

## **Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel – Monday 8 February 2021**

### Feedback Report

Meeting attended by Councillor David Gray.

The meeting focussed on the following matters:

- Gloucestershire Police Precept 2020/21
- Covid 19 enforcement
- Report of the CEO of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
- Police and Crime Plan Summary Update

### **1. Gloucestershire Police Precept 2021/22**

The PCC proposed a 4.99% increase in the annual precept.

The PCC, Martin Surle, introduced his proposals for the 2021/22 precept by giving a wide ranging review of the position of the Gloucestershire Constabulary. Amongst the matters that he highlighted were:

- The Covid Pandemic has made for a difficult year for the Constabulary
- The precept increase in 20/21 was 2.7% against a maximum allowed of 4.0%
- As a result of two years' worth of rises in funding there has been an increase in the number of officers of 73 and in staff of 23
- The PCC released £1.3m from general reserves to the Chief Constable to help cover Covid related costs
- £1.0m has been spent from the Capital Fund, much of it on upgrading the customer relations system, and the benefits from this are already accruing, in the opinion of the PCC
- From a low point following austerity measures, the number of officers is up by 254 and the aim is to lift this number to 300 by 2022
- The Bamfurlong site is upgrade is underway

The PCC launched a public consultation on the Force on 6<sup>th</sup> January, and also sent out letters on 23 January. 199 letters were received in response and 1,207 responses online. The results showed that:

- 50% of respondents said they were unwilling to pay more for the police
- 43% said they were willing
- 52% said they were unable to pay more due to a variety of reasons, including financial difficulties and the pandemic
- A minority said they were willing to pay more "because it was needed"
- Of 296 police staff who responded to the survey only 53% said they were willing to pay more

As a background to the precept rise requested, the PCC noted that the central government had provided much needed additional funding for new officers, but had frozen the central precept that supports the existing Force. The per capita central grant for Gloucestershire is the 8<sup>th</sup> lowest in the country, reflecting a historic formula which takes into account the low relative crime level, amongst other things.

Having historically provided half of the funding for the Force, due to rising costs the central grant has now fallen to just 1/3 of costs, the rest being covered by the local precept.

The PCC, once again, highlighted the fact that officers are now required to train to degree level, which takes 3 years, before they are fully available. The impact of new officers will take time to accrue.

General financial reserves are recommended to be maintained at 3-5% of the annual budget. Following the draw down related to covid, these reserves have fallen to 3.7% of the budget, but there is no intention to start rebuilding them within the budget for 2021/22.

On the basis that it was the lowest level that he felt he could ask for without having to make cuts, the PCC asked that the annual precept be raised by 4.99%, slightly below the figure of 5.8% figure that would trigger the need for a referendum.

The Panel, which could veto any precept increase requested by the PCC if it had a 2/3rds majority against the requested amount, approved the requested increase.

## **2. Covid 19 enforcement**

In line with the rest of the Country, the crime rate in the County has fallen over the course of the pandemic, falling by 10% in 2020 calendar year. Burglary has declined by 25%. The drops in crime in Gloucestershire have been lower than in most parts of the country. However, the PCC said that he believed this was a consequence of the focus on recording "every crime" that came out of the review of the Force that took place two years ago; the Force changed its basis for recording crimes which has increased the number recorded.

Gloucestershire has the 6<sup>th</sup> lowest crime rate in the country, with 61.5 crimes per 1,000 people as against a national average of 79.9.

## **3. COO report**

Richard Bradley, the interim CFO, has been appointed full time.

## **4. Police and Crime Plan**

A number of matters were highlighted from the plan;

- 3 dedicated Superintendents have been appointed as local Commanders to oversee the Force in its 3 regions within the Force; Superintendent Emma Davies will have responsibility for Cheltenham and Tewkesbury
- Gloucestershire was the only Force to hold a rural crime week this year, others cancelling due to covid. Amongst other actions, 70 dog theft posters were posted and 109 farms visited.