

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### 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 Thursday, 24 July 2014.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Mr Gurvinder Sandher (Vice-Chairman), Cllr P Clokie, Cllr P Todd, Cllr T Martin, Cllr Mrs S Chandler, Cllr J Burden, Cllr L Wicks, Cllr R Turpin, Cllr P Fleming, Cllr Campbell, Cllr C Derrick, Mr R A Latchford, OBE, Mr G Cowan, Mr Dan McDonald, Mrs P A V Stockell (Substitute) (Substitute for Cllr Mrs A Blackmore) and Cllr K Pugh (Substitute) (Substitute for Mr A H T Bowles)

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs A Barnes, Mr S Nolan and Mr O Shaw

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Campbell (Policy Officer) and Mr J Cook (Scrutiny Research Officer)

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

##### **90. Introduction/Webcast Announcement**

*(Item 1)*

1. The Chairman welcomed Members and Commissioner to the Police and Crime Panel meeting and advised Members that the meeting would be webcast and filmed by television cameras.

##### **91. Apologies and Substitutes**

*(Item )*

##### **92. Declarations of Interest**

*(Item )*

##### **93. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 05/06/14**

*(Item 4)*

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 28 May and 5 June 2014 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

##### **94. Engagement Strategy**

*(Item B1)*

1. The Commissioner introduced her report on her Engagement Strategy, outlining the changes in focus and implementation. The Commissioner said that the key points included highlighting the continued focus on listening to communities and developing and maintaining a dialogue between the Commissioner, the police and relevant partners to improve local understanding. The Commissioner said that this refined approach will acknowledge the excellent work carried out by Kent

Police, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner as well as the partner agencies and Kent Police's corporate and internal communications teams. The Commissioner said that, in common with other Commissioners her initial communication and engagement work was centred on explaining the role of the PCC but this phase of the strategy had now been largely completed. The Commissioner said that her revised strategy will focus on business as usual, promoting a corporate and professional image through tailored and balanced engagement and communication activities that are designed to suit the relevant audiences.

2. The Commissioner summed up the main points of her refined strategy as being focused on local engagement, a more corporate and policy orientated online presence, improved partnership working and a closer relationship with the Police and Crime Panel. Some specific actions planned included the creation of a new corporate PCC Twitter account, the retiring of the Commissioner's Community Outreach bus, using Police local profiles to plan targeted engagement activities, encouraging Panel members to join the Commissioner in local engagement activities and a review of the general style and tone in response to Members' comments at the previous Panel meeting.
3. The Commissioner commented that it was her strong desire to ensure that Kent Police were supported in continuing to be an excellent Force. The newly instituted People Board was one measure designed to achieve this and in addition, she would be making informal visits to Police Stations around the county and engaging with the staff support associations. The Commissioner added that a positive aspect of the past issues discussed at the Panel and in the media had been to cause all involved to step back and reflect on ways to improve.
4. The Chairman thanked the Commissioner for her comments, stressing the Panel's primary focus was the need to change inappropriate behaviours such as 'campaigning' through excessive media presence, an alteration in tone and style to a more professional and respectful approach in the Commissioner's dealings with all parties and general improvement in attitude to engagement with the Panel and the Police.
5. The Commissioner emphasised that her reviewed engagement strategy reflected her refined approach of tailoring all further communication and engagement to suit the audience.
6. Members engaged in a discussion with the Commissioner on various aspects of her report and verbal update. The main points covered included advice on management of social media and pitfalls of holding more than one Twitter account as well as the nature of appropriate communication and how important leadership skills were in striking the right tone.

