

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

KENT AND MEDWAY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 26 June 2013.

PRESENT: Cllr R Turpin (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), Cllr Mrs A Blackmore, Mr A H T Bowles, Cllr Mrs S Chandler, Cllr P Fleming, Cllr Mrs I Johnston, Mr D Jukes, Cllr T Martin, Cllr L Wicks, Mrs P A V Stockell (Substitute) (Substitute for Mr P M Hill, OBE), Mr I S Chittenden and Mr G Cowan

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs A Barnes (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner), Mr S Nolan (Acting Chief of Staff and Chief Finance Officer), Mrs K Chapman (Policy Officer) and Mr M Stepney (Proposed Chief of Staff)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Campbell (Policy Officer) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

28. Election of Chairman

(Item 1)

1. The Scrutiny Officer (KCC) asked for nominations for Chairman of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel.
2. Mrs P Stockell proposed and Councillor A Martin seconded that Mr M Hill be elected Chairman. No other nominations were received.

RESOLVED that Mr M Hill be elected Chairman of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel.

29. Election of Vice-Chairman

(Item 2)

1. The Scrutiny Officer (KCC) asked for nominations for Vice-Chairman of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel.
2. Councillor L Wicks proposed and Mr G Sandher seconded that Councillor R Turpin be elected Vice-Chairman. No other nominations were received.

RESOLVED that Councillor R Turpin be elected Vice-Chairman of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel.

30. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 April 2013

(Item 6)

1. Mrs Johnston asked that paragraph 20 (3) be amended to take out the reference to more support being needed in relation to the Youth Commissioner appointment

as this was not her recollection of feeling of the meeting. The Commissioner also confirmed that support offered by her office was ongoing.

2. Mr Sandher also asked about progress on the review of the youth commissioner appointment. Mrs Barnes confirmed that Quest had been commissioned to undertake an independent review of the process during July and the report would be shared with the Panel. The report would inform the next round of recruitment for the Youth Commissioner.

RESOLVED that subject to the above amendment the minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

31. Commissioner's Decisions

(Item B1)

1. In response to a question from Mrs Johnston the Commissioner confirmed that the June neighbourhood forum event had taken place and had been very successful, copies of the notes of that meeting were tabled for Members' information. The Commissioner asked Members to feed back any comments they had on the neighbourhood forums. Dates for the Commissioner's briefing events for Parish and Town Councils to be held in July would be circulated. Post Meeting Note: The dates of the Commissioner's briefing events were circulated on 4 July 2013.
2. Mr Fleming asked for detail around Decision 3 – to discount the police precept element for Special Constables. Mrs Barnes confirmed that it would amount to around 200 people getting a discount on their police precept element of their Council tax, around £28,000 for Kent County and it would be funded by the Commissioner, not the district councils.

RESOLVED that the Kent and Medway Police and Crime panel note the key decisions taken by the Commissioner and her office April – May 2013.

32. Chief of Staff Confirmation

(Item C1)

1. The Panel were provided with two reports in advance of their meeting. The first report set out the Commissioner's proposed job description and person specification for her Chief of Staff and explained the recruitment process. The second report advised the Panel that, at the conclusion of the selection process, the Commissioner proposed to appoint Mr Michael Stepney. The panel were satisfied that these two reports provided them with the information set out in Schedule 1(9) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.
2. The Commissioner explained at the Panel meeting that she had decided on the title of Chief of Staff rather than Chief Executive as she felt this title more accurately described the role, but that Mr Stepney would discharge all the statutory functions of a Commissioner's Chief Executive as set out in the 2011 Act.

3. The Panel heard from Mr Sandher who had been nominated by the Panel, in response to the Commissioner's invitation, to sit as an observer at the final selection process. Mr Sandher said he felt the selection process had been carried out fairly and objectively. Mr Sandher advised the Panel that he had not been present when the proposed decision was made but from what he had seen the proposed decision was reasonable.
4. The Panel sought clarification about those involved in the long list process and were advised by the Commissioner that she had undertaken this exercise with the two individuals who also conducted the final interviews. She confirmed that all decisions were unanimous. Panel members also asked whether any candidates were known to members of the interview panel. The Commissioner said that 3 of the final shortlist were known to her and 2 candidates were known to other interview panel members but no member knew Mr Stepney. The Commissioner confirmed that all previous knowledge of candidates was declared but that all were judged just on the evidence presented during the selection process.
5. Panel members asked whether the prospect of direct management of non-operational staff as a result of Stage 2 staff transfers had been discussed with Mr Stepney at interview. The Commissioner said she had reached no conclusions on stage 2 transfer proposals but that she had raised the topic at interview and she was confident that Mr Stepney would be able to lead and manage whichever staff were under the control of the Commissioner. Panel members also asked about the future of two Advisers appointed by the Commissioner and were reminded by the Commissioner of the assurance she had given at the previous Panel meeting – that all posts and roles would be reviewed once the Chief of Staff was in place.
6. Panel members asked about the vetting process, particularly in the light of the recent appointment process for a Youth Commissioner. The Commissioner assured the Panel that a more rigorous process had been adopted including checking, with Mr. Stepney's permission, any social media accounts.
7. Panel members asked Mr Stepney to explain further his range of skills and their relevance to this role and he gave evidence of his career background and his ability to lead, to innovate and to manage in situations where there was uncertainty, restricted resources and conflicting priorities. In response to Panel questions, the Commissioner assured the Panel that his ability to introduce new ways of working had been thoroughly tested during the recruitment process.

