



To all Parish and Town Councils in Gloucestershire

23 May 2022

Dear Councillors,

A year as your Police and Crime Commissioner

As your Police and Crime Commissioner I value greatly the dedication that you show to your communities, completely voluntarily, every week of the year. I was recently also a very busy Parish Council Chair and fully appreciate the unstinting efforts many of you put into making your communities nicer and safer places to live.

It is this respect for you and the leadership you show in your parishes and towns across the County that has encouraged me to write to you all at the end of my first year in office, and review the progress that we have made thus far, building on my regular 'roadshow activity' to ensure I continue to listen to what the public is saying about crime and its police.

Delivering on my 300 more police pledge

Firstly, despite what you may have read elsewhere, I can confirm that I have strengthened the Constabulary by almost 200 full time officers and police staff. This includes many response and neighbourhood police officers, thanks to our Government's national Police Uplift Programme, and front line custody and control room staff, with lots more to come this financial year. This already represents a 10% increase in establishment and these officers are going to increase the visibility of the Constabulary, and be on hand to address those persistent crime issues in your communities. By the middle of next year, I intend to have fully delivered on my pledge of 300 more police.

However I am not stopping there. This year will also see a considerable increase in our volunteer force of officers, increasing the size of our volunteer Special Constabulary and introducing the new role of Volunteer Police Community Support Officers. This will allow me to restore the traditional and noble role of a Parish Constable, using people already invested in their local community, who care about their neighbours and public safety - who will be a vital new link with Parish and Town Councils. I hope that [these roles](#) may interest some of you, so please consider making an application.

Cutting Anti-Social Behaviour

The new full time officers are already having an impact, contributing to a 59% reduction in neighbourhood crime, such as house burglaries, vehicle crime and bike theft, and in anti-social behaviour. I'm very pleased that Cheltenham has just been assessed as the second safest place in the whole country, but I'm ambitious, and want every area of our County to be just as safe.

Turning my plans into action

This is a key part of my comprehensive [Police and Crime Prevention plan](#) that I published earlier this year. I am focusing on empowering communities to help tackle the issues that matter to them, working in partnership with our communities and Councils to tackle the scourge of anti-social behaviour, local drug dealing and neighbourhood crime and herald the end of the epidemic of violence and intimidation against women and girls that has plagued our society for far too long.

I have also been working very hard to respond to a highly critical report by the Government Inspector regarding the historic under performance of our force. When I came into Office, I was met with a legacy of under recording of reported crime due to insufficient investment, a lack of grip over major projects, a projected overspend of millions of pounds, and poor value for money. As custodians of taxpayers' money yourselves, I know that you will recognise how disgraceful this situation was. Please rest assured that I am getting on top of this, and working with the Chief Constable to invest more into the front line and raise performance across the board. I have produced a balanced budget for the rest of my term in office and have also introduced much better governance procedures.

Working in partnership

To augment more focussed investment into the front line, I am also accessing considerable sums of additional Government funding (so far almost £5M), to tackle the issues that matter to you and ensure that the burden of addressing these matters is not unduly placed on local taxpayers. For example, we have secured more than £1M from the Home Office Safer Streets fund which, amongst other things, has provided re-deployable CCTV cameras that we can use to keep our communities safe. Some of these cameras have been specifically allocated for use by your local Community Safety Partnerships, so I would encourage you to get in touch with your District colleagues to see whether you might benefit from a short, sharp intervention such as this.

I'd also like to highlight the renewed partnership with our colleagues at Gloucestershire County Council, which is helping to tackle persistent speeding and make our roads safer. This includes an innovative new £600K [Community Speedwatch Camera Fund](#) that we have just launched. This allows local groups to apply for a range of measures to help tackle this issue, from a speed survey and simple bin stickers to sophisticated but low cost cameras which gather intelligence that is passed to the police, with the aim of encouraging behaviour change amongst drivers. I know this is an issue in many communities in the County, so I'd strongly recommend that you take a close look at the scheme and contact your County Councillor to find out more.

Lastly, after extensive consultation with stakeholders and partners, I have refocused the existing Commissioner's Fund, so that it concentrates on projects that prevent crime. I am investing almost £560,000 on community projects, with a focus on youth diversion initiatives that will help keep young people away from anti-social behaviour, which is often a gateway into more serious crime.

So I believe I have made a strong start in addressing the concerns of our communities and redressing the balance to ensure that front-line crime prevention takes precedence in future. Nevertheless I am under no illusion that there is still a great deal more to do. The Constabulary's 999 and 101 response times, for example, are still unacceptably long, and this year, I am making serious investments in the Force Control Room to ensure that those who call for our help receive the sort of service they rightly expect and deserve.

I also know that many of you will have just gone through your Annual Parish Meetings and may not have received police attendance at those meetings, or even a report. May I apologise for this, and assure you that as former Parish Councillors, my Deputy Nick Evans and I understand how disappointing this can be. We have raised the issue with the Chief Constable and while we

recognise that shift patterns can sometimes preclude attendance of your specialist neighbourhood officers at every meeting, I have set my expectation that local teams should plan to attend these vital annual community gatherings, if at all possible. Please let me know if that does not happen.

How can we help you?

Finally, my Deputy Nick and I, are very happy to come and attend your meetings to provide a verbal update and answer any questions that you, or your residents may have. We have already attended many meetings, but we both believe that this sort of community visibility and accountability is vital to the legitimacy of our Office. If you would like us to attend a future meeting, please contact pcc@gloucestershire-pcc.gov.uk and we will be very happy to come and present a report, together with an officer from your local neighbourhood policing team.

Thank you again for all that you do for your communities,

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Nelson
Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire
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