

Police and Crime Panel Update - 8 September 2023

Criminal Justice Board Update

The Panel received a presentation from Victoria Bishop, Criminal Justice Board Co-Coordinator, on the work of the Criminal Justice Board. Mrs Bishop outlined the organisations that send representatives to the Board and the Board's priorities - reduction of reoffending, criminal justice performance, victims and witnesses, violence against women and girls, and anti-discrimination - and the framework through which those objectives are achieved.

Safer Gloucestershire Update

The Panel received a presentation from Debbie Powell, Safer Gloucestershire Coordinator, providing an overview of the work of Safer Gloucestershire, including Community Safety Partnerships. The Panel was briefed on the obligations imposed on district authorities by the Crime and Disorder Act which include the requirement of Councils to consider crime and disorder in all its functions. Ms Powell further updated the Panel on the Strategic Assessment for Gloucestershire which was undertaken in 2018; the key findings of the assessment were that while Gloucestershire remains one of the safest places in England, violent crime and sexual offences are on the rise and 14% of violent crimes are domestic in nature; furthermore, drug offences are falling but urban street gangs, organised crime groups, and County Lines are still a threat. Acquisitive crime is falling but it was noted that this may be a consequence of less reporting. Also noteworthy is that hate crime is on the rise in Gloucestershire; this included racism but also homophobia is particularly increasing. The Assessment identified six priorities - violence against women and girls, hate crime, urban street gangs and Serious/Organised Crime, the 'Prevent' plan (aimed at preventing radicalisation), road safety, and antisocial behaviour. The future plans for Safer Gloucestershire (i.a.) are to establish a county-wide antisocial behaviour group, a county hate crime group, enhanced reporting for antisocial behaviour, reference to statistics, and a two-year perception of crime survey.

Update from Police and Crime Commissioner

The Panel noted the report of the PCC. The PCC also mentioned that:

- Another 21 police officers on top of the 153 new officers will be serving in Gloucestershire soon.
- £1.5 million has been earmarked for enhancements to police staff.
- Two new police community hubs have been established in Newent and Winchcombe. The hope is that other market towns who lost their local police stations will have hubs too.
- £1 million bid on rural VIAWG and ASB submitted to Safer Streets.
- Rural crime cost is down 29%; ASB reports cut by >50%.
- There don't appear to be any RAAC problems in Gloucestershire Police or HMCTS buildings but checks are being done.
- There is a local spike in shoplifting and the PCC is looking at ways to remedy this.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

The Panel noted the report. A Member raised concerns about the increasing antisocial use of e-scooters and asked whether any plans were in place to combat this. The Chief Executive replied that she would ask the Chief Constable about what was being done operationally. The Deputy PCC noted that the constabulary policy is that if an officer sees an illegal e-scooter they must take positive action; the PCC added that hundreds have already been seized.

A Member also noted that the Cheltenham Guardians had issued a warning to women not to visit Cheltenham after dark alone as there were horrific increases in violence against women and girls. This was problematic as it appeared to blame women for going out alone, but the fact that these VAWG figures had so dramatically increased explained why this advice had been given. The Chief Executive responded that she would ask the Chief Constable whether the increases were due to an increase in actual events or just a side effect of better reporting and recording. The PCC argued that the world is not a more unsafe place but merely that reporting was better, and expressed dismay that the Guardians' messaging was frightening and inappropriate.