

Police and Crime Panel Report for Overview & Scrutiny – Jan 2021

Date of Panel: November 6 2020

Report from the Police & Crime Commissioner

Noting that it had not been long since the last meeting, the Commissioner updated the panel to say:

- The team at the Bamfurlong motor control centre had been moved off-site due to roadworks. As such, officers are deployed to different sites than usual. Planning consent to rebuild is now progressing well through Tewkesbury Borough Council
- Police officers and staff are to receive a 2.5% pay rise, this should be covered by central government
- The constabulary is ahead of schedule on recruitment for new police officers
- The constabulary recently held its annual rural crime week, the only authority to do so

Covid-19 enforcement plan

The constabulary has been following the 'Engage, explain, encourage and enforce' approach. Given that lockdown restrictions have been in place for some time, there is now more cause for enforcement.

The commissioner reported that the vast majority of the public are complying with restrictions, but there have been some flagrant breaches. This led to a lengthy discussion, covering these specific points:

- An extensive report is issued to police Gold group on a weekly basis, which is heavily scrutinised
- Officers will 'not be shy' in issuing 10k fines to organisers of flagrant breaches. Individual fines will be issued as feasible.
- The constabulary is working to ensure the law is enforced in a proportionate manner; performance is being monitored to be sure that different groups such as age and ethnicity are not treated differently
- Gloucestershire is in the top third of constabularies for policing restrictions
- Warnings and fines are increasing, there are some minor demographic trends but the numbers are currently too small to be reliable. These numbers will be assessed in the future
- Most incidents are occurring in the early-late afternoons, and weekend evenings
- Some businesses have breached restrictions
- There were some issues in relation to Halloween parties

Police & Crime refresh document

The commissioner presented this agenda item. The Panel noted the document and asked questions about young offenders and low incarceration rates.

Criminal justice update

The courts in Gloucestershire are struggling. 1100 cases are blocked up in the magistrates court. The only solution is to increase capacity; the Crown court is down to a single court being operational at any one time.

'Multi-handed' trials, where there are multiple people accused (i.e. burglaries, affray), cannot be held.

The commissioner expressed his concern that people can plead not guilty because they know that their cases won't make it to court in due time, and by the time they do get to court witnesses will have given up interest.

Panel members expressed serious concern that a lack of timeliness in dealing with known crimes is contributing to an increased likelihood of further crimes being committed. The public will lose confidence in policing when they lose faith in a section of the system. Serious organised criminals can take advantage of a weakened justice system.

Regarding the commissioner's offer of Cirencester court, he has given the MoJ a deadline of November 27 to decide, otherwise the offer will be withdrawn. £25k is needed for refurbishments at Gloucester, which is a tiny proportion of the ministerial budget. The commissioner can make other use of the facility.

The commissioner has no statutory obligation here and is only involved because the OPCC owns the court. He does not understand why the MoJ is not snapping his hand off. The commissioner does not know why there is such a delay, or why there is no communication between the MoJ and the court system in the county.

Opening of the Sabrina centre

The new Sabrina training centre is operational and all involved are extremely proud. It is a world class facility, and was recently visited by policing minister Kit Malthouse MP.

CEO report

Presented and noted.

Upcoming meetings of note

In January the commissioner will host a budget briefing for the panel. This is ahead of February's meeting, which is when the precept for the next financial year will be set.