

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 Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 20 December 2013.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Cllr R Turpin (Vice-Chairman), Cllr G Galpin (Substitute for Cllr G Clarkson), Cllr P Todd, Cllr T Martin, Cllr N Collor (Substitute for Cllr Mrs S Chandler), Cllr Mrs A Blackmore, Cllr L Wicks, Cllr P Fleming, Cllr M Dearden, Cllr K Pugh (Substitute for Mr A H T Bowles), Cllr M Rhodes, Cllr J Cunningham, Mr R A Latchford, OBE and Mr Gurvinder Sandher

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs A Barnes (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner), Mr M Stepney, (Commissioner's Chief of Staff) and Mr S Nolan (Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer), Chief Constable Ian Learmonth and Deputy Chief Constable Alan Pughsley

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

57. Membership Update

(Item 2)

1. The Scrutiny Officer updated Members on the Membership of the Panel.
2. Cllr David Jukes had been replaced by Cllr John Cunningham (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council)
3. At the meeting on 5 November it was agreed that, following the changes in the political makeup of Kent, one Lib Dem seat would be offered to a UKIP Member. Cllr Alex Perkins had resigned from the Panel and Mr Roger Latchford had joined the Panel.

RESOLVED that Members note the membership of the Panel.

58. Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 November 2013

(Item 5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

59. Commissioner's Decisions (to follow)

(Item B1)

1. The Chairman introduced this item and the excellent work of the Special Constabulary was noted.

RESOLVED that Members note the key decisions taken by the Commissioner in November 2013.

60. Confirmation Hearing for the Commissioner's Proposed Chief Constable (to follow)
(Item C1)

1. The Chairman reminded Members that this should not be a re-interview of the candidate but it was an opportunity for the Panel to ensure they were satisfied that due process and reasonable judgement was used in making the decision to recommend Mr Pughsley as the new Chief Constable.
2. The Panel was provided with a comprehensive report, which met all the legal requirements for a confirmation hearing. The report set out the Commissioner's proposed job description and person specification for the Chief Constable and explained the recruitment process. The report stated that, at the conclusion of the selection process, the Commissioner proposed to appoint Mr Alan Pughsley and gave reasons for her proposal. The Panel was satisfied that this report provided them with the information set out in Schedule 1(9) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The Commissioner's report also provided the Panel with detailed information about the advertisement, shortlisting and selection process and the briefing provided to candidates in advance of the selection. The Commissioner also provided the Panel with a copy of the report by the independent member who had observed and advised on the process in line with the requirements of Home Office Circular 20/2012. The Panel noted the conclusion of the independent member that the selection was fair, transparent and merit-based.
3. The Commissioner explained that she had undertaken a rigorous and transparent process and that Mr Pughsley had fully demonstrated his ability to fulfil the role effectively.
4. The Panel Chairman, who had been invited by the Commissioner to sit as an observer at the final selection process advised the Panel that he felt that the selection process had been fair, objective and transparent.
5. The Panel asked whether the Commissioner had considered including Council Leaders and other partners in the selection process and was advised that invitation had been sent to all Councils to participate in the briefing arrangements. The Commissioner advised the Panel that she intended to undertake a programme of public engagement, with Mr Pughsley in the next 3 months.
6. The Panel sought an assurance from Mr Pughsley that he fully intended to serve for the full 5 year term of his contract, an assurance which Mr Pughsley gave.
7. Panel members expressed some concern at the fact that there were only 3 candidates and that the opportunity to apply had been limited to police officers. The Commissioner explained the extensive efforts she and the Chief Constable had made to invite applications but pointed out that there were large number of recent Chief Constable vacancies and a relatively small pool of potential applicants. The Commissioner explained that, under present rules, only Chief

Police Officers who had passed the senior command course were eligible to apply.

8. The Panel asked Mr Pughsley about his commitment to the development and progression of female and Black and Minority Ethnicity (BME) officers and staff. Mr Pughsley gave an assurance of his commitment and drew attention to the increased number of female Superintendents and the appointment of a dedicated diversity officer as evidence of his commitment. The Commissioner pointed out that, as Deputy Chief Constable, Mr Pughsley had personally mentored 8 or 9 women in the force.
9. The Panel expressed some concern at the relatively frequent movement of police officers in senior local roles. Mr Pughsley said that, apart from movement occurring as a result of retirement or promotion, his expectation was that local commanders would serve a minimum of 2 years in post.
10. The Panel asked about Mr Pughsley's role in the Crime recording issue that had been the subject of a recent HMIC report. Mr Pughsley said that as Deputy Chief Constable he held responsibility for the audit of crime recording and that he fully accepted that 90% accuracy was not good enough. He had, at the Chief Constable's request, led the recovery programme after the HMIC report and said that the current crime recording procedures are 96% accurate.
11. The Panel said that the recruitment had been undertaken quickly and asked whether the Commissioner had considered taking longer in order to generate a larger field of applicants. The Commissioner said she had considered an interim appointment for 6 months but had decided that the Force needed continuity at a difficult time and that the recruitment situation was unlikely to be any different in 6 months time.

