



Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel
Hosted by Somerset Council Democratic Services



Annual Report

April 2024–
March 2025

*Providing effective Challenge and Support to the
Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner*



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Members of the Panel

Each of the Local Authorities in the Avon and Somerset Police area must be represented on the Panel by at least one elected member. It is the responsibility of each authority to ensure that the member appointed has the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience for their role on the Panel. The overall composition of all Police and Crime Panels should form a “balanced appointment” objective which takes account of, as far as is practical, both political and geographical proportionality. Reaching the balanced appointment objective is a collective responsibility of the component authorities and the Panel itself.

Each of the 5 Unitary councils in the force area are represented. North Somerset, Bath and North-East Somerset and South Gloucestershire each have 2 seats. Bristol City Council has 3 seats based on the city’s population size and comparatively high crime levels. Somerset has 5 seats following the dissolution of its 5 district councils on 1st April 2023 and the establishment of Somerset Council.

They are joined by three Independent Co-opted Members recruited through a competitive selection process, who have the same voting rights as the Councillor Panel Members. In total, there were 17 Panel Members in 2024/25:-


Bath and North-East Somerset	Cllrs Andy Wait and Ann Morgan
Bristol City Council	Cllrs Lisa Durston, Sibusiso Tshabalala, and Cara Lavan
North Somerset Council	Cllrs Peter Crew and Stuart Davies
Somerset Council	Cllrs Heather Shearer (Chair), Nicola Clark, Federica Smith-Roberts, Martin Wale, Brian Bolt
South Gloucestershire	Cllrs John Bradbury and Raj Sood
Independent Member	Richard Brown
Independent Member	Julie Knight (Vice-Chair)
Independent Member	Gary Davies

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Chair's Introduction

I am pleased to introduce the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel's Annual Report for 2024/25 and reflect on the past year. Outside of the four-yearly election cycle, the Panel continues to provide the key support and accountability mechanism for the decisions and activities undertaken by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).



Elections in May 2024 saw the appointment of a new PCC, Clare Moody. Clare has a background spanning various sectors and brings a clear understanding of public office accountability to the role. With a new PCC comes the statutory duty to issue a new Police and Crime Plan. The PCC facilitated the creation of the plan with the assistance of an over-arching Advisory Board that provided meaningful and collaborative space for problem solving between the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), the Constabulary and Panel representatives.

You can read more about the Police and Crime Plan later in the report.

Our role is to support and challenge the PCC's decisions and performance and we have delivered a challenging work programme over the last year, incorporating our work into 7 public meetings and 10 sub-committee and task group meetings. Outside of our statutory responsibilities, the Panel's proactive scrutiny included a session that looked at the strategy around PCC partnership working with a focus on Community Safety Partnerships, funding mechanisms and monitoring processes.

The PCC must work effectively with partners across all aspects of criminal justice, public health and community safety within Avon and Somerset. This last year, we looked at the new partnership arrangements that created a central Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) in the OPCC. The OPCC acts the VRP hub, providing a function that coordinates the Home Office grant allocation and ensuring that the VRP is collectively meeting the objectives of the public health approach to tackling serious violence. The five Local Authorities in the force area act as spokes for delivery of those objectives.

The Panel's Budget Task Group continued to operate across the year, enabling members to evaluate the effectiveness of additional Precept investment by reviewing the constabulary's quarterly budget reports across 2024/25. This enabled a small group of members with the right experience to delve deeper and focus on any issues before the wider Panel made the Precept decision. Whilst the Panel was satisfied that a Precept increase was justifiable, our expectations were made clear in our statutory report that you can find here [PCP Precept Report 2025](#)

PEEL is the regular assessment of Police forces in England and Wales conducted

by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. The PEEL inspections (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy) are a really important tool in assisting the PCC in her statutory duty of holding the Chief Constable to account and ensuring that she delivers an efficient and effective Police service. The Panel has taken a keen interest in the judgements made by the Inspectorate, both in terms of the outcomes and required actions from individual inspections and in trends over time.

At our last meeting of the year, the PCC was resolute in her confidence in the Chief Constable and the plans in place to tackle the issues identified as areas of concern in the last inspection report. We will be directing appropriate challenge to the PCC in 2025/26 to ensure that the force is making progress as required by the inspectorate and in line with her expectations. We feel strongly that unequivocal and consistent leadership is needed from the PCC and the Chief Constable as they manage the necessary change.

