

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, 2 February 2016.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Mr Gurvinder Sandher (Vice-Chairman), Cllr S Bannister (Substitute for Dr M R Eddy), Cllr P Clokie, Cllr J Cubitt, Cllr M Dearden, Cllr M Franklin, Cllr B Luker, Cllr K Pugh (Substitute for Mr A H T Bowles), Cllr K Morris, Cllr Sloan, Mr T L Shonk, Cllr P Todd, Cllr R Wells (Substitute for Cllr C Shippam), Cllr F Wilson, Mr R A Latchford, OBE, Cllr H Tejan, Cllr J Burden and Mrs E Bolton

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

155. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 17 November 2015
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2015 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

156. Draft Police and Crime Plan 2016/17
(Item B1)

1. The Commissioner introduced her third draft refreshed April 2013 – March 2017 Police and Crime Plan and Precept Proposal for 2016/17. There was an expectation set out within the plan of how the Force should work with partners to deliver the priorities. The plan had been kept under review with small changes made as appropriate throughout the year. Page 39, Appendix B, provided a summary of the main changes to the plan.
2. The Commissioner referred to Compass House, in Ashford, which opened in April 2015 and was a blueprint for delivering victim services. This year had seen the launch of a new multi-agency team to combat child sexual exploitation (CSE). This affected some of the most vulnerable people in society and there was a specific expectation to protect children in care and unaccompanied asylum seeking children. The Force remained committed to tackling cyber-crime, human trafficking and modern slavery. The Commissioner had signed up to an anti-trafficking network and there was also an emphasis on protecting the public from harm and preventing extremism and radicalisation.
3. A Member asked about the Prevent agenda, the Commissioner confirmed that she was keeping a close eye on the relevant boards to ensure partners continued to engage and work together.

4. A Member raised the issue of restorative justice, which was considered to help prevent crime. In response, the Commissioner confirmed that she would consider including this within section 4.3 – Prevent crime, anti-social behaviour and reduce repeat victimisation and offending, of the draft plan.
5. In response to a question about expectations on the Force to tackle the issues within the plan, the Commissioner explained that the Force were already tackling the issues, funding was being put into appropriate areas and the Commissioner was working with colleagues picking up good practice. Kent Initiatives were also being rolled out nationwide.
6. One Member raised his concern about organised crime and the effect of burglary etc. on victims. The Commissioner explained that in the past organised crime had primarily been the work of the Serious Crime Directorate, however there was now a duty on forces to cascade knowledge to the frontline and neighbourhood officers are aware and focussed on reducing organised crime within their neighbourhoods.
7. There was a discussion around the recent events in Dover. The Commissioner confirmed that the Chief Constable was responsible for the operational response, but Dover had proved to be a difficult policing operation. Kent Police had a duty to facilitate a peaceful protest and during the detailed planning process there had been no legal reason to ban the protest. The Commissioner praised the work of Dover District Council which had been fantastic, and said that there would be a detailed post review which would be made public. The Commissioner said that she had visited Dover and there had been universal condemnation amongst local people of the protesters' actions and universal support for the police and the council. Concerns were raised about the speed of the review and the Commissioner confirmed that the review would be done quickly and thoroughly.
8. A Member asked whether public order should be included within paragraph 4.5 - Protect the Public from Harm. The Commissioner explained that £2million had been earmarked for public order and there was currently nothing within the law that could have prevented the protest. The Commissioner said she would write to the Policing Minister to explain the dangers of allowing two events in the same location on the same day.
9. In response to a question about firearms capacity, the Commissioner explained that the Home Secretary expected forces to increase their firearms capacity by up to 50% so Kent Police would need an additional 37 officers. The proposed increase in precept would pay for 24 of the additional officers, but funding would still need to be found for training, equipment etc.
10. A Member asked what the Commissioner would like to see achieved from the plan before the election in May 2016. The Commissioner stated that she would like to see a reduction in crime and fewer victims of crime. Kent's crime had decreased by 3% whilst Hampshire's had increased by 26%. Violence against the person had increased in Kent by 8% but had increased in Hampshire by 70%. Domestic violence reporting had increased however secondary reporting had decreased. The Commissioner said that she would like more work on CSE and a focus on human trafficking and modern slavery.

- 11.A Member asked whether 'public space protection order' should be included within the plan, the Commissioner confirmed that she would consider it.

RESOLVED that the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel approve the Commissioner's Draft Refreshed Police and Crime Plan for 2016/17.

