

## **Overview & Scrutiny, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

### **Update from 4<sup>th</sup> November Police and Crime Panel (Cllr. Flo Clucas)**

The PCC gave his briefing in relation to bids that had been put forward for safer streets. The bid was for £2 million and designated to antisocial behaviour, rural crime and violence against women and girls.

This would enable him to generate seven new PCSOs and support Solace across the county. There would also be further work on technical matters and in addition 32 number plate recognition cameras would be available for communities. New drones would also be available, together with personal safety applications and alarms.

Funding initiative bids in has resulted in an increased workload for staff.

The County, OPCC and Police are always short of money! In relation to dog theft, an initiative launched by Gloucestershire PCC, five forces have now signed up to the system.

The new Odyssey system allows the police force, when investigating sexual assault, to take information from the victim's phone without removing the phone from the victim for six months, a year or longer, as has been the case in the past.

This means that the key evidence which the victim has that may be relevant to the case, is available to the police, but the victim can retain the phone and supportive contact with family, friends and colleagues.

The Police and Crime Commissioner indicated sexual and assaults and rapes are increasing in the County.

He then spoke about Operation Scorpion, which involves working with Southwest forces against drugs, targeting cannabis and cocaine, both distributor and usage and getting media interested.

Scorpion is highlighting the use of children by county line gangs. (Somewhat later than no Child left Behind however!)

Community speed watch is in relation to speeding and in relation to cameras, these will be of interest to communities and look to volunteers to use the system.

### **Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**

The PCC had a meeting in Stroud which looked at misogyny and sexism and language and range of other issues.

The PCC is also looking at organising 'find your voice' which will look at bystander training.

There is also going to be a range of PCSO training courses and The Commissioner estimates that there will be a further 25 constables above target over the next three years.

### **Questions asked in relation to the report**

I asked a number of questions about a range of matters:

The increase in the number of sexual assaults, which obviously of great concern. The Commissioner believes that the information that he has given to the committee demonstrates his commitment to ensuring that women are safer on the streets. However if these assaults are rising then more is needed to be done. I asked whether work was being done in relation to schools, colleges and in relation to universities. The earlier that misogyny is tackled, the better the outcomes will be.

The Commissioner indicated that, yes, work was ongoing in schools in order to ensure that children understand more, not just in relation to how they can be abused as children by cartels and county line gangs.

I asked about information that is being given to children and indeed to the wider public, particularly as far as reading ages are concerned, because obviously we can put out a huge amount of stuff but most of the people at the committee would have reaching in excess of 16 to 18. In other words that they be able to read the Guardian or Times, without any difficulty. Most recent evidence would indicate that a reading age of somewhere between eight and 10 is best when putting up public messages on social media and in print. Indeed, short sentences are better than long ones!

The Commissioner agreed and they're going to look at this. I have said that I would be happy to help him should he wish me to do so.

In relation to recruitment, I asked that given what has happened in the Met and other forces, the applicant's history should be properly examined and questioned. That was agreed.

Given reports in the media in relation to officers using food banks, I did not think that was at all helpful either to their standing or indeed to the recruitment of officers. The Commissioner agreed that wasn't an acceptable situation but he indicated that things were going well in relation to targets and that the police would be much more target driven in future.

I questioned that, as targets do not always lead to good results, when the targets are what matters, rather than the results that are required and therefore those who have to meet targets concentrate on that, leaving potential areas of difficulty, and crime alone.

The Police and Crime Commissioner responded to each of my questions in relation to enforcement treatment systems prevention using education the impact on the most vulnerable drug awareness courses and using webinar systems this was all in relation to refugees in our town who are coming here now in greater numbers.

(It was interesting that the PCC commended the Liberal Democrats for the readability of our leaflets).

In relation to schools, there will be a range of initiatives they will be looking to start. Each school does have beat officers and therefore what they do will be monitored.

In relation to Misogyny and Exploitation, there is a consent video and which is part of the teaching work that is carrying on. I asked whether restorative justice could be enabled in more cases when dealing with young people as there was a need for that to happen in Gloucestershire. He agreed that was a good thing to do.

In response to my question about targets, he agreed that the force might struggle to cope with some and recognised the dangers of having a targeted approach but believed that they could manage to offset those in relation to the work being done.

In relation to officers using food banks, the PCC indicated that there had been a £2000 a year pay rise and there was going to be a focus on the lowest paid officers. Nationally PCCs had lobbied government to that effect saying that more needed to be done. He is also talking to the Chief Constable and Chief Executive as to how things might be done differently to enable more to be paid to officers. They are obviously concerned about the fragility of morale and so on and the pressures that many officers face.

The PCC's Report and Questions took up most of the meeting. They were followed by reports from the Chief Executive and others that went into some depth in particular areas. Many of those areas repeated much that was in the report from the PCC.