

Update on Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

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Panel

The past year has been particularly challenging for the Panel. The Panel had major conflict with the Commissioner on two main matters. The first was in relation to the decision to appoint a Deputy Commissioner without reference to the Panel or any selection process. It appeared even more irregular when the chosen candidate was the recently resigned Chief Executive of the Commissioner's office who had resigned to stand for election in the May 2020 election for the Commissioner role! Eventually a selection process was agreed and the Panel were allowed to send observers, after we insisted on some role in the process of selection. The Ex- Chief Executive was duly appointed to the deputy position and is a candidate for the forthcoming May election.

The second matter concerned the Panel rejecting the Police Budget in relation to the suggested precept increase which was 6% and set at the maximum allowed for the third year running. The Panel who is made up of Councillors from all Authorities within the Force Area took this decision very reluctantly but unanimously. As is laid down by regulation the budget was returned to the Panel with a one and a half percentage reduction, about £1 million and that budget was passed. It should be noted that the decrease will not affect the operational capacity of the Force and thanks to Government funding the number of officers is set to increase by 271. The £1 million was saved from the Commissioner's part of the overall budget. It should be noted that the Commissioners budget is now just short of £4 million of which about £2 million is part of the Police budget. The rest is from Government grants.

There are currently 27 employees in the Commissioner's Office. Some of the initiatives undertaken by the Office are –

- Constabulary response to COVID.
- Call Centre response times
- Customers response to proposed Precept increase
- Violence reduction Unit
- Independent custody visiting scheme
- Reduce offenders panel
- The Lammy report
- Independent Residents Panel
- Review of Complaints Panel
- A scrutiny of police powers panel

Operation Remedy was set up two years ago to target Burglary, Drugs and knife crime. Positive outcomes (clear ups) for Drugs and Knife Crime are good but burglary although improved is still disappointing.
