

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 on Wednesday, 25 April 2018.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Mr Gurvinder Sandher (Vice-Chairman), Cllr B Bradford, Mr N J D Chard, Cllr M Dearden, Cllr MJ Holloway, Cllr A Horton, Cllr J Iles, Cllr J Knight, Cllr B Luker, Cllr P Todd, Cllr R Wells, Cllr H Tejan, Cllr J Burden, Mrs E Bolton and Cllr R Hogarth (Substitute) (Substitute for Cllr P Fleming)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M Scott (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner), Mr A Harper (PCC's Chief of Staff) and Mr Robert Phillips (PCC's Chief Finance Officer)

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

261. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 8 February 2018

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

1. Members asked that an item on recruitment be brought to a future meeting of the Panel, earlier than in November as currently planned. The Commissioner agreed to update the Panel but pointed out that it would be necessary to ensure that enough information was available to make the updates valuable.
2. In response to a question the Commissioner confirmed that the judgement had been made on the case of Mr Bowler, although the Force had yet to receive the written judgment. There were elements found in Mr Bowler's favour and elements in favour of Kent Police, it was considered that lessons would be learned to ensure that no-one felt discriminated against in the work place. In answer to a Member's question the Commissioner advised that the response would be submitted to the Panel in due course.

262. 999 and 101 service update

(Item B1)

1. The Commissioner introduced his report and explained that although he had concerns about the service, particularly 101, he reassured Members that work was being done to improve the service. There had been a substantial increase in the number of 999 calls coming into Kent Police, which had a knock-on effect on the 101 service. The Commissioner confirmed that by definition 999 emergency calls were given priority over 101 non-emergency calls and there had been fluctuations in the number of 101 calls received. The calls were also more complex, time consuming and demanding. There had been no reduction in the

number of staff working in the Force Control Room, however there had been issues with vacancies; control room staff were often successful in securing other roles within the organisation. The service was also seeing an increasing number of mental health calls.

2. The Commissioner confirmed that he held the Chief Constable to account both at 1 to 1 meetings and his Performance and Delivery Board. Kent Police were also starting to see an increase in online reporting with 11% of crime reports being made online and 60% of road traffic collisions.
3. The Commissioner explained that with the support of the Panel, Kent Police were recruiting more people to work in the Force Control Room; not just filling vacancies, but an additional 40 members of staff specifically to answer phone calls and a further 20 in the Incident Management Unit.
4. A Panel Member asked whether consideration had been given to have a dedicated team to deal with 101 calls rather than within the general call system. The Commissioner explained that this, along with a number of other ideas to improve the process were currently being looked at by external consultants.
5. Members discussed the term 'abandoned' in relation to 999 calls (42,174 between April 17-March 18). 38% of 999 calls require an immediate response and 55% lead to an incident. The failsafe was if Kent Police were unable to answer a 999 call another force would answer. In response to a query about the term 'abandoned' Mr Harper confirmed that this was a national term which included accidental misdialling as well as a person phoning, saying help and hanging up; it was agreed that this term was not helpful.
6. In response to a question the Commissioner confirmed that he was satisfied with how people who repeatedly misuse the 999 system were being handled however he continued to hold the Chief Constable to account to improve the service. With regards to repeat callers by example, the Commissioner said research had found that 17 people who needed support with their mental health were responsible for 5000 incidents in one part of the county alone over a 4 month period; there was now a dedicated mental health team in place to work with these individuals and others to determine why they were calling Kent Police repeatedly and assisting them. He added that within the Force Control Room there was also the mental health triage service, provided by Mind mental health workers. The Commissioner offered apologies to residents who had experienced problems with the 999 or 101 service, and asked that people continue to provide Kent Police with information through 101, crimestoppers or country eye for example.
7. The Commissioner said he would provide statistics on the numbers of people using alternative channels, such as the text messaging service, to contact Kent Police. These additional channels were advertised through specialist charities and on the Kent Police website. He added that Victim Support offered similar services and funding had been provided to a charity which helps domestic violence victims who are deaf or experiencing hearing loss.
8. Members raised concerns about the differences between answering times within the report to the Panel and the Performance and Delivery Board minutes. The Commissioner acknowledged the comments and confirmed that he would try to

present information in a more consistent way in the future. In relation to abandoned calls the Commissioner considered it important to be aware of the context behind why calls were abandoned, he acknowledged that there needed to be an improvement in the way 101 calls were dealt with in the future. Mr Harper explained that abandoned calls included those where the phone was hung up or the line went dead, they put a significant demand on policing because they can fall into the most serious categories and Kent Police have to act on the call and decide the best course of action.

