

**Response of the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner to the PCP Response
to the Commissioner's Annual Report
September 2016**

Thank you for your report, received on 2 September 2016, outlining the response of the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel, following consideration of my Annual Report at your meeting on 16 June 2016. I am pleased to set out my response to observations made by Panel Members below, and explain how these issues informed the development of the new Police and Crime Plan and will be taken forward in the coming term.

Performance Overview

I welcome the recognition of the Panel at the challenging context in which the previous plan was delivered with changes to senior leadership, significant organisational change, the introduction of new systems and the changing nature of crime, with an increase in complex, 'high harm' cases, focus on supporting vulnerable people and an increase in cyber-enabled crime. The contribution made by the Panel in scrutinising and supporting progress against the priorities has played a valuable role in understanding the impact on performance, identifying opportunities to strengthen local partnership working and informed the development of the new Police and Crime Plan and assurance framework moving forward. With respect to performance against the burglary priority, I share the Panel's concern and welcome the opportunity for detailed scrutiny of this area by the Panel on 20 September.

I concur with the Panel's observation that improvements in performance, standards of behaviour and morale emerge from strong supportive leadership, in shaping a positive organisational culture. The Panel can take confidence from their role in the appointment of Chief Constable Andy Marsh that strong leadership, recognition and high standards of behaviour lie at the heart of the Chief Constable's approach to building a strong and empowered workforce, and delivering a high quality policing service to the communities of Avon and Somerset. The Panel will have an opportunity to hear about the broad range of work underway in this crucial area when the Chief Constable attends the Panel in December.

Changing nature of crime

As set out above, the police service nationally has seen a significant shift in demand towards complex, high harm cases, support for vulnerable people and an increase in cyber-enabled crime. This presents a challenge not only to the police, but for all public services. I agree with the Panels' assessment of the importance of effective multi-agency working and information sharing in rising to this challenge: at a time of ever increasing financial constraints, now is not a time to be retreating into silos. Strong and effective multi agency working is a key thread throughout the new Police and Crime Plan, in particular through the *Protecting the most vulnerable from harm* priority. As the Panel will be aware, positive progress has been made in a number of key areas, including securing partner funding for services for victims of Child Sexual Exploitation, and for the Mental Health Triage Control Centre model. Panel members will continue to have a valuable role to play in supporting

efforts to build strong and effective multi-agency partnership working, through their respective roles on the Panel, as Local Authority Councillors, locally engaged independent members and in the breadth of partnership roles that Panel Members hold.

As Panel Members will recall following scrutiny sessions held during the last year, the issue of victim satisfaction has been subject to a range of assurance activity to understand and seek to improve the current position. It is important to clarify that for those victims whose case is going to court, the Lighthouse Victim Care service provides post-charge support for all victims, not only those who fall within the 'enhanced' category under the Victims Code of Practice. Being kept informed of progress in their case has emerged as a key area which will assist in driving improvements in victim satisfaction. As such, training and assurance has focused on ensuring that officers maintain timely contact with the victim, as well as increasing use of technology, through Track My Crime, so that victims are able to access information at a time that is convenient to the victim. Improving the experience of victims remains an important focus within the new plan and assurance framework moving forward, including a significant piece of work to review the local criminal justice service to identify opportunities for greater efficiency and to improve the experience of victims.

As the Panel will be aware, action to tackle domestic abuse and sexual violence has included a range of activity to ensure that male victims have confidence to report and have access to support. To give some examples: services commissioned by the OPCC, including the ISVA service and Victim Support service are open to both men and women. My office has provided funding for a new book, written by SARSAS, providing advice and support to male victims, to be launched at an event in October. I have supported work by the Constabulary to increase confidence of men to report rape, and have spoken at a conference on this subject. The new Plan places a focus on protecting the most vulnerable from harm, regardless of gender. Increasing confidence to report will remain a key focus moving forward. I would welcome the support of Panel Members in ensuring that men, as well as women have access to support in services which fall outside of OPCC commissioning, notably services for victims of domestic abuse.

