

AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

20th September 2016

Title: Review of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Annual Report 2015/16

RECOMMENDATION – the Commissioner is invited to respond to the Panel's report and recommendations submitted following consideration of 2015-2016 Annual Report and in accordance with Section 28(4) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

1. Purpose

This report summarises the views and recommendations of the Panel following consideration of the Commissioner's Annual Report on the 16th June 2016.

2. Background

The Commissioner has a duty under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 to produce an annual report after the close of each financial year and present it to the Panel. The annual report was presented at the Panel's AGM on 16th June 2016. The purpose of this report is to respond to the annual report in accordance with Part 1 Section 28(4) of the Act which states that the Panel must:-

- arrange for a public meeting of the Panel to be held as soon as practicable after the Panel is sent an annual report under section 12;
- ask the Commissioner at that meeting, such questions about the report as the members of the Panel think appropriate;
- review the annual report;
- make a report or recommendations on the annual report to the Commissioner; and
- publish any reports or recommendations made to the Commissioner.

3. Response of the Panel

- There was a mutual recognition that performance in general required improvement. The Panel was grateful for assurances that this was receiving increased focus, assisted by the development of the Police and Crime Plan over the summer.
- Burglary remains a primary concern for the Panel.

In 2013, it was reported to the Panel that a wholesale review and reconfiguration of the way in which burglary offences are managed had taken place. The way in which performance is monitored had also been adjusted. The Panel heard that these changes would reverse the downward detection trend, along with purposeful police officers, forensic recovery and the

integrated offender management at point of arrest.

In the short term, it was accepted that the figures were disappointing and the Panel was asked to take into account the unique challenges faced by the Constabulary. The Constabulary was confident in the arrangements put in place but regrettably the position has not improved.

The Panel is specifically concerned that low detection rates will impact on public confidence and act as a deterrent to reporting. The Panel notes the development of an improvement plan to improve the management and detection of burglary offences, and welcomes the opportunity for detailed scrutiny of this area on 20th September 2016.

- The Panel wishes to emphasise the established links between strong leadership practices and the effectiveness of a modern organisation. Improvements in performance, standards of behaviour and morale invariably emerge from strong supportive leadership and assist in shaping a positive organisational culture. In the light of the recent HMIC inspection, the Panel wishes to seek assurance from the Commissioner that leadership will continue be an active issue for the Constabulary as it moves forward.
- The Panel welcomes the Commissioner's proposals to reinvest in the Constabulary's investigative capacity to address increased demand and improve outcomes for vulnerable people. The Panel notes that the Commissioner is alert to the needs of staff and the importance of role specific training that will ensure that the quality of investigations is also of a high standard.

The Panel recognises that effective multi-agency working and information sharing is also a key element in securing improved safeguarding outcomes and notes the appointment of a Constabulary lead to explore this further. The Panel feels that the critical test of commitment to partnership working is pooled budgeting. This is only happening in limited areas but has been successful in enabling a broad range of partners to agree common outcomes and pool resources to achieve a better service.

Whilst there have been significant improvements to the experience of vulnerable and serious crime victims within the Criminal Justice System, the victims satisfaction survey again highlights the lack of quality support available to mainstream crime victims. The Panel has previously highlighted serious capacity issues in the support available for mainstream victims of crime, and it is therefore disappointing that this problem continues.

- In recognising all forms of violence against women and girls, it is important the OPCC does not neglect abuse perpetrated by women and directed against men. It is essential that male victims are aware they will receive the same access to protection and legal redress, and that the gender of the perpetrator does not make any difference when offenders are brought to justice.

Research demonstrates that significant numbers of male victims under-report and "suffer in silence" due to the fear of their claims not being taken seriously by the Police and other agencies. The Police must therefore endeavour to ensure men who experience violence within relationships feel secure in coming forward and know that support is also available to them.

The Panel acknowledges the commissioning of gender specific victim services is often appropriate, but seeks reassurance that appropriate support is available to male victims and asks that more be done to encourage male victims to report. The current EU directive on support for victims of crime, and the Government Violence against Women and Girls Strategy, are both clear that in targeting violence against women and girls, the rights of male victims to receive victim support should not be overlooked.

- The Panel notes that the total numbers of reported hate crimes have soared over the past year with the majority of forces recording a rise in offences. A recent report suggested that Avon and Somerset Police resolved 241 fewer hate crimes in 2015/16 than the previous year – a drop of 41% - despite reported hate crime rising over the same period. Hate crime affects some of the most vulnerable victims in our communities. The Panel seeks clarification of the action being taken to make positive changes and how this will be monitored.

A recent move by Nottinghamshire Police to record misogyny and incidents of harassment against women as hate crimes is regarded as an important step for victims. The Panel recommends that the Constabulary's categories are expanded to include misogynistic incidents in its definition of hate crime.