RESOLVED that the Panel concluded that the Commissioner had undertaken a thorough recruitment process and that Mr Stepney was a suitable person to appoint as her Chief of Staff.

33. Progress on Recruitment and Deployment of Officers and PCSOs *(Item C2)*

1. The Commissioner introduced her item and explained that the recruitment of the Police Officers and PCSOs was underway and the first officers would be in the community from 1 July 2013.
2. The powers of PCSOs was a matter for the Chief Constable, however in recognising that it may be unclear to the public the Commissioner had put a video on her website explaining the powers and duties of PCSOs.
3. The Commissioner was supporting a recruitment drive for Special Constables; last year these unpaid officers gave 64,000 hours of policing to communities. By discounting the police precept element the Commissioner was recognising the important work done by the special officers. It was hoped that paying the precept part of the specials would encourage special officers to attend community events in their uniforms.
4. The Force had lost 497 police officers to date due to cuts in funding. CSR 2 had been announced and was 6% for the Home office which would have an impact on policing.
5. In response to a question the Commissioner confirmed that the 60 PCSOs were new posts. Funding for PCSOs had been un-ring fenced for the first time this year.
6. The Commissioner explained that she had frequent discussions with the Chief Constable about the powers of PCSOs and the issue was constantly reviewed; in the Chief Constable's professional view the Officers had the powers to enable them to best carry out their duties in Kent. The powers of PCSOs were rarely raised at community events, it was hoped that putting the video explaining the PCSO powers on the Commissioner website might generate some discussion amongst members of the public.

RESOLVED that members of the Panel note the progress on recruitment and deployment of officers and PCSOs.

34. Community Safety Landscape Update

(Item C3)

1. The Commissioner explained that year on year funding decisions made the future for partners very difficult. The Commissioner was committed to a 3 year funding model, not year on year funding, however no commitments had been made over the level of funding.
2. Mr Nolan explained that there was £2million in the Community Safety Grant, the 3 year funding model meant that great care had to be taken on resources over 3 years. CSR2 had been announced with a grant reduction of 6% in the first year (2015-16). It was necessary to take an objective view of the community safety landscape needs and partners. A key partner would be the Community Safety Partnerships, but it was also necessary to think about broader partners in relation to drug and alcohol abuse and youth offending. In terms of other priorities there was the transformation of the Sexual Referral and Assault Services centre and

priorities around helping partners to reduce domestic abuse including the needs of affected children and families.

3. The Commissioner was thanked for her support last year and members welcomed her commitment to three year financing however it was impossible for local authorities to guarantee to continue to meet the shortfall in funding. The Commissioner confirmed that whatever she received she will give out; the work of the Community Safety Partnerships was greatly appreciated.

RESOLVED that Members note the Community Safety Landscape Update

35. Consultation and Engagement Strategy

(Item C4)

1. Members had previously requested sight of the Commissioner's Communication and Engagement Strategy, it was responsive to local needs.
2. Members discussed the inclusion of social media and ways in which the Commissioner would engage via social media.
3. In response to a question about neighbourhood watch Mrs Barnes explained that there were issues with neighbourhood watch, communication was an issue and the recent event had lead to discussion of a lot of key issues. It was a very successful event and the Commissioner reiterated that she welcomed Members input.
4. Members and the Commissioner agreed that it was important to managing public expectations. The Commissioner's office had received 4000 pieces of correspondence since the election of Kent's Police and Crime Commissioner and it was important to be open and honest with residents to explain the role of the Commissioner.
5. The Commissioner explained that one criticism of Police Authorities was that they unapproachable, the Commissioner was committed to being open and accessible to the public and to giving a human face to the role of the Commissioner.
6. It was important that there was closer engagement between the Independent Police Advisory Groups and the Commissioner's Office; the Commissioner was committed to working with every group in the county.
7. It was requested that key messages within the strategy included the Police and Crime Plan.

RESOLVED that Members note the Communications and Engagement Strategy.

36. Report back on SARC Summit

(Item C5)

1. It was agreed that it was not acceptable that there was not a fully-functional 24/7 Sexual Assault Referral Centre in this county. Darent Valley hospital had given notice that the service would not be provided there, and this was unfortunate but it had prompted people to hold discussions and three sites

were now available. There was now a joined up focus and it was hoped that something would be available by 1 September.

2. Best practice models had been investigated around the country and it was hoped that Kent's new centre would be a centre of excellence. In the past resources had not been pooled together and partners were willing to invest.