RESOLVED that the Panel concluded that the Commissioner had undertaken a thorough, objective, fair and transparent recruitment process and unanimously recommended that the Commissioner appoint Mr Pughsley as Chief Constable.

61. Commissioner's initial thinking in the light of recent published crime data and future police funding (Oral)

(Item C2)

1. The Commissioner explained the Governance Board, which was the formal procedure for holding the Chief Constable to account and there was a standing invitation to Panel members to attend. These were meetings open to the public with a standing item around performance. The Chief Constable was required to explain five things: what were the performance figures? how were they made up? what caused the dips and any improvements? if there were dips what the force was doing and what was the impact and expectations of future performance? The Chairman had requested that this item be placed on the agenda to give Members the opportunity to discuss and understand the recent coverage.
2. There had been an increase in recorded crime in Kent of 9% between April – October 2013, which the Commissioner said was in part due to more accurate crime recording, particularly since the publication of the HMIC report, the findings of which were now being applied to other Police Forces.

3. The Chairman asked how crime figures would be kept down bearing in mind the financial constraints facing the Force. The Commissioner explained that following the first budget reductions arising from the Comprehensive Spending review there had been significant officer and staff reductions within the Force. Further grant reductions were expected in 2015/16 and onwards and the Commissioner's Office had recently held a partners conference to seek views on how further reductions could be managed. At the conference, community policing continued to be a priority to the people of Kent.
4. The Chairman explained that through the new ways of working programme the County Council was looking at every single service to determine how else they could be delivered; this included the possibility of outsourcing. He asked the Commissioner to consider outsourcing back office functions. The Commissioner stated that her views on privatisation and outsourcing remain the same as those expressed in previous discussions and that she did not support the privatisation of Kent Police. The Commissioner updated that an innovation day conference would be hosted, which aimed to harness the expertise of the private sector to enable staff to be more efficient and to support better use of technology. The Commissioner also confirmed that every budget heading and every way of working would be looked at but outsourcing and privatisation were an absolute last resort, along with losing Police Officers.
5. Another Member confirmed that there were efficiencies in outsourcing back office functions. In response to a question around public satisfaction the Commissioner explained that overall satisfaction rates had remained broadly stable, However victims of crime still felt that they were not being informed, so a new system had been set up to tackle this, 'Track my Crime'. This was due to be launched in April 2014.
6. A member raised the use of the precept and government grants for the recruitment of police officers. The Commissioner raised that there may be flexibility on the precept, as at the moment there was a 2% cap but a decision was expected later in the month as to the cap level. It would be difficult to go over the cap, as there would have to be a referendum if it did. A referendum would cost about £2.5 m and it would need to be proposed in February but couldn't be run until May. The Commissioner also commented that it would not be possible to canvass on why an increase in council tax was being proposed.
7. A Member queried the feasibility of charging late night establishments for a contribution to policing and should this be something that the district and boroughs should consider. The Commissioner explained that this was done in Newcastle, with 70% of the levy going to policing and a 30% to the local authority. The Commissioner said that for places like Newcastle, with a high concentration of establishments, it was easier. It would be difficult to apply a blanket approach to late night establishments but this was not within the Commissioner's remit.
8. It was considered by members that there might be an under reporting of certain crimes such as cyber crimes, bullying and fraud. The Commissioner explained that there was a South East regional response team targeting specific crimes. The Commissioner referred to her Youth Commissioner, who, when appointed, would work with schools to help address some of these issues.

9. There was a discussion around increasing joint working. For example, a member suggested that local authorities employed enforcement officers and it was important to look at any opportunity for enhanced powers. The Commissioner explained that the Police Community Support Officer powers were reviewed on a regular basis by the Chief Constable, and a piece of work was underway between the Force and local authorities.

RESOLVED that Members note the comments made around the published crime data and future police funding and look forward to receiving the Police and Crime Plan during February 2014.

62. Future work programme

(Item D1)

1. The Chairman confirmed that the meeting planned for 8 April 2014 would be an informal away day for the Panel, Commissioner's Office and the Police.

RESOLVED that Members note the Future Work Programme.

At the conclusion of the meeting the Chairman thanked the Chief Constable for his work within Kent. The Chairman said he had been impressed with Mr Learmonth's clarity of purpose and his straightforward and direct approach. He had been easy to engage with and successful in his work with partners, particularly in Essex and had worked for the best interests of the people in Kent. The Panel joined the Chairman in thanking Mr Learmonth for all he had done for Kent Police and Kent County and offered him their best wishes for the future.

Mr Learmonth returned his thanks to the Panel and confirmed that they had an excellent new Chief Constable in Mr Pughsley.