- The Panel acknowledges the need to narrow the budget gap, and therefore understands the rationale for making visible organisational change at senior officer level. However the side effects of this include reduced promotion opportunities that work against staff retention. This is evidenced by a migration of staff to other professions. The Panel considers that retaining staff with the best skill sets and attributes should be a long term focus for the Constabulary and a key consideration in developing a business model that not only meets its overall strategic aims, but continues to develop and retain talent.
- The Panel shares the Commissioner's concern that less than 3% of staff are from BME backgrounds and welcomes plans to focus on a representative workforce as a top tier priority. The Constabulary serves a very diverse community and therefore needs to ensure that protected groups are adequately represented throughout the organisation.

Previous efforts to bring about change in this area have been unsuccessful - the Panel notes that the position deteriorated further following the implementation of recommendations made by the advisory group set up in 2013. This highlights the need for an alternative strategy which must include a pipeline for talent and talent development in order to have a marked impact on the recruitment and future prospects for BME officers across the workforce.

The Metropolitan Police has fully exploited positive action throughout its employment processes to support the recruitment of under-represented groups. A number of key initiatives have notably increased diversity including the introduction of a new London residency criteria for Police constable applicants which helped increase BME recruitment to 27%.

A second-language recruitment campaign in 2015 requiring applicants to be proficient in one of the 14 most spoken languages in London has increased BME applicants by 50%. It is anticipated that around 110 officers from BME backgrounds will be recruited from a further second-language campaign launched earlier this year which increased the number of

languages to 25.

The Panel looks for specific reassurance on a new methodology and is confident that operational advantages as well as everyday improvements in relations with the public can emerge from a realistic bench-marked approach.

- The Panel notes the move away from cell detention following a Section 136 arrest. This is a significant step and the Panel commends the Commissioner and partner agencies for their sustained efforts in bringing this about.
- The Panel welcomes plans to increase and support the work of Special Constables and cadets. The Panel recommends that these volunteers receive the required training and are properly integrated and utilised within the organisation. The Panel recommends that both qualitative and quantitative performance data should be provided annually on the use of these volunteers.
- The Panel feels rural policing and the human toll of criminal activity in rural areas is being neglected. There is evidence to suggest that offenders in rural areas are gaining confidence because of a lack of Police visibility. The theft of high value machinery and livestock has a profound effect on farming in certain areas - impacting on both business decisions and the ability of farmers to remain in the industry.

Shop crime, cyber-crime and alcohol/drug related crime are continuing matters of concern for rural communities. Specific to West Somerset, anti-nuclear and badger cull protests are proving challenging issues for communities who have experienced both violence and intimidation. Victims are being placed in a no win situation as a direct result of the tactics employed by protesters. In the absence of any tangible evidence that an offence has taken place, victims have to place reliance on their verbal accounts which typically do not meet the evidential standards required by the Police. The Panel considers the Police presence in West Somerset to be visible and satisfactory, but there is perhaps a lack of understanding of the covert intimidation that is taking place.

Although the rights of protesters are legitimate, many of the tactics employed are not. The wearing of face masks is evident in campaign scenarios across a number of force areas and the Panel welcomes the ministerial push for amendments to the Policing and Crime Bill to make it easier for the police to unmask potentially violent protestors in the countryside. This will dispense with the need for a senior officer's written consent to remove a mask. The Panel feel that if Police officers are sufficiently trained, they should be trusted to make decisions in individual situations. In the meantime, the residents of West Somerset are keen to see Police officers use the powers available to them now to tackle this problem— powers which a number of Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables have publically deemed as sufficient but are evidently not being used.

- The introduction of the Community Pledge was welcomed especially for those areas without PACT meetings.
- The Panel notes the number of recorded offences of cybercrime has increased by 91%.

In an earlier presentation to the Panel, it was reported that the Constabulary does not have

a dedicated cyber-crime unit but a wide ranging capacity to deal with different elements of cyber related criminality within various different units. The Panel understands the high level challenges this crime presents for the Constabulary, particularly in terms of child protection and economic crime which often requiring the pursuit of offenders outside of the UK.

However the Panel seeks assurance that the investigation of the high volume lower level frauds also form part of everyday policing and that front line officers, PCSO's and police staff are trained to deliver the appropriate level of services to the public when reports are made.

The internal reporting boundaries between the Constabulary and Action Fraud are meaningless to the average person and do not take into consideration the economic and personal loss to victims who are frequently elderly and vulnerable. Anecdotal evidence suggests that complaints to Action Fraud are not routinely followed up and victims are not receiving feedback. Again, the Panel welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this work area but wishes to emphasise the need for greater steps to both combat and detect cyber-crime locally. Work around education and prevention is key to protecting our communities and it is felt that a central unit does not provide the local accountability that is needed. The Panel recommends that consideration be given to a publicity campaign and hopes that reporting can be made easier.

In conclusion, the Panel acknowledges that Police resources are valuable, finite and declining. This serves to emphasise the importance of ensuring that decisions about where to allocate them are made on the basis of a rational and transparent assessment. A highly skilled, well informed and motivated work force is a key factor to the success of any organisation. The key to delivering such a work force is through strong and empowering leadership and ensuring that the organisation learns from its mistakes. The end result and focus of all policing activities must be to deliver the highest quality services at the point of contact with the public.

Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

Patricia Jones (Lead Officer)

patricia.l.jones@bristol.gov.uk

Tel: (0117) 922 2883/078 999 02336