

## Notes from Police and Crime Panel – November 2024

Our Police and Crime Commissioner is responsible for dealing with complaints and allegations about the conduct of current and former Chief Constables. Following the suspension of Rod Hansen after allegations of gross misconduct, Maggie Blyth has become Gloucestershire Police's interim Chief Constable.

The recruitment of a Deputy Chief Constable is currently underway. Although we have three Assistant Chief Constables (ACCs) in Gloucestershire Constabulary, that are next in rank within the command structure, none were able to step up into this role, due to not yet completing the required qualification to become a substantive chief constable (ACC, DCC or CC). The training is provided by the College of Policing, through their Executive Leadership Programme. I enquired as to why, when we already have three ACC's in position that not one of them was ready to step up. The Chief Executive provided a satisfactory answer in that it was simply a matter of bad timing.

Maggie Blyth will retain her current position as the National Police Lead, at the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) for male Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and I am confident her wealth of experience will be of great value to our PCC, when he launches his new Police and Crime Prevention Plan, as I know Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) will continue to be a priority for the force.

I subsequently learned, Maggie asked the OPCC to change their updated Violence and Intimidation Against Women and Girls (VIAWG) term, to be more inclusive of the crimes suffered, back to the nationally recognised VAWG term. While I respect this move, I do hope it doesn't go against their [Words Matter guidance](#), that recognises the nuances of language and giving practical advice specifically when reporting on male VAWG.

I questioned our PCC as to why his new Plan, expected in the Autumn had yet to be published, reason given was due to the many challenges the force has had to deal with over the past few months. I was told it would be published in early 2025 and before March the statutory completion month.

**Independent Custody Visitors Annual Report** - Annie White, OPCC Volunteer and Engagement Manager, gave an excellent presentation on their Independent Custody Visitors Annual Report.

Visits to custody suites by voluntary Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) became a statutory provision under the 2002 Police and Crime Act. The ICV scheme exists to provide the public with confidence about the way the police treat people who are held in custody. The ICV Annual Report is written to give an overview of the ICV's custody visits and record reviews. The OPCC were one of six who received a Platinum Award from the Independent Custody Visitors Association for their ICV Scheme.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) recruits volunteer ICVs to undertake the role and provides them with support and on-going training to ensure that they can carry out their role effectively. I commented that it was pleasing to see that training delivered this year focused on a variety of topics including how menopause and neurodivergence affect detainees in custody.

I queried as to whether the issues identified by the ICVs in the report had been resolved, as the reporting period ended in March 2024. The Officer confirmed that the walls in the yard had been painted in the summer and the cleaning contracts had been sorted to make sure there was a regular cleaning schedule.

I also questioned about the recruitment of new IVCs. It was confirmed the recruitment process took place in June and they are waiting for one final vetting check to come back before the new intake is trained in November.

IVCs must be proportionally representative of the local community, I compared this with the 2021 Census and they are. In Gloucestershire the population of ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities) accounted for 44,765 people or 6.9% of the population; this was much lower than the England percentage of 19.0%. The population of Gloucestershire is, however, becoming increasingly diverse. Ethnicity of non-white IVCs in the previous reporting year was at 11.11%.

When it comes to the ethnicity of detainees however, which should also be proportionally representative of the local community, I wasn't so comfortable. Especially when reported figures for both adults and children (aged 17 years and under) stated so many unknown ethnicities – in my opinion potentially hugely distorting the figures.

The stats are particularly concerning for children which stood at 11.8% not white and 12.7% not stated.

I questioned how ethnicity is captured and why it is not possible to know if someone is Black or Asian or White or other? And how reporting of such ethnicity figures can be improved, we so don't see such huge percentages of not stated that could be distorting the aims of such reporting. I was informed that going forward they would feedback my suggestion to include the police officers' perceived ethnicity of the detainee in the annual report.

**The Commissioners report** - I thanked the Commissioner for his report however requested for more detailed information going forward. Such as when he's had interviews with the media, he also provides a brief description of the subject matter. When he attends events, he also notes which districts he visits. When he attends key meetings that he provides an update of his key takeaways regarding actions to consider for the force.

I also noted the many acronyms in his report and although we have been provided with an acronym glossary requested full descriptions to be provided in his reports.

Full minutes of the meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> November can be [read here](#)