9. In response to a question about how call information was used the Commissioner explained that all calls to 999 or 101 relating to a crime were recorded and investigated either through telephone and desk top investigation or attendance at the scene. The Commissioner said all crimes in Kent were investigated for any leads and opportunities to secure a conviction. He urged Members to report to him any instances where residents had tried to report a crime and Kent Police advised they would not investigate.
10. In response to a question about artificial intelligence and its impact on processes in the future the Commissioner explained that Kent police was always looking at ways in which technology could be used to provide a better service, however human interaction was also very important.
11. A Member asked about morale amongst staff in the control room, how this was assessed and how this was monitored, the Commissioner confirmed that this was covered within his holding to account of the Chief Constable. He considered that whilst it was recognised that Kent police were supporting people better there were challenges that needed to be addressed. The Force Control Room were commended for the outstanding ways in which they responded to heavy snowfall earlier in the year. It was considered that Kent Police were in a better position but there was still work to be done.
12. In response to a question about sanctions the Commissioner confirmed that he didn't use targets but if the response to 999 and 101 calls did not improve he might have to consider them as a mechanism to drive delivery.
13. The Chairman thanked the Commissioner for his report, the subject of which was a matter of significant public interest. There was interest from the Panel in the use of technology, and particularly online reporting.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the Commissioner's report on 999 and 101 service.

263. Road traffic policing

(Item B2)

1. The Commissioner introduced this report, the subject of which was of great concern to the people of Kent. Roads policing was one of the priorities set for the Chief Constable.
2. A Member commented on Operation Stack and the special circumstances in Kent with 40% of all UK exports going through Dover. The Commissioner acknowledged the impact of Operation Stack and its effect on businesses in East Kent. There would be challenges from March 2019 when Britain leaves the EU

and the Commissioner had put forward representations to the Government that Kent needed to be considered as a special circumstance with additional money required for roads policing. Of the 200 additional officers being recruited in 2018/19, a number will be going to the Roads Policing Unit. Highways England were due to put forward their plans for lorry holding and there was a high level group within Kent Police, involving the Commissioner's Office, looking at issues, opportunities and partnership working to ensure the best outcome for Kent following the UK's departure from the EU.

3. Members had positive feedback regarding speedwatch, there was a better relationship with speedwatch practitioners and Kent Police than in the past. The Commissioner would feed this back to the relevant officers. In response to a question about whether speedwatch actually made people drive more slowly the Commissioner wondered whether running some pilots to capture additional information might be beneficial.
4. In response to a question about the additional police officers in the Road Policing Unit and what they would be focussing on the Commissioner explained that there would be 7 additional officers focussing on casualty reduction in partnership with Kent Fire and Rescue Service, as well as others. They would also be looking at ways in which enforcement and education could be used to reduce casualty numbers further.
5. The Chairman thanked the Commissioner for his report.
6. RESOLVED that the Panel note the Commissioner's report on road traffic policing.

264. Mental Health update *(Item B3)*

1. The Commissioner advised the Panel that substantial progress had been made during the last 6 months. He welcomed the investment by the Chief Constable to increase the size of the Mental Health Team, with a further increase as part of the additional officer uplift in 2018/19.
2. The Commissioner set out to Members the recipients of some of his funding, he had continued his commitment to the wellbeing centres in Tunbridge and Maidstone and would share more information with the panel at the next meeting in July.
3. The Commissioner had spent a week meeting teams within Kent Police to understand the challenges faced, nationally there was an independent review of the Mental Health Act and it was anticipated that this would raise issues for policing. The results of the interim review were due to be published in May and once the interim recommendations were available there would be a number of working groups before the full report was published later in 2018.

