

Report to Area West Committee – Police and Crime Commissioners Panel

Background

The Police and Crime Commissioners were first elected in 2012 and was a new role created by an Act of Parliament.

The Commissioners roles, under the Act are-

- To secure an effective and efficient police force for their area.
- Appoint the chief constable, hold them to account for running the force, and if necessary dismiss them. Set the police and crime objectives for their area by producing a 5 year plan.
- Set the force annual budget and police precept.
- Produce an annual report setting out the progress against objectives in the police and crime plan.
- Contribute to the national and international policing capabilities set out by the Home Office.
- Cooperate with the criminal justice system in their area.
- Work with partners and fund community activity to tackle crime and disorder.

The Panels Role is defined under current legislation as-

Making provision about procedure for scrutiny of the appointment of chief constables and the precept. Power is conferred on the panel to veto a proposed precept or appointment.
Deal with complaints or conduct matters about the commissioner.
Confers power to appoint 'independent' members to the panel.

The Commissioner has no control over every day operational matters. They have a separate budget but this is part of the overall police budget. Certain funding is available from the Home Office for specific projects, victim support for example. They also have a staff which is paid for out of the budget.

The current budget setting process will be finalised at the next panel meeting on February 1st. Rather like setting our own budget this process is reliant on grants from the Home Office and set by a much disputed formula which appears to favour certain area!

As you will be aware the Government has announced an increase in police funding across England and Wales of £450 million which is 'part of a comprehensive settlement for forces and counter terrorism policing'. How that will affect the budget process will be more apparent after the meeting.

The Commissioner also has been given the ability to raise the precept above the 2 percent should she think it is necessary.

Over the last year I have tried to represent South Somerset on the Panel, particularly when it comes to closure of Police Stations, rural crime, unlawful/unauthorized encampments and retention of neighborhood/response policing.

Neighborhood policing strengths are a perennial problem as when other priorities are identified, terrorism for example, the main call on strength will come from the local teams.

Another problem, in my view, is the necessity in dealing with Bristol and its many urban difficulties and cultures. This can marginalize our area which could be considered a 'quiet police area' compared with other parts of the Force area.

To give you a flavour of the reports the Panel receives from the Commissioner I have listed below some of the headings from our December meeting.

Police and Crime update
Commissioning and partnership work
Avon and Somerset reducing reoffending Board
Victim Service recommissioning
SARCS services (Sexual Assaults Referral Centre's)
Custody and Courts Referral Service Consultation (PCC working with NHS)
Mental Health review of use of S136
Child Sexual Exploitation
Commissioner's community action fund
Government Inspection of Avon and Somerset
Scrutiny of Police Powers
Independent Residents Panel Independent Custody visiting scheme
National Update

As you can see these are wide ranging and varied. I have some concern over a number of these involvements which I think go outside the remit of the Commissioner, under the current legislation, and I will continue to question and research these matters.

I will try to answer any of your questions on the above or any other matters connect with the Panel at the meeting.

Cllr Martin Wale
Vice Chairman Somerset and Avon Police and Crime Commissioners Panel