Hate crime is an area of focus within the priority of *Protecting the most vulnerable from harm*, and will be a specific area of performance monitored by commissioned delivery assurance reports. Increasing confidence to report and improving the response to hate crime has been an area of focus in recent months, with a comprehensive programme of hate crime awareness training rolled out across the Constabulary, alongside a range of action in response to recommendations of the IPCC review into the death of Mr Ebrahimi. Events in the wake of the EU Referendum have reinforced the need to maintain a close watching brief, through daily tasking, by ensuring that learning is used to improve the response to victims and by engaging with communities to increase the confidence to report.

As Panel Members heard at their briefing last year the response to the growing area of cyber-crime requires activity by a range of agencies at a national, regional and local level. There is a valuable role for Panel Members to raise awareness in through their Local Authorities and in their local communities, particularly the most vulnerable, about how to report, and who to go to for support and advice. I share concerns expressed by the Panel in relation to Action Fraud, and continue to work with the Constabulary lead and PCC

colleagues to scrutinise performance, challenge poor service to victims, clarify reporting pathways and improve advice available on how to report. The Constabulary's capacity and capability to tackle cyber-crime will form part of the HMIC PEEL inspections. In addition, a specific assurance audit will be requested in recognition of the rapid growth of this area of business. I look forward to the continued support of Panel Link Members to drive forward work to scrutinise the response to cyber-crime and raise awareness among local communities.

Impact in shift in demand

I welcome acknowledgement by the Panel that Police resources are valuable, finite and declining and the challenge this presents as the police and other public services meet the shift in demand described above while maintaining a high quality of service to the communities of Avon and Somerset.

The priority to *Strengthen and improve your local policing teams* within the new Police and Crime Plan sets out the strategy for strengthening the police response to the crimes that matter to the local community. Investment in technology and community involvement through volunteering roles from the Special Constabulary to Neighbourhood Watch and Community Speed Watch are examples of the approach to strengthening the policing response in local communities. I will be working with partners in the coming months to develop local plans to reflect the issues that matter to the local community and focus partnership working on tackling these issues at a local level.

I accept the Panel's observations regarding the experience of rural communities, which reflect the concerns I have heard through the Rural Crime Forum. I continue to work through the Rural Crime Forum, Rural Crime Team and specific initiatives such as Farm Watch and Horse Watch to strengthen the response in rural communities. With regard to policing the badger cull, I would like to assure Panel Members that I receive regular briefings, including the impact of the operation on the local community. Building on lessons learnt and good practice from previous operations, dedicated Cull Liaison Officers have been appointed, to engage with cull directors, landowners and farmers in planning and during the operation itself. The police service to rural communities will be a focus for assurance activity, as an issue scheduled for scrutiny by my Service Delivery Assurance Panel. I would welcome the involvement of Panel members in this.

Confidence in the policing service is built by consent and by ensuring that the police service is representative of the communities served. I take on board the Panel's feedback in relation to the success of previous attempts to improve workforce representation. As Panel Members will be aware, I have identified this as key area of focus for the coming term. The role of Panel Link Members will be invaluable to supporting and scrutinising progress, and in finding new and innovative ways of reaching the under-represented communities and building the relationships needed to progress this crucial area of work.

Finally, and central to success of the delivery of the new plan, is the priority to *Ensure Avon and Somerset Constabulary has the right people, the right equipment and the right culture*. The Panel has rightly observed the strain placed upon the Constabulary's investigative capacity, in dealing with increased demand and improved outcomes for vulnerable people.

As well as the strong partnership approach described above, I will be seeking to refocus investment to increase capacity, invest in equipment and training and support the Chief Constable in driving a culture in which officers and staff feel valued, recognised and supported in work. As outlined at the start, building a strong and empowered workforce through strong leadership will be critical to the success of delivering against the priorities set out in the new Police and Crime Plan, and above all in delivering an effective policing service to the communities of Avon and Somerset.