

Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel - Friday 6 November 2020 – Feedback Report

The meeting was focussed on the following items:

- Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) update.
- COVID-19 Enforcement Plan.
- Police and Crime Plan Refresh.
- Criminal Justice Update.
- Opening of the Sabrina Centre.
- Chief Executive Report from Office of PCC.

1. PCC update

The PCC gave an update on his activity over the last month. Amongst the matters covered were:

- Police officer numbers have been increasing as planned and have risen from 1,168 to 1,194 since the end of September. COVID has not delayed plans, but has actually helped as there have been fewer retirees than anticipated.
- The Gloucestershire Rural Crime Week, which ran from 23 October, had a number of areas of focus, including hare coursing, rural criminals, illegal angling and dog theft. The use of 4x4s and drones was publicised. Nationally the RCW was cancelled, but the PCC and Chief Constable decided that given the nature of the County it should proceed in Gloucestershire.
- The Bamfurlong Motor Patrol Centre at the junction of the A40 and M5 has been emptied of police assets (cars etc.) due to roadworks that adversely effected response times, and in particular as they relate to Gloucester. Officers have been relocated to various locations to provide cover. A planning application has been submitted for an upgrade to the site and demolition of the existing site will commence in January 2021.
- Additional costs identified as occurring as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic amount to £1.3m so far, £1.0 of which have been covered from PCC reserves and rest from central government grants.
- Crime has dropped as a result of COVID restrictions by 6%, but by less than the national average, which is 20%. The PCC suggested that this was largely explained by the higher number of crimes being booked as a result of the recent negative conclusion of the review into the Force's activities, a practice consistent with the "every crime matters" focus in the Police Plan.

2. Covid 19 Enforcement Plan

Gloucestershire has received £229k of additional funding from central government to "beef up" enforcement and the County Council has also received similar funding.

The approach in Gloucestershire has been to follow the four Es: Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce. The focus is now on enforcement and flagrant breaches of the regulations will attract fines.

The PCC emphasised the wide range of views amongst the public and the need to make sure that enforcement was seen to be proportionate, being sensitive to different communities and age groups. In this regard the new 2nd national lockdown actually made life easier as the rules are simpler to interpret.

In response to a question from the Panel, the PCC said that he was not sure if domestic abuse had risen in the County during the pandemic, but the active coordination with relevant charities and other public bodies that address this issue had continued to help ensure that the issue was addressed effectively.

In response to a question, the PCC confirmed that Gloucestershire was in the top 1/3 of forces for issuing fines against recorded breaches of regulations.

Gloucestershire also cooperates with bordering forces, including providing additional officers for the police response to a rave in Somerset, and coordinating with Welsh forces regarding policing across the border, especially as COVID regulations differ.

3. Police and Crime Plan Refresh

The Plan, which covers the period 2020-22 was reviewed and its themes approved as sensible by the Panel. The areas of focus are:

- Every Crime Matters, including improved recording of crimes.
- Safer Days and Nights.
- Young People Becoming Adults, including being a “child friendly” County.
- Older but not Overlooked.
- Safe and Social Driving.
- A Green and Pleasant County, including plans to make the force carbon neutral.

There has been some slight delay in the implementation of the plans as a result of COVID.

4. Criminal Justice Update

The continued problem of the condition of the courts in the county was discussed. This is not directly an issue for the PCC or the Police as he and they have no jurisdiction over the courts, but the continued failure to address the condition and accessibility of courts, something that COVID has worsened, has consequences for the ability of the police to deliver justice in a timely manner.

5. Sabrina Police Centre

The new Sabrina Police training facility has been opened. The opening was attended by the Policing and Crime Minister, Kit Malthouse.

The next meeting of the Panel will be on 9 February 2021.