We understand that our communities want the best possible Police service and over the last year, I believe that we have applied our scrutiny powers to best effect. In doing so, I hope that we have reflected the views and concerns of our residents.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members from all five councils and our three independent members who have demonstrated their willingness to participate in this important support and challenge role. And I would also like to thank our excellent officers for all they have done to support us again this year. I am grateful for their invaluable contributions over the last year.



Heather Shearer, Chair.

Roles and Responsibilities

In each Police area, there is an elected Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The role of the PCC is to be the voice of the public and to hold the Chief Constable to account. The PCC is responsible for setting the strategic objectives of the Constabulary and deciding how funding for local policing and crime reduction activity is allocated. Clare Moody was elected on 3rd May 2021 for a 4-year term.

The purpose of the Police and Crime Panel is to support and challenge the PCC's decisions and performance. The Panel is made up of elected members from the 5 Local Authorities in the force area and 3 Independent members of the public who bring a variety of skills and experience to the role. Somerset Council currently acts as the Host Authority for the Panel and is responsible for its administrative and specialist officer support arrangements.

The PCC's plans and objectives are set out in a document called the Police and Crime Plan, available here [Police and Crime Plan 24~29](#)

This is the most important document any PCC will produce during their term of office. The PCC is required by law to consult the Panel on the plan and other duties connected to the role. A summary of the Panel's core responsibilities is set out below:-

- Review the objectives set out in the PCC's Police and Crime Plan and monitor performance against her priorities.
- Scrutinise and vote on the PCC's proposed Policing Precept.
- Hold a Confirmatory Hearing for the PCC's proposed appointment of a Chief Constable and other senior officers (the Panel has the ability to veto the Chief Constable appointment if this is considered necessary).
- Resolve complaints that relate to the PCC's personal conduct.
- Scrutinise decisions the PCC makes in connection with the discharge of her functions and make reports and recommendations to the PCC in relation to the discharge of those functions.

Sarah Crew is the Chief Constable for the Avon and Somerset Police area, and it is important to note that the Panel does not hold the Chief Constable to account. If the Panel has a particular issue of concern, for example an increase in violent crime or a perceived deterioration in response to the public, the Panel's role is to establish how the PCC is addressing this at a strategic level for the benefit of the public. In turn, the Chief Constable has responsibility for implementation of the PCC's Police and Crime Plan and for day-to-day operational matters in our communities. She is accountable to the PCC.

In carrying out the above duties, it is essential for the Panel to stay well informed on policy and strategic issues affecting Policing, and the Panel has dedicated officer support and appropriate developmental training to assist with this.

Key/Statutory Activities

Development and Review of the Police and Crime Plan 2024-29

Plan Advisory Board

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has a legal duty to issue a Police and Crime Plan (Plan) for the force area as required by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The PCC's priorities are to:-

1. Strengthen neighbourhood policing
2. Reduce violent crime
3. Prevent crime
4. Support victims
5. Improve standards of policing

A Police and Crime Plan Advisory Board (Advisory Board) was set up by the PCC to oversee and facilitate the creation of the 2024-2029 Police and Crime Plan. An invitation was extended for two Panel members to represent the Panel on the Advisory Board; these two members were Julie Knight and Cllr John Bradbury.

The Plan was found to be more direct and succinct than its predecessor, providing a clearer, narrower focus and mandate to those charged with its delivery. We anticipate better and more realistic performance outcomes. Each priority is clear, and their description is informative to the public along with the outcomes that are expected. This will help the Panel to understand the impact of the plan and inform the focus of our scrutiny.

We acknowledge the vast amount of critical work undertaken by the PCC and her officers and the engagement, support and obvious commitment to task by the Constabulary.

Communication and Engagement

Multiple channels were used to raise awareness, including mainstream and social media to seek a wide range of participants including community groups/organisations/forums including youth and faith groups. It also included PCC commissioned services, MPs, local councillors, agencies including Police (and their channels, e.g. Independent Advisory Groups), Local Authorities, Integrated Care Boards, NHS England, Criminal Justice agencies, partnerships (including Community Safety Partnerships, Criminal Justice Board, Violence Reduction Partnership), the Police and Crime Panel and with those with 'lived experience'.

Survey

The Police and Crime Plan/Police Funding Survey was launched on 15th August, marking the start of an 11-week public consultation period. This is the first double-handed consultation that a PCC has run, seeking views on her priorities and views on how much of an increase the public would support. This seemed like a reasonable approach in terms of preventing public confusion and consultation fatigue.