The Chairman thanked the Commissioner for his efforts in raising the profile of this subject, the Panel was grateful for his continuing updates.

RESOLVED that the Commissioner's mental health update be noted.

265. Development of Ashford Police Station - Record of Decision

(Item C1)

RESOLVED that the decision ref OPCC.D.018.18 – Development of Ashford Police Station be noted.

266. Permanent Appointment of Chief Executive - Record of Decision

(Item C2)

RESOLVED that the decision ref OPCC.D.019.18 – Permanent appointment of Chief Executive be noted.

267. Future work programme

(Item D1)

1. Members requested that a report on 999 and 101 be brought back to the Committee once the recruitment of staff was in place, this should include comment on morale and health and wellbeing issues.

RESOLVED that Members note the future work programme.

268. Panel SIG Update

(Item D2)

RESOLVED that Members note the Panel SIG update.

269. Questions to the Commissioner

(Item E1)

1. *Question 1: Can the Commissioner tell the Panel what steps he takes to ensure that the Chief Constable is managing the fitness requirements for officers in an effective way and whether he is satisfied that absence levels in the Force are being managed effectively (Cllr Dearden)*
2. The Commissioner explained that there was a national requirement that all police officers had to pass a fitness test and then continued to be assessed as part of their role. There was an annual process to ensure officers were fit for duty. Officers and special constables got support and assistance to ensure they could keep up with requirements and the Chief Constable led circuit training classes. The Force also offered an alternative test for those with a disability, if anyone was unable to pass the test a bespoke plan would be put in place to improve fitness, if fitness didn't improve the force would consider invoking unsatisfactory performance procedures.
3. Regarding absence, the Commissioner received updates at his Performance and Delivery Board, the average days' absence for officers had reduced slightly, but there had been a slight increase for police staff. There was also a self assessment tool 'feel well live well' 790 individuals took part in this.

4. *Question 2: Following the recent increase in incidents of knife crime in London, what action is the Commissioner taking to ensure that Kent police are well prepared to deal with any similar increase? (Cllr Hill)*
5. The Commissioner advised the Panel that knife crime and violent crime featured within the Police and Crime Plan for the Chief Constable to address. This remained amongst the top priorities of people in Kent. The Police were aware that when there was an issue in London there was a risk that it would impact on Kent. The Commissioner mentioned Operation Raptor, violence was often linked to other crime such as drugs for example. The Commissioner was responding proactively to the Government's new Serious Violence Strategy. A Violence Reduction Challenge had been set up to bring organisations together to come up with a local plan to deal with violence. The Commissioner was keen to involve people with direct experience and was determined that this would be a challenge, not just another strategy.
6. *Question 3: Swale Borough Council was informed on 19 March 2018 by the Office of the PCC that any previously agreed roll-over of unspent/unallocated funds from 2017/18 could no longer be rolled forward and had to be spent or returned by the end of the financial year. This unexpected news in the last two weeks of the financial year resulted in a number of difficulties ensuring that remaining funding was spent to meet both the PCC's and local priorities. This exacerbated frustrations experienced during the year resulting from in-year changes in the conditions of the grants, changes which may in part have resulted in the accumulation of underspent/unallocated funds resulting from delays in the commencement of a number of projects. Can the Commissioner please explain the sudden change in direction and advise Councils whether the principal of 'roll-over' remains an option in appropriate circumstances or whether going forward we should plan on the assumption that 'roll-over' is no longer an option? (Cllr Horton)*
7. The Commissioner explained that there had been a number of changes to the way in which funding was allocated. It was essential to ensure councils were held to account for how money was spent. Funding had been increased by 10% and the Commissioner considered that the Community Safety Partnerships should have had plans to spend their funding in year. The Commissioner wasn't aware, prior to seeing the question, that there was a problem with this council or any other.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the Commissioner's answers.

270. Minutes of the Commissioner's Performance and delivery Board meeting held on 7 March 2018
(Item F1)

RESOLVED that the Panel note the minutes of the Commissioner's Performance and Delivery Board meeting held on 7 March 2018.