7. Members raised concern that the Commissioner need not necessarily abandon the use of her community outreach bus. Panel members commented that, if it was the most cost effective method of achieving her county wide engagement activities, then the Commissioner should consider retaining the vehicle.
8. In response to a question about the difficulty of arranging for the Commissioner to attend District Council meetings, the Commissioner explained that she and the Chief Constable had written to all district councils outlining the plans for the People Board and other engagement opportunities. Members asked if the minutes of the People Board could be viewed by the Panel. The Commissioner said it had not yet been decided whether to provide minutes as there were specific HR issues being discussed that might not be suitable for publication. The Commissioner stated she would take the matter up with the Chief Constable to examine options for sharing information from the People Board.
9. The Vice-Chairman expressed praise for the strong focus on partnership working that the Commissioner had outlined in her report. He requested further detail on the representation and attendance at the People Board. The Commissioner responded by explaining that the Board was very new but did examine equality and diversity issues within the Force and the People Board complements the Chief Constable's Culture board which has similar staff welfare and attitude considerations that may impact on equality.
10. Members commented that while there had been concerns on the panel regarding the Commissioner's style, they were pleased with her response and commitment to improve the relationship with the panel in future. Members stated that there is a desire to draw a line over what had taken place previously and for the Panel and the Commissioner to make progress.
11. A member commented that the Chief Constable's Culture board was an interesting development and asked whether the panel could be involved. At this time, the Commissioner indicated that it was not possible due to potentially sensitive issues being raised and that the Chief Constable was still developing the board.
12. In response to further questions about the People Board and whether they had impacted on the number of Governance Boards, the Commissioner explained that the new People Boards were being held in addition to her other meetings. The Commissioner also invited members of the panel to visit her office for more information about the work of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, as well as which meetings Panel members might care to attend in future. A member strongly supported the idea that Panel members should attend the People and Governance Boards.
13. Several members made comment that they were pleased with the improved attitude and communication style evidenced by the Commissioner and that they

were pleased with the progress made. It was also suggested that the decision to retire the Commissioner's community outreach bus was reviewed with the caveat that it be corporately branded to reflect the Office held rather than the Office holder.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the Commissioner's report and endorsed her decisions;

- a) To move away from a campaigning role.
- b) To undertake less 'big bang' publicity.
- c) To focus all publicity less on the Commissioner as an individual.
- d) To adopt a more corporate style on her website.

The Panel also requested and received the Commissioner's assurance that her engagement style with Police Officers and staff, Panel members and other partners would be modified.

## **95. Corporate Communications** *(Item B2)*

1. The Commissioner introduced her report on Corporate Communications, stating that the history of the transfer of employment were already known to the panel and that she wished to explain the rationale behind her initial retention of the employment of the Corporate Communication and Research Bureau teams. When agreement had been reached that all other Police staff would transfer employment to the Chief Constable, the teams in question had been conducting an ongoing piece of work relating to communication and engagement. Given that this was fundamental to the work of the Commissioner and would also benefit Kent Police, the Commissioner said that it was agreed by the Home Secretary that ownership of these teams could remain with the PCC until such time as it was appropriate and manageable to complete their transfer.
2. The Commissioner said that now that the new Policing model has been implemented, which has heightened the core role of communication and engagement, she had agreed with the Chief Constable that now would be an appropriate time to complete the transfer of employment. Linked with this is the fact that Kent Police will shortly be creating a new role of Head of Community Engagement which will develop the positive work of the Force and the Commissioner's office in terms of working with the public. The Commissioner regretted that there had been delays to the final transition, particularly due to the uncertainty this could cause members of staff but was firm in the view that it was the right thing to do to wait until an appropriate strategic model could be put in place.

3. As a result of the communications and engagement project that the corporate teams had undertaken prior to the transfer, the new strategy for tailored police engagement would be rolling out soon with a pilot area already identified.
4. Members welcomed the decision to transfer the teams to the employment of the Chief Constable and were pleased to hear more about the tailored communication strategies now being put in place as a result of the communication and engagement project the Corporate teams had been working on, particularly in terms of how this will benefit some communities that ignored police information because of the volume of leaflets and prevention advice that did not apply to them.
5. Panel members praised the use of a pilot scheme in light of concerns that new communication strategies and tactics carried risks when first implemented as staff needed to acquire and develop new skills.
6. The Commissioner emphasised that while the new strategy had highlighted opportunities to improve Kent Police's engagement approach, she had nothing but praise for the work that had been carried out previously by the corporate communications team who had been exceptional at implementing ACPO approved communication programmes.

