

Notes on Police and Crime Panel 22 March 2024

The agenda and reports for this meeting can be found at <https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=650&MId=11497&Ver=4>.

1. A question was received by the Panel from a member of the public asking about the removal of the Community Trigger mechanism from Gloucestershire Police's stop and search terms of reference. The Panel asked the police for statistical data on searches, and whether the Commissioner was aware of the removal of the Community Trigger from the Police terms of reference. This data would be forthcoming in the next few weeks.

2. A presentation on the Serious Violence Duty was received in conjunction with the Serious Violence Prevention Five Year Strategic Approach, and can be viewed in the agenda for the meeting.

3. The PEEL report (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Legitimacy) for 2023-2025 was received prior to the meeting and can be found at this link (<https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets-hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/uploads/peel-assessment-2023-25-gloucestershire.pdf>). The Inspector remarked that she had concerns about the Constabulary's ability to keep people safe, reduce crime, and provide effective service to victims.

The Constabulary has not sufficiently improved its call answering speed (in the year ending June 2023 50.9% of 999 calls were answered within 10 seconds, well below the target of 90%); it is the poorest performing police force in the country in this regard. By the end of October 2023, 80% of 999 calls were answered within 10 seconds which is hopefully indicative of a better performance going forward. It does remain an Area of Concern.

The report also downgraded the Constabulary's performance in creating a positive workplace and preventing antisocial behaviour, both moving from Good to Adequate.

There have not been sufficient improvements in investigating crime and managing offenders and suspects, with the Constabulary only moving from Inadequate to Requires Improvement. Only 7.7% of victim-based offences had an offender brought to justice, with 34% of investigations concluding without a suspect even being identified. It should be noted that these figures are

consistent with other police forces - which in my view is indicative of poor police resourcing nationwide, rather than an absolution of Gloucestershire's performance. This is exemplified by the Inspector's finding that the Reactive Investigation Team was staffed almost entirely by student officers, some of whom had only 36 weeks service. Even with these student officers, the Inspector found that the Team was significantly undermanned, with one officer being assigned 26 cases and some new cases not having been investigated for over a month; the Inspector noted that the Constabulary does not consistently carry out thorough investigations with appropriate oversight and supervision; interviews revealed that many young in-service officers are not given the guidance required. The Inspector noted a lack of training and experience in the Constabulary which is having an adverse effect on crime in the county.

The report shows that the Constabulary does not consistently or routinely pass information to other agencies in cases of child abuse and does not effectively monitor their register of sex offenders; it noted that the Constabulary allows sex offenders who have been classified as low risk for only six months to be downgraded to reactive management - this is significantly quicker than the College of Policing and academic research suggest is appropriate, and means in many cases that court orders such as restraining orders are not enforced. Similarly, there is no policy on home visits to sex offenders and those working in this area reported being unclear as to what was expected of them. Furthermore, visits were often carried out by single officers and were routinely abandoned if there was no specific reason for visiting. These unjustified departures from authorised professional practice are due to lack of resources rather than risk management. This, together with the low rate of positive outcomes of criminal investigations, is in contrast to the Constabulary's extremely effective crime recording; attention was repeatedly drawn to the fact that Gloucestershire is one of the top performing constabularies in terms of crime data; the panel suggested that the effectiveness of recording is not a priority for the public, who in the majority of cases are not seeing effective investigation and enforcement.

Similarly there have not been sufficient improvements to the Constabulary's leadership and management. The Constabulary is relying too heavily on its current officers, with over 8,500 rest days owed to officers whose leave has been cancelled - this could represent an unbudgeted expenditure of £2 million if the Constabulary has to pay for that time. It is relying heavily on overtime (meaning significant hours of Time Off In Lieu have accumulated) but also on tutors and student officers in order to reach minimum staffing levels. The Inspector noted that the Constabulary relies on its council tax precept far more than other constabularies, with 47.5% of funding provided by the precept, significantly higher than the national average. The Constabulary's

workforce is leaving at a significant rate and the Inspector noted that the force does not understand why; 35.2% of new recruits do not anticipate remaining in the police after the next three years. This is particularly noteworthy as the Constabulary explains that it deliberately places new officers in the Reactive Investigation Team because, they say, it provides them with greater experience of the breadth of police work which is good for their career development.

Naturally the panel had significant concerns about the report, and the impression I got from the Temporary Assistant Chief Constable was that the constabulary is taking on board criticism from the Inspector and that improvements are already being made; it was drawn to the Panel's attention that the data in the report is now nine months old. It would only be fair also to point out that the Constabulary has made improvements from the 2021 report, albeit perhaps not to the extent that the panel would like to see. It was noted that the Constabulary seems to have put a great deal of effort into improving the Areas of Concern identified in the 2021 report, but it would appear that this has come at the expense of other areas which have not seen the same level of attention. It remains the case that staffing is the main issue, both in terms of warranted officers and also staff.