Report from the Police & Crime Commissioner

The waiting list for courts in Gloucestershire is increasing. The magistrates court has risen from 450 before the pandemic to 1,000 now. There is a backlog of 330 cases in the crown court. Gloucester cannot be covid-proofed because of its listed status, which means that only one case can be heard at a time. Most cases are being heard in Bristol. Victims, witnesses and the accused alike are beginning to lose patience. The commissioner has offered Cirencester court to Ministry of Justice and is waiting for a detailed response. If Cirencester can be put back into service, it will be the only DDA complaint court in the county.

The home office is undertaking a review of Police and Crime Commissioners and Police & Crime Panels, which is due for report this autumn.

Police & Crime Plan refresh

The deputy commissioner presented the refreshed Police & Crime Plan. The Panel took a vote on endorsing the principles set out in the plan, subject to approving a fuller draft at a later stage. That vote carried, with 8 voting for, 2 against and 4 abstentions.

Revised police operating model

Detective Chief Superintendent Richard Cooper presented a revised operating model to the Panel. The revised model changes the way in which officers interact with cases. Under the new model, the officers who initially respond to incidents will take ownership of the case through to completion. This is a change from a former model in which cases change hands between officers, who take responsibility for different stages of cases.

The objective behind the change of model is to introduce a greater emphasis on localism and ownership. Giving ownership of a case to officers will also introduce a greater sense of local identity as they get to spend more time in their areas working with residents. This is particularly important in more rural areas and is expected to resonate well with local business owners.

CEO report

The Chief Executive of the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner presented his report to the panel. He announced there has been an extension of contract for Chief Constable Rod Hansen (this was for the panel to note, rather than approve). This news was well received by panel members and commented on favourably by many. O&S members may be pleased to know that the Chief Constable was recognised in the latest Queen's honours, receiving the Queen's Police Medal.

Mental health report

There is a possibility of establishing a blue light service for mental health. Currently there is a high level of partnership working, including the use of agencies for dealing with some of the demand for the police force. Mental health calls are becoming increasingly prevalent; the current figure is that 10 people go missing per day in Gloucestershire.

Safer streets

Cllr Mark Hawthorne pressed the Commissioner on why he did not apply for safer streets funding. The commissioner explained that the chances of success were slim, and as the time to make the applications coincided with the peak of the first wave of coronavirus he did not feel it would be a good use of officer time. The constabulary was operating at 74% capacity, with staff members themselves having the virus and/or self-isolating. The commissioner noted that plenty of other constabularies applied without getting grants, that he made an extra £1m of funding available to the constabulary, and Cllr Hawthorne should be aware of all of this as it was included in a recent response to an FOI from his office. Many panel members raised objections to the chair, saying they felt that this part of the meeting was clearly a politically motivated attack on the commissioner. The chair allowed around twenty minutes of debate before calling the meeting to a close.