

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 Tuesday, 22 September 2015.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Mr Gurvinder Sandher (Vice-Chairman), Cllr A Horton (Substitute for Mr A H T Bowles), Cllr J Burden, Cllr P Clokie, Cllr J Cubitt, Dr M R Eddy, Cllr L Fairbrass, Mr R A Latchford, OBE, Cllr Sloan, Cllr H Tejan and Cllr P Todd

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs A Barnes, Mr A Harper and Mr S Nolan

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

136. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 2nd June 2015
(Item 4)

1. The Chairman referred to para 127 (2) of the minutes, the Panel resolved to delegate authority to the Head of Democratic Services to take steps to achieve political balance via appropriate co-optees. The Scrutiny Research Officer explained that the Panel had a full complement of Members with the exception of one Independent Member - a process was underway to fill that post. The Panel comprised 14 Leader appointments, (one from each local authority in Kent) an additional seat for Medway Council in recognition of geographical balance, and 2 additional Labour seats and one UKIP in recognition of political balance across Kent. Councillor Tejan had joined the panel representing Medway, and Dr Eddy and Cllr Burden joined the panel representing the Labour group as co-optees.
2. The Chairman then referred members to para 131 of the minutes, the Panel resolved that the Commissioner be asked to provide an update on the Youth Advisory Group in early 2016, this had been included in the work programme for February 2016.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2015 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

137. Dates of 2016 Panel Meetings
(Item 5)

RESOLVED that the Panel note the meeting dates for 2016.

138. Overall crime performance - July 2014 to June 2015
(Item B1)

1. The Chairman stated that this was an important issue, one which the Panel had had much discussion over in the past.
2. The Commissioner introduced the report. She said she had spent the past two years explaining the increase in the Force's performance figures up to July 2014 as a result of the improved accuracy of crime recording. The report showed that the Force had continued to maintain a very high level of recording accuracy and the Commissioner was pleased to report that, comparing 12 months data at the same high level of accuracy, recorded crime had fallen by 1.5% which equalled 1500 fewer victims of crime. The only target set by the Home Secretary was to reduce crime, but for Kent it was also about reducing the number of victims of crime. The Commissioner explained the history of crime recording in Kent, that she had commissioned HMIC to independently review crime recording accuracy and this found a 90% accuracy rate which was not acceptable. Subsequently, the Force had worked hard to improve the accuracy of crime recording and the Commissioner's Chief of Staff was previously the Crime Registrar, playing a key role in facilitating this work. All numerical targets had been removed, officers had to provide a quality service and crime recording was now at 96-97% accuracy. When HMIC inspected police forces nationally, they found that levels of crime recording accuracy ranged from 60 – 80%.
3. The Commissioner explained that July 2014 was the new baseline and provided a like for like comparison with the subsequent year's data. Members were referred to the graphs at page 19 of their meeting pack. Kent's crime levels initially increased due to the improved accuracy of crime recording, but Kent now had one of the lowest increases in recorded crime. Kent had been praised nationally for its improvement in crime recording accuracy.
4. The most recent data from September 2014 - August 2015 showed that the reduction in crime had been maintained. Whilst some offences had increased, the Commissioner said this reflected victims being more confident to report crimes, most notably domestic abuse and historic sexual offences. The Commissioner confirmed that she was pleased with the progress but not complacent, stating that this issue was discussed at every Governance Board meeting. The Commissioner explained the role of Compass House in supporting victims of crime, and said that a number of Panel members were due to visit Compass House in November to see the facilities first hand.
5. The Chairman confirmed that there was confidence in Kent's crime recording figures, recognising that it was extremely difficult to compare forces unless they had similar reporting accuracy rates, and this was putting HMIC in a difficult position when publishing comparative national data.
6. The Commissioner was congratulated on the report and the improvement in crime recording accuracy. A Member asked whether fraud and internet crime was included in the crime figures. The Commissioner explained that the City of London Police had responsibility for fraud and cyber-crime, and that the National Crime survey conducted by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) had not asked the public whether they had been victims of fraud or cyber-crime until 2015. The ONS estimated that there were 3 million victims of fraud or cyber-crime last year. The Commissioner offered to provide a report to the Panel on fraud and cyber-crime at a future meeting.