Neighbourhood Policing

The PCC has fully recognised the importance of strengthening neighbourhood

policing in the Police and Crime Plan. However, the Panel remains concerned about the significant reduction in baseline PCSO numbers over time and the impact on the neighbourhood teams when Police officers are abstracted from their neighbourhood roles to manage demand. It has been particularly hard to reconcile these actions with a clear operational need to improve neighbourhood policing.

Additional government funding to kickstart the delivery of 13,000 more neighbourhood police officers has been doubled to £200 million to make communities feel safer. The resulting 70 additional officers for the neighbourhood teams is a positive start, but even with the additional funding, the Panel is concerned that government targets for PCSO uplift will not be reached.

You can read the Panel's input to the development of the plan and its formal review here [PCP Report on the Development of the Police and Crime Plan 2024-29](#) and here [PCP Report on the Draft Police and Crime Plan 2024-29](#)

Precept Proposal

One of the Panel's core duties is to scrutinise the PCC's proposed Council Tax Precept, the money collected from council tax specifically for Policing. As representatives of the tax-payers of Avon and Somerset, the Panel's focus must be value for money and delivering outstanding performance.

During 2025/26, to retain appropriate oversight and ensure that the Panel made a tangible and practical contribution to the budget and Precept-setting process, the Budget Task Group continued. This enabled members to make an assessment across the course of the year of the effectiveness of the Precept investment.

At the precept meeting on 4th February 2025, a presentation from the Chief Constable set out an uphill struggle in the fight against crime. Our attention was drawn to shifting crime dynamics including striking increases in rape and serious sexual offences, domestic abuse, online child abuse, knife crime, stalking and shoplifting. The Chief Constable described a Police service under tremendous pressure in a complex and challenging environment and outlined her commitment to "tackling the pain being felt in communities".

We heard that the harshest reality the constabulary is facing is a lack of resources.

Police forces are partially funded by central government. This creates an on-going financial dilemma and the need to consider the extent to which local taxation should bridge the gap. As in previous years, the Panel was required to reconcile the cost of increasingly complex demands of modern policing with the likely impact on the service if we did not agree to the additional investment.

Whilst the Panel was ultimately satisfied that a Precept increase was justifiable at this time, we also made a range of requests for information and recommendations based on our principle concerns. The Panel's formal review of the Precept proposal can be found here [PCP Precept Report 2025](#)

Recruitment and Retention

The Panel represents the residents of Avon and Somerset and understands that all communities want a low crime environment where people can feel safe and secure.

The Panel has been concerned for some time about the effectiveness of neighbourhood police teams due to abstractions to manage demand elsewhere. We have continued to retain oversight of Police officer and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) numbers by way of a timeline report to each of our meetings.

PCSOs remain integral to keeping our communities safe and bring much needed visibility to our streets. Last year, the Panel was notified of a pause in recruitment, making it hard to reconcile the financial need to reduce PCSO numbers with a clear operational need to improve neighbourhood policing.

As mentioned previously, the Panel is concerned that despite the additional funding, the government targets for PCSO uplift will not be reached as the baseline has been significantly reduced over previous years to achieve savings.

Last year, the target of 456 additional Police officers took officer headcount to 3,291. The headcount target for 2025/26, enabled through the precept increase and additional government funding, is now 3,351.

Complaints

The Panel must consider non-criminal complaints that relate to the personal conduct of the PCC. This duty can relate to conduct matters emerging from her actions and omissions, any statements or procedures, or the way the PCC takes decisions. As an example, a complaint that challenges or has some bearing on the PCC's personal integrity, competence, reliability or ethical framework, would amount to a valid conduct complaint. Inevitably this would result in the Panel's oversight role becoming more focused on that issue.

In practical terms, the Panel's objectives are clear - to ensure recording obligations are adhered to, avoid delays and to reach appropriate resolutions as soon as possible.

The more serious complaints are referred to the Panel's Complaints Sub-Committee for consideration. However, Gary Davies (Independent Member) and the Panel's Lead Officer work together on complaints on a day-to-day basis and helpfully provide a filter for the less serious complaints. This ensures that meetings of the sub-committee are only held when necessary.

The Panel is not responsible for investigating or determining whether a crime has been committed. Any conduct matter and any complaint that appears to involve a criminal offence must be referred to the Independent Office for Police Complaints (IOPC). There is day-to-day liaison between the Lead Officer and the IOPC when necessary.