RESOLVED that the Police and Crime Panel note the Commissioner's report.

**96. Police Contact Points / Mobile Police Stations**  
*(Item B3)*

1. The Chairman explained that the this report had been produced to address the negative perception around the Police Contact Points that had been created as a result of their coverage in the 'Meet the Commissioner' Channel 4 documentary.
2. The Commissioner explained that the footage used was from the early stages of the scheme and did not reflect how Police Contact Points were currently being used and how effective they have been. The report to the Panel was developed by Kent Police as the Police Contact Points are an operational resource used at the discretion of the Chief Constable.
3. The Commissioner said that, since April 2014, the Police Contact Points have been staffed by a dedicated team of PCSOs. This has allowed the scheme to evolve and change depending on demand from the community. Such engagement is made easy through use of Twitter by the PCSOs who can advise the public of their whereabouts and also respond to requests for Police Contact Point attendance.

4. The Commissioner said that a recent review indicated that there had been between two and three formal outcomes a day from interaction between the public and Police at the Contact Points. The Commissioner explained that “outcomes” refer only to information provided by the public resulting in either an Intelligence Report being submitted or the recording of a crime or incident. The review did not record how many engagements had taken place where police staff and the public interact in a positive manner that can build confidence and develop relationships. The Commissioner said that this aspect is a core part of visible community policing and must be taken into account, particularly in light of HMIC’s recent report that highlighted the difficulties Police forces are encountering in maintaining visible community policing while making spending cuts.
5. The Commissioner said that local groups can now bid for Mobile Police Station attendance either for addressing local concerns or to support community events that will allow for positive engagement. All deployments are now at the discretion of the District Commander, with a Chief Inspector having complete control of all resources within that area.
6. The Commissioner wished to congratulate the Chief Constable for the excellent management of the Mobile Police Stations and she believes they will continue to be useful resource for Kent Police. The Panel noted the Commissioner’s confirmation that the mobile police stations are an operational resource under the control and direction of the Chief Constable.

RESOLVED that the Police and Crime Panel would note the Commissioner’s report. The Chairman further thanked the Commissioner for responding to the requests for updates the last meeting by bringing all three formal reports to the Panel.

**97. Commissioner's Decisions**  
*(Item C1)*

1. A member requested clarification on the decision to implement the People Boards regarding the limited number of only two per year. The Commissioner explained that they were new but promising and more would be held if necessary.

**98. Future work programme**  
*(Item D1)*

**99. PCC Correspondence following 'Meet the Commissioner' documentary**  
*(Item D2)*

1. The Chairman explained that Mr Campbell, Policy Officer of the Panel, had produced the report in response to his review of correspondence arising from the Channel 4 documentary.

2. Mr Campbell explained that his aim was to confirm that no complaints had been received but not recorded from amongst the correspondence received by the Commissioner's office in the wake of the Channel 4 documentary.
3. In the course of assessing the correspondence, Mr Campbell said he had identified criticisms of the Commissioner and her Office arising from the documentary but that these did not constitute complaints.
4. A member asked for clarification on what criteria were used in deciding what constituted a complaint rather than a criticism. Mr. Campbell explained that his judgement was based on Home Office guidelines for such assessments as part of the complaints process. He said that an allegation that the Commissioner had committed an inappropriate act or failed in her duty through an inappropriate omission would constitute a complaint whereas negative comments about the Commissioner's general behaviour or the cost of her role and staff would be considered criticisms.
5. Another member raised a concern that the difference between a criticism and complaint was narrow and nuanced and that as a result, the approach outlined in the report may disadvantage some people who believe they are making formal complaints and expect an appropriate response and then only receive a general purpose thank you letter.
6. Mr. Campbell clarified that his judgements about what constituted a complaint were not based on the Commissioner's choice of response but were entirely decided by the content of the correspondence sent to the Commissioner. He stated that the decision of how to respond to correspondence that did not constitute a complaint was entirely down to the Commissioner.

RESOLVED that the Police and Crime Panel note Mike Campbell's report.