

REPORT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETING 18.09.20

Rob Bird, substitute for TBC representative David Gray

Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The Chair reported that following the previous meeting he had written on behalf of the Panel to Alex Chalk, in his capacity as a Minister, to ask about funding for refurbishing/replacing Gloucestershire's Courts. Alex Chalk had responded and confirmed that the funding available for refurbishment had recently been doubled. This prompted a lengthy attempt by one of the members to try to persuade the Panel that this response was inadequate and to write a further detailed argument back to Alex Chalk on this basis.

Such activity is clearly nothing to do with the work of the Panel, but this conversation was only eventually curtailed by the head of GCC democratic services having to explain that such action is beyond the Panel remit and it cannot act as a campaigning body.

Agenda Item 4 – PCC Update

Martin Surl, PCC, reported on a number of recent activities, including:

- work to improve the Police Control Room System, and investment in a new, co-ordinated system, as there are currently a multitude (17?) of systems operating
- a focus on animal theft and welfare – “the force must have a compassionate approach to all animals, domestic and farm” – “animal theft is a high priority” – recent intervention in attempted theft of 40-50 puppies was cited as proof of success of Police and Crime Plan
- MS referenced his work on other bodies:
 - 1) as vice-chair of APCC has taken on responsibility for ‘sustainability’ – referenced electric vehicles and charging
 - 2) on response panel to Home Office review of PCCs
 - 3) chair of Gloucestershire Criminal Justice Board – referenced case backlog building up in courts, and leading to witnesses giving up

Agenda Item 5 – Police and Crime Plan Refresh

Assistant PCC gave a marketing style “bullet point” presentation of the recent ‘refresh’ of the PC Plan, 6 priorities each supported by a number of brief statements of intent to highlight areas of intended activity, with the comment that more detail is to follow.

Every Crime Matters, Every Contact Counts
Older but not Overlooked
Green and Pleasant County
Young People becoming Adults
Safe Roads
Safer Days and Nights

A number of panellists questioned lack of detail or commitment to specific activities, one in particular that child exploitation is not addressed, which received the response that the plan is an overarching strategy, and such details are police operational matters.

Martin Surl then stated that it is the role of the Panel to 'take a view' of the Plan, and asked the Panel to endorse the changes, ie to formally vote on it, to which I responded that this would be inappropriate, we couldn't formally endorse a few slides without much more detail to come, ie a Plan. My view was supported by several members, but, against this, others enthused about the 'plan', a vote was forced, the outcome being 8 For, 2 Against (myself and the person concerned about child exploitation), 4 Abstain.

Agenda Item 6 – Police Operating Model Changes

Presentation by a senior officer. Changes to the operating model have recently been announced, and these were explained with appropriate diagrams. Changes originally driven by the demands of the CoVid emergency are now being made permanent, which are essentially a decentralised, local based resource model, rather than the 'schematic' approach of the past.

3 Local Policing Areas, each with its own area Superintendent and line of command – Supt Emma Davies is responsible for local policing in Tewkesbury and Cheltenham

Agenda Item 7 – Mental Health Report and Police Demand

PCC has agreed to extend the Chief Constable's tenure from 2022 to 2025

There was a very general, brief update on police response activity to missing person alerts and the work carried out dealing with mental health related cases.

Agenda Item 8 – Safer Streets Grants Awards

Martin Surl explained that he had been asked to provide a report about the fact that the PCC office hadn't applied for a government grant under the 'Safer Streets' scheme, designed to fund anti-burglary measures, at the beginning of this year. He invited questions and there followed a lengthy question and answer session which established the following:

- the PCC office researched Home Office application criteria in advance of the submission deadline, which were complicated
- as a minimum, 2 areas of Gloucestershire potentially could have met Home Office criteria for funding if an application been submitted, and the PCC office had this information in time
- the PCC had the government 'potential allocations' information which listed each PCC area and the maximum grant level available, subject to criteria on application
- the detailed application process was clearly complicated
- Martin Surl made various statements about being disappointed with the outcome, but the fundamental reason(s) for not applying remained unclear
- as to why an application wasn't submitted, Martin Surl made, amongst others, the following comments:
 - "the chances of success were slim"
 - "the 2 areas identified would have been difficult to address operationally"
 - a comment to the effect that that if money had been allocated, the PCC wouldn't have been able to spend it within the deadline

In view of the last 2 statements, I asked 2 specific questions:

Q. - what are the 2 areas which were eligible for grant funding? A. – 1 in Cheltenham and 1 in Cirencester, and understandably MS wouldn't be more specific

Q. – what is the deadline for spending the money? A. – 31.03.21

REPORT ENDS