A standing report on complaints is provided to each Panel Meeting. Further information on the Panel's complaints handling function can be found on the website here [PCC Conduct Complaints](#) including a copy of the Panel's Complaints Protocol.

Performance Monitoring

National Crime and Policing Measures

Police forces are now ranked in league tables according to their success in cutting serious crime. Forces are measured according to their effectiveness in combatting six key areas - homicide, serious violence, the supply of drugs, neighbourhood crime, cyber-crime and improving satisfaction for victims.

The Home Office requires the PCC to provide Panels with a narrative on force performance against the Government's crime measures mentioned above. The Panel's role is to make sure that the PCC is ensuring an adequate level of progress and improvement is being made within these crime areas.

We also monitor the PCC's performance against the priorities set out in her new Police and Crime Plan. We are in the process of developing a mechanism which will enable us to focus our scrutiny and track progress against the PCC's Action Plan that accompanies the plan.

Public Question Time

To increase public confidence and transparency, the PCC holds the Chief Constable to account in public as part of her governance arrangements. This takes place in the form of a Public Question Time session which is a public meeting held via Facebook:

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<https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/reports-publications/police-question-time/>

Formal Panel meetings also include a standing Public Question Time agenda item. This provides opportunity for members of the public to submit a statement or ask questions about the Panel's role in holding the PCC to account. More information can be found on the Panel's website here:-

[Police and Crime Panel » Getting involved](#)

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

PEEL is HMICFRS's regular assessment of Police forces in England and Wales. The PEEL inspections (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy) are a really important tool in assisting the PCC in her statutory duty of scrutinising and holding the Chief Constable and the force to account.

Inspectors use findings, analysis and professional judgment to assess how good forces are in several areas of policing. Most of these areas are then graded as outstanding, good, adequate, requires improvement or inadequate.

At our meeting on 4th February 2025, the Chief Constable described a Police

service under tremendous pressure in a complex and challenging environment and outlined her commitment to “tackling the pain being felt in communities”. She anticipated the imminent HMICFRS inspection report would present challenges.

The inspection report can be viewed here:-

<https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/police-forces/avon-and-somerset/>

The Panel needs to have confidence that the HMICFRS Areas for Improvement and the recommendations from the Inspectorate are being progressed in the timeliest manner and in line with the PCC’s expectations; of particular concern to the Panel is the required progress around detection rates and positive outcomes.

We have requested the PCC’s input into this when it becomes a standing item for the Panel in 2025/26.

Proactive Scrutiny

This work can take place outside of the core meeting cycle by individual members, as a dedicated Inquiry Day or as a whole Panel function by reserving part of a public meeting to a particular topic. Proactive scrutiny provides an opportunity for greater insight and can inform the broader role of a Panel Member. It can also enable

members to draw on their knowledge and expertise and contribute to the work of the PCC in key areas of business.

Review of the PCC role in Community Safety Partnerships and Strategic Approach of the Avon and Somerset Violence Reduction Partnership

The PCC has committed to building safer communities and helping to prevent and solve crime.

Part two of the government's Police and Crime Commissioner Review recommended that the Home Office undertake a full review of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) across England and Wales. It explored whether strengthening the accountability of CSPs to PCCs would improve the delivery of effective outcomes for the public and how PCCs and CSPs can better work together. The Home Office committed to improving and clarifying the ways in which CSPs and PCCs work together by taking forward a series of proposals.

Most Panels have recognised the need to communicate with CSPs as a means of plugging into local-level issues which are impacted by the PCC's decision-making. Commonality of membership (some members sitting on both the Panel and their local CSP) inevitably makes this easier, but all Panel members are keen to gain assurances that resources are being prioritised correctly.

The PCC has recently met with key members of Somerset Council's community safety team and local organisations, to gain insight into the pressing issues facing Somerset and the proactive measures being taken to address them.

The PCC has also committed to making the reduction of violent crime a priority including knife crime and violence against women and girls. As touched on in the Chair's introduction, the Panel has looked at the new partnership arrangements which have created a central Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) in the PCC's office.

This is the VRP hub, providing a function that coordinates the Home Office grant allocation and ensuring that the VRP is collectively meeting the objectives of the public health approach to tackling serious violence. This central co-ordination team around violence and knife crime links to the Local Authorities in the force area and Home Office reporting structures.

For member development purposes and to get some insight on the PCC's general strategy position around partnership working, the Panel received a presentation on

the PCC's role in CSPs and VRPs on 24th September 2024. This gave members the opportunity to hear directly from the PCC's officers leading on these work areas and the ability to scope out direct questions for the PCC.