7. One Member commented that the focus should be on reducing crime rather than comparing with other forces; the Commissioner agreed and explained that the graphs showed a comparison of year on year data for Kent Police.
8. In response to a question about crime being properly investigated and detected, the Commissioner explained that this was the responsibility of the Chief Constable. The Commissioner stated that this was regularly monitored through the Governance Board to which all Members were welcome.
9. A concern was raised about members of the public not reporting crime because they did not feel it would be investigated. The Commissioner was asked how she was encouraging the public to report crime. The Commissioner said she reinforced the message that crime should always be reported at all public events. Rural crime in Kent was reducing, and the Commissioner offered to report back to the Panel on this and the Rural Task Force.
10. In response to a question about the breakdown of violent crime and sexual offences the Commissioner referred to domestic abuse. The recording of domestic abuse had increased and the Commissioner said this was positive because it meant the public had greater confidence to report to the police. Within the domestic abuse figures, first-time recording had increased and recording of repeat abuse had reduced due to victims getting the support they needed. There was on-going work with partners to promote the reporting of domestic abuse, an awareness campaign was run during the previous football World Cup and would likely be run again next year.
11. In response to a question about the 101 and 999 service the Commissioner explained that she had recently spent time in the Force Control Room as there had been concerns about the 101 service. 999 calls were the top priority and if there was a spike in demand for the 101 service then there may be a delay in calls being answered. Cuts to the Force budget had resulted in fewer staff yet the demand had not reduced. The majority of calls to 101 were not reporting crime, sometimes as low as 20% related to crime. During July 2015 there were 4000 extra calls to the Force Control Room regarding Operation Stack and whether roads were open.
12. A Member requested that the crime clear up rate be included in future crime performance reports.

RESOLVED that the Panel welcome the reduction in victims of crime, particularly burglaries and congratulate the Force on the high level of crime recording accuracy. Where there were increases, the Panel wishes to keep a watchful eye. The Panel welcomes the Commissioner's offer to report back on fraud, cyber-crime and also rural crime in Kent including the Rural Task Force at a future meeting.

139. Accounts 2014/15
(Item B2)

1. The Commissioner offered her congratulations to Mr Nolan, Chief Finance Officer, who had just been appointed president of the Police and Crime Commissioners' Treasurers Society.

2. The Panel was reminded that the Force had already made savings of £50million in the period 2011-2015. There were planned savings of £14.5million this year and further significant savings would have to be found up to 2020. The Chancellor had announced another year of austerity up to 2020 and the Government was consulting on a new system for allocating funding between forces. The Commissioner's response to the Government's consultation was attached at Appendix B of the report.
3. Mr Nolan introduced the report which comprised the draft accounts and the strategy in response to the comprehensive spending review. Members were reminded that the Accounts were currently draft and a number of queries were being worked through, but an unqualified opinion by the deadline was expected. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) had been working on a four year plan, to the end of 2018/19 in line with the previous governments spending review period. The Chancellor had expanded this period to 2019/20 adding approximately £14million to the 'already planned for' savings. The Chancellor was due to announce the national spending review on 25 November, but the impact for Kent would not be known until approximately 18/19 December 2015. Mr Nolan said that the current formula was not fit for purpose and the review was welcome, however the lack of certainty was unsatisfactory and further clarification would not be available until nearer Christmas.
4. The Commissioner said that the Force and OPCC had assumed cuts of 28% (cuts would be between 25-40%) but this caused difficulties with the timing of OPCC engagement around the precept as clarity on the financial position would not be available until nearer Christmas. Consultation could be carried out before Christmas without further detail but allowing more time for consultation or after Christmas with more detail but allowing less time for consultation. The Commissioner said she would welcome the Panel's view on the best approach.
5. The Force was congratulated on improving its performance whilst absorbing the cuts they had faced in recent years.
6. The Commissioner said that the funding formula had to be fair to urban and rural forces; there had been very little work with partners on the issue to date.
7. A Member queried the level of reserves held by the Force. The Commissioner said that Kent had a prudent approach to reserves, inherited from the Police Authority and these were built up for capital investment as well as covering insurance risk and providing a buffer in case cuts were greater than planned. The Commissioner referred members to the final paragraph of her letter in response to the Government's consultation and the reference to reserves.
8. A Member asked that the Panel be involved in discussions around the budget proposals for 2016-17 and the Commissioner confirmed that she would welcome engagement with the Panel.