157. Precept Proposal (contained within item B1)
(Item B2)

1. The Commissioner introduced her proposed precept, it had been a very busy few months with a number of announcements and there was still some uncertainty, for example around the funding formula. Kent was a unique county with different policing pressures, there had been no increase in cash terms and would be no increase in the next 4 years. There was an assumption that every PCC would increase the council tax precept to the maximum allowed. Since Kent had the third lowest precept, there was an opportunity to increase the council tax by £5 per household (average).
2. The county had to be able to respond in an emergency, the additional money from the precept would pay for additional firearms capacity; this did not mean an armed police force but would give the Force the capacity to effectively respond.
3. The Commissioner explained that a consultation had been run with one question: "will your family pay £5 extra to increase public safety? Yes/No". In total, 895 online responses were received and the outcome was as follows: Yes: 53.2%, No: 46.8%. Together with face to face discussions with residents the majority agreed with the proposal to increase the council tax precept by £5.
4. Mr Nolan explained that the settlement from the Government was better than feared, particularly in light of the reduction in funding for local authorities. There was a savings gap of £33million over the next 4 years which was a 12% real cut on the net budget over the period which had to be managed. The reserves held were vital and meant that the Force did not have to borrow for investment. At 31 March 2016, total earmarked and non-earmarked reserves were expected to fall to £56.8million. There was an intention to release £44million over the four years to 2019/20 for major transformational investment in mobile and other innovations as well as ensuring proper facilities and equipment for the Force.
5. Some questions were raised about how the savings would be made without affecting the front line workforce. Mr Nolan explained that the £8.7million savings required for next year had already been identified and due to effective planning by the Chief Constable will not involve any impact on frontline policing. For the remaining three years, the Chief Constable's aim remains to limit the impact on frontline policing as far as possible, and only take savings from this area as a last resort.
6. The Panel considered that an increase to the council tax precept of £5 was reasonable, however a concern was raised about the future use of reserves and that the Home Secretary should be made aware of planned use.

7. The Commissioner confirmed that she frequently lobbied the Government over such issues, including recouping the money spent on operation Stack in previous months.
8. A Member asked whether there was any capacity to make savings from vacancy rates, although this was not considered good practice. There was a suggestion that the Force look at its fuel bill due to the recent decrease in fuel prices as well as a suggestion that the Force look at its assets with a view to selling where appropriate. Mr Nolan explained that there was a constant review of the Force's estate, with planning for future and targeted opportunities. The Commissioner praised the Kent Community Safety Partnership; it was invaluable for sharing best practice and ensuring close working between partners in Kent.
9. The Commissioner summed up this item by explaining that Kent had received a 'good' rating for financial management and an 'outstanding' rating for financial planning. Thanks were offered to Mr Nolan who had done an excellent job.
10. The Chairman offered his support for the £5 increase in council tax precept. He also considered that the Government were aware of the levels of reserves and advised caution against retaining high levels. Congratulations were offered on the financial ratings received by Kent Police.

RESOLVED that the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel approve the proposed precept for 2016.

158. Youth Engagement Work (Item C1)

1. The Commissioner had established a new forum called the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) and it had met twice; September 2015 and January 2016. The most recent meeting on 26 January had received a presentation on the Prevent strategy and how the police could help keep young people safe from the dangers of radicalisation. The Commissioner would encourage more young people to attend.
2. A Member asked about the diversity of membership; which areas of Kent were young people being attracted from? The Commissioner considered the YAG to be a good starting point but said consideration would be given to holding meetings in other areas of the county.
3. A suggestion was made that the Commissioner utilise groups that already attended the YAG due to their links with large numbers of young people. The future of the group relied on being able to get to 'hard to reach' groups, and there was a need to go to where young people already met.
4. A Member raised technology as a way of contacting young people, Skype and conference type facilities might be an efficient way of liaising with young people.
5. The Chairman confirmed that he would like to attend a future meeting of the YAG and there were benefits in using existing organisations to liaise with young people.

RESOLVED that the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel note the Commissioner's Progress Report on Youth Engagement.

159. HMIC Report on Vulnerable Persons - Commissioner's Comment (verbal report)
(Item C2)

1. The Commissioner gave a verbal update on the HMIC Vulnerable Persons report. The HMIC judgement had been 'requires improvement' and the Commissioner was unhappy to receive the report and surprised to receive the grading of 'requires improvement'. HMIC were due to return in the summer and the Commissioner was aiming for an 'excellent' rating. The Commissioner explained that this would be discussed at her Governance Board to be held the following day on 3 February.
2. The Chairman looked forward to seeing the result of HMIC's inspection in the summer.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the Commissioner's verbal update on the HMIC Vulnerable Persons report.

160. Commissioner's Decisions
(Item D1)

RESOLVED that the Panel note the Commissioner's Key Decisions for November and December 2015.

161. Panel Annual Report
(Item E1)

1. The Chairman proposed an amendment to paragraph 27 of the report which was approved by the Panel. The revised paragraph would read:

"The Panel was also critical of some of the PCC's public relations work in the first part of her term of office. Following the Commissioner's appearance in a Channel 4 documentary the Panel discussed her approach to public relations work and endorsed her decision to move away from a campaigning role, to undertake less 'big bang' publicity, to focus less on the Commissioner as an individual and to adopt a more corporate style on her website. The Panel also received an assurance that the Commissioner's engagement style with Police Officers and staff, Panel members and other partners would be modified. The Panel was pleased to note that the PCC has taken note of the Panel's views."

RESOLVED that subject to the above amendment the Panel approve its Annual Report which would be published on KCC's website and sent to each authority within the Police Force area.

POST MEETING NOTE: The Report was published and circulated on 8 February 2016.

162. Complaints against a Police and Crime Commissioner - Government proposed changes to the procedure
(Item E2)

1. Mr Campbell explained that the Government's consultation, on proposed changes to the procedure for complaints against Police and Crime Commissioners, sought to tidy up the existing regulations.
2. The Chairman explained that very few complaints had been received about the Commissioner and none had been upheld.

RESOLVED that the Panel approve the comments in the report as its response to the Government's consultation on the procedure for complaints against Police and Crime Commissioners.

163. Future work programme
(Item E3)

RESOLVED that the Panel note the future work programme.

164. Minutes of the Commissioner's Governance Board meeting held on 11 November
(Item F1)

RESOLVED that the Panel note the minutes of the Commissioner's Governance Board meeting held on 11 November 2015.