You can find the PCC's responses to member questions here [PCP VRP CSP Questions with PCC Responses](#)

Budget Task Group

For the last 2 years, a small group of Panel Members with an interest and expertise in finance and accounting have formed a Budget Task Group.

The process provides a mechanism to enable members to evaluate the effectiveness of additional precept investment by means of the opportunity to review quarterly budget outturn reports across the year. This included the opportunity to submit detailed questions to the Chief Financial Officer. The purpose of the group is to robustly scrutinise the information made available by the OPCC and assist the wider Panel in making an informed decision on the precept proposal.

Public Trust and Confidence Sub-Committee

Policing both nationally and locally is feeling the strain of a significant reduction in trust and confidence, brought about by a range of national and local policing issues which have undermined public attitude towards policing.

The decline in public confidence is concerning and the PCC shares our concerns. The strategy to proactively improve public confidence, maintain the reputation of the force, and importantly, to communicate this to the public are important factors for the PCC to consider.

The Panel's Public Confidence Sub-Committee formed in 2023, continues to support and challenge the PCC as she holds the Chief Constable to account for the areas for improvement emerging from the last inspection of the force by HMICFRS.

The sub-committee will report in June 2025 and this report will be published. In the meantime, its Terms of Reference can be viewed here [PCP Public Confidence Sub-Committee - Terms of Reference](#)

Tackling Disproportionality

In 2019, former PCC Sue Mountstevens and Chief Constable Andy Marsh commissioned a local review into disproportionality in the criminal justice system. In

2022, the review report was published, setting out 83 recommendations for all agencies involved. A Tackling Disproportionality Programme was subsequently developed spanning the term of three PCCs with governance structures and partnership engagement based on the recommendations.

The ambition, defined by the multi-agency partnership, is to make criminal justice fair and transparent for all by establishing a proactive multi-agency approach to tackling disproportionality for Black, Asian and other minority ethnic people across Avon and Somerset.

In December 2024, the Public Confidence Sub-Committee held a meeting with relevant staff from the PCC's office to discuss their high-level strategic governance arrangements and the PCC's expectations and desired outcomes. It was important to gain assurance on:-

- the effectiveness of the governance arrangement at all levels
- that the necessary buy-in at the right level has been secured given various strands are being led by a range of partners
- that those agencies have the resources (human and financial) to move their elements forward and in a timely way
- to establish the timescales for key deliverables and the outcomes expected over the next five years

Following the Chief Constable's declaration of institutional racism in 2023, it was also important to gain assurance that the communities of Avon and Somerset are aware of the work taking place in response to the declaration.

The Panel's proactive scrutiny of this work area will be covered in detail in the Public Confidence Sub-Committee's final report to be published in June 2025.

Tackling Racial Disproportionality Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is another strand of the work chaired by Sarah Crew, Chief Constable and former Panel member Asher Craig. They are leading delivery of the recommendations to drive the changes needed in culture and leadership.

The Panel extends its thanks to the Detective Inspector Ayesha Giles who leads for the Constabulary and took the time to brief all Panel members on this work area in March 2025.

Challenges ahead and looking to the future

Work Programme

As the PCC's primary "checks and balance" in between elections, the Panel is aware of its important role in challenging and supporting the PCC on your behalf. Our shared objective for the future is to influence and impact positively on the decisions that matter.

The Panel has a work programme that is reviewed every 4-6 weeks as part of the agenda planning process with the PCC. As might be expected, it is developed to align with its statutory duties and topical strategic policing issues.

The initial planning that takes place with the OPCC ahead of the Panel's Annual General Meeting is a co-operative and useful exercise that enables both the Panel and the PCC to plan ahead and ensure that reports and information are produced in a timely fashion. The Chief Constable attends a Panel meeting at least once a year to provide an update on key issues including the financial challenges linked to the Precept proposal.

Below are some of the work areas the Panel will be reviewing as part of our Work Programme for 2025/26:-

- review of the Commissioner's Annual Report
- scrutiny of meaningful performance reports and data
- progress against the Police and Crime Plan – specifically the underpinning Action Plan outlining how the PCC's objectives will be delivered
- monitoring of the strategy to recruit, train, retain and lead a workforce which reflects the communities it serves
- a proactive scrutiny review of the strategic arrangements and analysis in place to combat knife crime. This aligns with the PCC's high-level priority to reduce violent crime.
- scrutiny of the Commissioner's Precept proposal and oversight of the draft Policing budget and its proposed allocation
- Standing report on progress against the Areas for Improvement and performance concerns highlighted in the PEEL inspection reports – a strategic look at the infrastructure the PCC has in place for monitoring the leadership/systemic issues the inspection has highlighted and finding out what assurance mechanisms are in place to ensure they are being addressed
- Joint Targeted Area Inspection – a regular review of progress in developing effective working relations with partners
- The timely resolution of conduct complaints against the PCC.