RESOLVED that Members congratulate the Force on its performance in managing the financial challenges and the Panel looks forward to engagement with the Commissioner around her budget proposals and expressed their support for securing a fair deal for Kent under the new funding formula.

140. Working with the Business Community
(Item B3)

1. The Commissioner introduced the report, saying it was vital that the Force worked closely with the business community because being a victim could be devastating to some businesses. The OPCC and the Force had a long history of working in partnership with the business community. Business crime was absolutely not a victimless crime and the Business Crime Advisory Group had done some excellent work shaping the Force's Business Crime Strategy, looking at crime reduction measures and providing tailored crime prevention advice. The scope and nature of business crime was changing, for example, organised criminals from London were coming to Kent and committing large scale fraud and theft. Tackling issues such as this was a priority and in November 2015 the Chairman of the Business Crime Advisory Group and the Commissioner were hosting a joint business crime conference to look at crime prevention techniques, emerging threats and best practice with an emphasis on fraud and cyber-crime, the date would be confirmed to Members.
2. The Chairman queried what impact the work the Commissioner had outlined had had on business crime. The Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer explained that the value of this work included encouraging reporting of business crime and moving away from the retail industry solely, to raising awareness of other serious threats to businesses. The Serious Crime Directorate had presented to the Business Crime Advisory Group about cyber-crime, opening up opportunities for local businesses to share information. The Commissioner set out the figures for business crime, in 2012-13 there had been 25,065 offences, 2013-14 25,297 offences, 2014-15 25,774 offences. There had been an increase in shoplifting and improved crime recording accuracy had also had an impact, however the figures excluded all fraud offences which were reported directly to Action Fraud. The Commissioner advised the Panel that there was a new national definition of business crime: 'Any criminal offence that is committed against a person or property which is associated by the connection of that person or property to a business'.
3. In response to a query about the emerging issues being identified by the Business Crime Advisory Group, Mr Nolan explained that these included the impact of organised criminals and cyber-crime.

RESOLVED that the Panel thank the Commissioner for the report and request a further report on business crime in September 2016.

141. Body Worn Cameras - Verbal update
(Item B4)

1. Mr Nolan explained that funding from the Innovation Fund had been received for 400 body worn cameras, but unfortunately a second bid for funding was unsuccessful so the cameras were not rolled out across the Force. The 400 cameras were used in a pilot scheme which led the Chief Constable and the Commissioner to again discuss the impact of cameras being rolled out more widely. Following the Commissioner's approval of a business case, the Chief

Constable has purchased another 1600 cameras, at a cost of £1.8million over three years out of the capital programme (£1.4million in the current year). The business case included a reduction in complaints, with the Force estimating productivity savings of £900,000 per year as well as 2,600 less absences from work as a result of police officers being hurt on duty. The cameras would be rolled out over the next year.

2. Panel Members were shown video footage of a stop and search captured on a camera worn by a Kent police officer. The Commissioner said that the Police Federation supports the use of cameras as it stops malicious complaints and officers being injured. The Commissioner also said that they will have a knock on effect for the wider criminal justice system with improved evidence gathering, a reduction in bureaucracy and an increase in early guilty pleas as people can't argue with what they see.
3. The Vice-Chairman welcomed the use of the cameras. In answer to a question from the Vice-Chairman the Commissioner said that the cameras would be available to all frontline officers, and would become part of their daily kit in most cases. Mr Harper said data would be stored in line with guidance, 7 years as minimum but if the data was linked to a serious crime it would be held for longer and then when no longer required would be destroyed in the correct manner.
4. The Commissioner said that whilst savings achieved through the use of cameras was important, the cameras would also improve the safety of officers.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the update on body worn cameras.

142. Commissioner's Decisions - July, August & September 2015
(Item C1)

RESOLVED that the Panel note the decision of the Commissioner to endorse the wide scale roll out of body worn cameras for frontline police officers.

143. Future work programme
(Item D1)

1. The Panel asked that a general discussion around the Commissioner's budget proposals take place at the November meeting.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the work programme with the inclusion of a general discussion around the Commissioner's budget proposals at the November meeting.

144. Minutes of the Commissioner's Governance Board meeting held on 11th August 2015
(Item E1)

RESOLVED that the Panel note the Meeting Notes of the Commissioner's Governance Board held on 11 August 2015.