RESOLVED that Members note the report on the Sexual Assault Referral Centre

37. Future work programme

(Item D1)

1. The future work programme was to bring Members up to date with items that had been requested.
2. On the item referring to a report on statistics to identify the extent to which alcohol and/or drugs are influencing crime statistics the Commissioner had checked with the Force and at the moment it was not possible to extract that data from their system, because crimes are recorded by reasons for arrest. It was widely known that a large proportion of crimes were influenced by alcohol and/or drugs.

RESOLVED that Members note the Future Work programme for the Panel.

38. Home Affairs Committee Report

(Item E1)

1. Mr Campbell introduced this item and explained that the Chairman had asked that this item be placed on the agenda. The report contained some unwarranted criticism of Kent which both the Commissioner and the Chairman thought inappropriate.
2. The Commissioner explained that she was critical of the Home Affairs Committee report; it was a negative report which contained nothing of the good practice going on across the country. It was inaccurate and it was understood that it was going to be re-written. Both the Commissioner and the Panel Chairman had written to Mr Keith Vaz MP to express their concerns about the report. The Commissioner's concerns included the following:
 - a. The Commissioner's budget for this year is the same as last year
 - b. No political appointments have been made
 - c. The website fully meets all statutory disclosures
 - d. The comment in the report referring to the Youth Commissioner was no an impartial one, the Youth Commissioner was one part of a jigsaw of initiatives within Kent. It was a manifesto commitment that would be fulfilled.
 - e. The criticism of the Panel was not supported by the facts
3. Members supported the letter sent by the Chairman to Mr Vaz MP which was accurate and fair and it was hoped that the Home Affairs Committee report would be re-written without the offensive wording.

4. A point was made about political accountability, the Commissioner was in the same position as elected members and she would be judged on her actions by the electorate within the next four years at the election.
5. It was confirmed that no response had been received to the Chairman's letter and Mr Vaz had repeated his criticism of the Panel in parliament in an adjournment debate in recent days. The Commissioner had not received a reply either.
6. One Member questioned whether the Panel should have met again in the days or weeks following the events surrounding the appointment of the Youth Commissioner. There was also a thought that the selection process could have been discussed at the previous meeting, in future, where necessary, it was requested that a legal advisor be present at the meeting.
7. Members agreed that a follow up letter would be sent to Mr Vaz MP. POST MEETING NOTE: a follow up letter was sent to Mr Vaz on 1 July, a copy was also circulated to Members of the Panel.
8. Mrs Barnes confirmed that she had commissioned an independent review of the appointment of the Youth Commissioner and the resulting report would be shared with the Panel, following the independent review lessons would be learned and the Commissioner would move into a recruitment process for a Youth Commissioner. Panel members were keen to have the opportunity to discuss the review once it was published.

RESOLVED that Panel Members request that a follow up letter is sent to Mr Vaz MP.

39. HMIC Report on Crime Recording in Kent

(Item E2)

1. The Commissioner introduced the report, in the past Kent has had a good history of recording crime accurately. There were issues with recording 'no crime'. Since the dissolution of the Police Authorities and the election of Police and Crime Commissioners the HMIC looked again at 'no crime'. The Commissioner was asked at her oath ceremony whether she had faith in Kent's crime figures. Commissioners have powers that the Police Authority didn't have, it is possible for Commissioners to instigate and commission an independent review from HMIC.
2. The report was published mid way through June and a public meeting had been held with the Chief Constable to discuss the findings. The issues surrounding the culture of an organisation were difficult; the report had found that there had been, until recently, target-driven culture in Kent Police Force. The Commissioner would have a monthly feedback session to update colleagues; HMIC had been invited in at the end of the year to carry out a follow up review.
3. Members discussed the difficulties with tackling the culture within the organisation. The Commissioner was working up a Governance structure around the Force's action plan. The Commissioner will support the Chief Constable in his work to improve the culture of the Police Force.
4. Referring to page 100 of the agenda, Panel members ask why issue (2) wasn't properly dealt with after the HMIC report of 2012. Referring to (3) where ACPO

guidance wasn't followed, the form doesn't provide the correct information. The Commissioner confirmed that the Kent police form guidance did now contain the correct wording. On item (2) it was flagged up in January 2012 and it was discussed throughout 2012 but a new investigation hadn't taken place so the Commissioner instigated an investigation.

5. A Member commented that there was a disparity between the level of crime and the public perception of crime, there might have been more validity to public perception than initially thought. The Commissioner explained that it was a question of trust in all public services. HMIC will have to assure the people of Kent that they can have confidence in Kent's crime recording figures when they re-visit in December 2013. If HMIC use the same methodology around the country there may be a bigger issue.
6. In response to a question the Commissioner explained that there had to be significant tests before a crime could be removed as a 'no crime', the Commissioner was comfortable with the process.
7. There would be an annual review of the Police and Crime Plan, the Chief Constable was not setting any numerical targets, and he was learning from other forces how they achieved sound performance without setting numerical targets, and would be held to account by the Commissioner.

RESOLVED that Members of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel note the HMIC report on crime recording in Kent.