Reflections of Panel Members

Councillor Andy Wait (Bath and North East Somerset)



I've been a member of the Police and Crime Panel for 6 years. When I started, it was made clear to me that our role was to scrutinise the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner and not the operational activities of the police service. This I understand, in terms of the meanings of all the words, but it soon became apparent that as the PCC is strategically responsible for the effectiveness of Avon and Somerset Police, the two activities are impossible to

separate. Therefore, I believe our role is to be the critical friend of both.

Essentially, every member of the Panel wants the best, most efficient police force that we can possibly have within the financial constraints that the government places on the service. We want it to serve the public, particularly the most vulnerable, to protect the victims of crime but seek to catch as many serious law breakers as possible. There is an obvious need to work with social services, probation, health, youth work, education, politicians and others to ensure that all members of our society are as safe as they can possibly be. All this takes time and resources.

However, the police service is our priority and the pressures on the police service are considerable. At a recent visit to our Police Headquarters at Portishead, we learned that there are 900,000 calls to the 999 number at Avon and Somerset Police every year and each call is targeted to be answered within 10 seconds, that target is currently achieved 98% of the time. That number is around 2 calls every second. Whilst there, I was struck by the calmness of the call centre and it is an example of the professionalism of our police service.

Julie Knight (Vice-Chair and Independent Member)



I'm one of 3 independent members, co-opted to bring additional skills, expertise and experience and assist the Panel in the discharge of its functions. I was appointed in 2021, and I have acted as the Vice Chair for the past two years. Over the past year, I have continued to be impressed by the Panel's collegiate approach and strategic interest. I'm also very grateful for the professional excellence of our lead officer and notable key officers from our Host Authority.

Clare Moody was elected as Police and Crime Commissioner last year and was required to set police and crime objectives. She chaired an Advisory Board to oversee the creation of the 2025-2029 Police and Crime Plan that was launched, in part, in December 2024. I appreciated the opportunity to represent the Panel and participate in this process again. The Plan is more succinct than its predecessor and should provide a more focused mandate to those charged with its delivery. Consequently, the communities of Avon and Somerset should expect better performance outcomes. I look forward to seeing the underpinning Action Plan outlining how the Plans objectives will be delivered. This will help to inform our support and challenge function of the commissioner through our annual work programme.

The previous Plan was being relied upon to raise public confidence in policing that declined steadily over its 3-year term. The Panel established a Public Confidence

Sub-Committee in 2023 that's due to report to the wider Panel in June 2025. It has needed this time to arrange opportunities to hear from witnesses to inform the sub-committee's understanding of some key elements that can build or harm confidence to better prepare them to support and challenge the Commissioner.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) carried out a PEEL (police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy) inspection of Avon and Somerset Constabulary and have recently published their 2023–25 report findings. In a press release, His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary Michelle Skeer said: "I am satisfied with some aspects of the performance of Avon and Somerset Constabulary, but there are areas in which the constabulary needs to improve. And some of the areas for improvement are identical to those we identified in the last inspection".

The Commissioner has set out her revised means of scrutinising performance in this respect and the Panel looks forward to hearing of its effectiveness.

We've had the opportunity to hear about disproportionality and how it will be tackled in the Criminal Justice system. The complex governance structure reports to the Local Criminal Justice Board chaired by the commissioner. She was clear about being committed to making a difference in this long-term process and that engagement from key sectors was crucial to continued improvement. We look forward to hearing more about how this work will make a positive difference to those affected by it.

We heard from the Chief Constable who reflected on the pain experienced over the course of the year. She described how officers were close to 'burnout' and that front-line police officers had 'starkly highlighted the challenges they faced in striving to meet a complex range of public needs'. She advised that even with a maximum increase in the Policing precept, they still 'need to deliver a further £6.4m in savings to balance the 2025/26 budget and enable new investment'.

For many years, the Panel has heard that the funding formula disadvantages the constabulary, and I was surprised to read that last year's overall funding was 'in line with expected levels compared to other forces' in the recent PEEL report. These mixed messages are unhelpful to the public and the Panel who must consider the evidence that supports the precept proposal.

As our Commissioner settles into her second year in office, I look forward to seeing how the new Police and Crime Plan helps to make our police service more efficient and effective and our communities safer.

Councillor Nicola Clark (Somerset Council)



As one of the five elected councillors from Somerset Council on the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel, I have had the privilege of being part of a critical, non-partisan body that plays an essential role in holding the PCC to account. Our primary responsibility is to scrutinise the work of the PCC and ensure that her actions align with the needs and priorities of the residents within our force area.

The past period has been particularly interesting due to the election of a new PCC, which has brought both change and opportunity. The Panel has been fortunate to hear from several guest speakers, providing valuable insights and helping us to understand the challenges faced by Avon and Somerset Police. We've also had the chance to put questions to the Chief Constable. This continued level of external scrutiny is very important, especially given the difficulties the force area has faced over the last year.

As a member of the Panel, I've actively participated in engagement events hosted by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and I am involved in a sub-committee focused on scrutinising the efforts to enhance public confidence in the police. This is particularly important in ensuring that the police force meets the expectations of our diverse communities.

One area where I have been particularly vocal is the lack of police representation in rural and semi-rural areas. I believe this is a concern that needs to be addressed for the sake of ensuring that all communities, regardless of location, feel secure and supported. While I acknowledge the challenges of policing in rural areas, I have raised the need for more neighbourhood policing in these parts, especially as rural residents often feel more vulnerable.

The good news is that we have been reassured that efforts will be made to improve this situation, and I remain hopeful that, with the promised increase in neighbourhood policing, rural communities will see a tangible difference. It is my firm belief that with continued effort, we can bridge the gap in policing services and create a safer environment for all our residents.

In summary, my role on the Panel has been both rewarding and enlightening. I am committed to working alongside my fellow Panel members to ensure the best possible outcomes for the residents of Somerset and the wider Avon and Somerset area. Together, we continue to scrutinise, challenge, and advocate for a police service that serves everyone equally, with fairness and dedication.

Councillor Raj Sood (South Gloucestershire Council)



After being elected in May 2023 to serve as a Local Councillor for Frenchay and Downend in South Gloucestershire, one of the duties I was assigned was to attend Police and Crime Panel meetings. I must admit it has been a very good learning curve for me to find out how such a large organisation, that covers 18 parliamentary seats, works in practice.

Whilst a member of the public first, and now as elected representative, I can see the difference in my perception of the workings of police from both angles. At the same time, I must say the amount of help I have received from our seniors on the Panel has immensely helped me to understand things in a correct perspective. I remember the first briefing where I was told: "No question is a silly question." This was really encouraging.

The Panel's job is to question the PCC on her various decisions and performance; this is an ongoing process. One of our main responsibilities as a Panel is to approve the PCC's Policing precept, which directly affects the funding available to the constabulary and the results they can achieve. I feel much more confident and able to understand these things compared to when I started.

What makes it interesting to be part of this Panel, where people from different backgrounds with different skills and different ideas, contribute to shape the policing policies that affect people's lives directly. We as a Panel leave our political beliefs and differences at the door once we enter the room and work as a group to create consensus on any issue being discussed. It has been a privilege to contribute at this level. I am grateful to my seniors who have made this possible for newcomers. My best wishes to all for the successful working of this Panel.

Councillor Lisa Durston (Bristol City Council)



My first year on the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel has been both insightful and rewarding. As a new member, I've been impressed by the breadth of work undertaken by the Panel and the importance of our scrutiny role in holding the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to account.

The year has seen the introduction of a new PCC, alongside a huge amount of work on the creation of a new Police and Crime Plan. It's been encouraging to see a renewed focus on key priorities such as tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG), addressing serious violence and neighbourhood policing; issues which resonate deeply with communities that I work with in Bristol and across Avon and Somerset.

In some of our most disadvantaged communities, both urban and rural, visible and trusted local policing is not just desirable - it is essential. Residents must feel safe and have confidence that the police are responsive to their needs.

One of the key responsibilities of the Panel is to consider and agree the policing precept. This is an important decision, particularly in the context of the ongoing cost-of-living pressures faced by residents. Nonetheless, the operational case made by the PCC and Chief Constable for sustained investment is clear, particularly to tackle issues like anti-social behaviour, knife crime, and drug activity. Agreeing to the PCC's precept proposal was not taken lightly, but it was necessary to help ensure the police service has the resources it needs to keep people safe. Now, we must ensure that the funding translates into meaningful outcomes.

The public rightly expects a police force that is visible, responsive, and fair. The Panel's work, including through its sub-committees, has shown a shared commitment to improving public trust and confidence in policing. As we continue to scrutinise progress against the Police and Crime Plan, I hope we can support a sharper focus on delivering tangible outcomes that communities can see and feel.

I'm grateful to fellow Panel members for their collegiate and constructive approach, and for the support they have offered to me as a new member. I also want to extend my thanks to the officers who have supported our meetings and the work of the PCC, throughout the year. I look forward to continuing this important work in the year ahead.

Councillor John Bradbury (South Gloucestershire)



I've been a member of the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel for two years now. What have Panel members achieved? A keen awareness of the issues now facing our local police force and the challenges it is up against.

Those challenges include a lack of public confidence, financial constraint, a young and inexperienced force, and in my view, still insufficient performance with regard to the detection of crime.

When I started in this role in May 2023, one of my first concerns was the apparent lack of detection of crime, commonly, known as detection or clear up rate. This is now referred to as "positive outcomes."

I note that for the year ending March 2024, the positive outcome rate was around 11.2% - that is the proportion of recorded crime that resulted in charge, summons,

or “other positive outcomes”. There were 150,309 recorded crimes for that year. For comparison, in 2019/20, the positive outcome rate was 13.3%, with 140,525 recorded crimes.

“While there were more positive outcomes (in volume) than two years ago, the rate is lower due to the increase in recorded crime,” the Commissioner’s annual report for the year to March 2024 explains. (Note that Commissioner Clare Moody was elected and took office in May 2024 replacing her predecessor Mark Shelford)

Investigating crime is one of the Areas for Improvement (AFI) identified in Avon and Somerset’s police effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy (PEEL) report for 2023 to 2025, carried out by His Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary. Other AFIs included responding to the public, protecting vulnerable people, managing offenders, and perhaps worryingly, leadership and force management.

On the positive side, Avon and Somerset was found to be good at preventing crime and using police powers and public treatment. We still have a long way to go. But Avon and Somerset is making steps in the right direction on several fronts. Chief Constable Sarah Crew and her deputy, John Reilly, continue to argue that Avon and Somerset is under-funded, compared to other police forces nationally, with similar responsibilities, with a major city like Bristol to police, as well as a geographically large area. The force has received an increase in central government funding this year in line with a government declaration to deliver 13,000 more police officers nationally.

As my colleague and fellow Panel member Julie Knight points out, despite a rise in central government funding, Avon and Somerset Police still needs to make £6.4 million in savings this financial year to balance its budget. This is worrying.

A pause in the recruitment of Police Community Support Officers – to save money – has now been lifted, and PCSO recruitment is underway again. And with development of a new Crime Plan promising a boost to neighbourhood policing among other pledges, Commissioner Moody is aiming for an overall improvement in performance from Avon and Somerset Police.

The Panel has set up a Public Confidence sub-committee which is due to report in June on how the Constabulary is trying to build public trust.

In April myself and fellow Panel members – Councillors Raj Sood from South Gloucestershire, and Cara Lavan and Lisa Durston from Bristol City Council, along with many others, attended the launch of a new comprehensive victim support service funded by Commissioner Clare Moody, the Ministry of Justice,

Bristol City Council, and NHS England South-West.

Representatives from various support organisations, including Safelink, Lighthouse, Unseen, and One25, now offer a unified service to the victims of crime in Avon and Somerset. This development should help build confidence among crime victims that their voices are heard, and that they will receive appropriate support if desired.

In an effort to specifically improve response within the criminal justice to victims of rape and sexual assault, Operation Soteria/Bluestone, a programme designed in Avon and Somerset to target and respond appropriately to rape and serious sexual assault offences is now being used as a template for response to these crimes nationally.

Councillor Peter Crew (North Somerset)



As part of the Budget Task Group, I have been working on the Budget over the last couple of years. I have found this challenging, drilling down to the nitty gritty, looking for savings and commitments. This year Paul Butler, Chief Finance Officer, has joined part of our meetings, which has been useful.

With the knowledge gained, it made it easy for me to lead the Budget debate with the Chief Constable and obtain a promise that the Neighbourhood Teams will be fully manned as soon as possible, and should we lose any more PCSOs, replacements will be recruited. I hope we continue this group to ensure we can be seen providing value for money from the service.