

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 Thursday, 19 July 2018.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Mr Gurvinder Sandher (Vice-Chairman), Mr N J D Chard, Cllr M Dearden, Cllr F Gooch, Ms S Hamilton, Cllr MJ Holloway, OBE, Cllr P Todd, Cllr H Tejan and Mrs E Bolton

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 Mr J Cook (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

271. Election of Chairman

(Item 2)

1. Mr Cook (Clerk) invited nominations for Chair. Cllr Todd nominated Mike Hill; nomination seconded by Cllr Gooch. There were no other nominations.

RESOLVED that Mr Hill be elected Chair

272. Election of Vice-Chairman

(Item 3)

1. Nominations were invited for Vice-Chair. Mrs Bolton nominated Gurvinder Sandher; nomination seconded by Cllr Gooch. There were no other nominations.

RESOLVED that Gurvinder Sandher be elected Vice-Chair

273. Membership

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the membership changes be noted.

274. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 25 April 2018

(Item 7)

1. The Commissioner provided brief updates regarding questions asked at a previous Panel meeting;
 - Progress made regarding improving access and support in relation to people with a hearing impairment.
 - 101 progress – positive news despite call spike during the World Cup (which was normal and expected). Both call-waiting times and drop out numbers had reduced.

- Chief Constable had accepted the Tribunal findings in the PC Angus Bowler case and was looking into the grievance process.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 April were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chair.

275. PCC's Annual report 2017/18 (including financial information)
(Item B1)

1. As per the legal requirement to present an Annual report, which outlines the exercise of the Commissioner's functions in each financial year and the progress made in the financial year in meeting the police and crime objectives in the police and crime plan, the Commissioner presented the 2017/18 Annual Report to the Panel.
2. The Commissioner explained that, while the accounts had received an unqualified opinion, he had decided, in the interests of transparency, to report that a technical error in the Police financial systems had recorded small overpayments over a number of years. This had led to £1m in unspent funds being accumulated, which having now been identified had been added to the reserves. He also reassured that Panel that the technical glitch had been fixed.
3. The Commissioner drew the Panel's attention to several areas of progress. In particular, he drew attention to the introduction by the Chief Constable of the New Horizon policing model, in support of his Police and Crime plan, which he said had maintained focus on neighbourhood policing while also providing resources to specialist units, such as the missing children and exploitation unit, which had resulted in a significant reduction in officer time dealing with such cases. The Commissioner pointed out that, unlike in some other areas, he had been able to use the additional funding to increase the number of police officers and to maintain the number of PCSOs.
4. The Commissioner drew attention to the funding he had provided to support people with mental health issues in order to decrease demand on the police. He gave examples of where these projects were starting to produce positive results. The Commissioner also drew attention to the funding he had provided for restorative justice, which had doubled from the previous year. The Commissioner said that there was good evidence that restorative justice was helping to reduce re-offending.
5. The Commissioner said that there had been an increase in the number of cases of modern day slavery and child sexual exploitation and that the projection was that cases of these types would continue to increase in the future.

6. Finally the Commissioner drew attention to his continued support for volunteering and for the Community Safety Partnerships, where he had maintained funding levels from the previous year.
7. The Panel drew attention to the reducing level of reserves and asked whether 3% general reserve was considered adequate. The Commissioner explained that, while not a formal recommendation, 3% was considered by HMICFRS to be an adequate provision. Panel members then drew attention to the capital budget which had been significantly underspent. The Commissioner explained that this was due to several factors, including national projects that were progressing more slowly than planned and a degree of over-ambitious planning by the Force. The Commissioner said that closer monitoring was being introduced together with a more flexible approach which would enable other projects to be undertaken if those originally planned fell behind schedule. The Panel were pleased to note the unqualified opinion on the accounts and also the fact that the accounts had been closed very quickly after the end of the financial year.
8. The Panel asked the Commissioner how he held the Chief Constable to account in respect of deaths in custody and the Commissioner explained that he received data on the use of force generally at his Performance and Delivery Board and that when particular reports were received he met with the Chief Constable to discuss them.
9. The Panel commended the Commissioner on the survey he was conducting into cyber-bullying and sought an assurance that he would continue to invest in projects that helped to tackle an increasing problem. The Commissioner said that, once the survey results were known, he intended to develop ideas further in the light of those results.
10. The Panel asked about the level of interest in volunteer PCSOs and the Commissioner explained that, while there is interest, progress is quite slow, most likely because Kent police is recruiting to many other roles - regular officers, police staff, PCSOs and Special Constables - at the same time.
11. In conclusion the Panel commended the progress shown in the Annual Report and also commended the Force on its exceptional performance over a number of years, noting that it had been rated as good or outstanding in every category of HMICFRS PEEL assessment over several years.
12. The Commissioner thanked the Panel for their positive comments. He advised the Panel that he was very proud of the frontline work delivered by Kent Police and that the excellent PEEL assessments highlighted the quality of this work. The Commissioner highlighted to the Panel that the role of a Police Officer was a challenging and dangerous one which required special, dedicated people and he was proud to be associated with them.

RESOLVED that;

- a) The Annual Report be noted
- b) The Panel's required report be prepared by Officers, in line with comments made during the meeting.
- c) The PCC be asked to pass on the Panel's congratulations and thanks to Kent Police.

276. Update on PCC's expenditure to support the Police and Crime Plan

(Item C1)

1. The Commissioner introduced the report on expenditure. He advised the Panel that work had been done regarding the Police ICT company, explaining that this represented the potential for better value for money compared to historic ICT commissioning. The Commissioner also highlighted the positive work of the victim services being funded, noting the excellent support provided to vulnerable people in particular. This linked to the vulnerability conference which had been held in 2017 and subsequent training these services had provided at Kent Police.
2. Additionally, he drew the Panel's attention to the other funding provided via the Mental Health & Policing fund, which made £250k available for relevant projects. The Commissioner also advised the Panel that the £500k had been used to increase Community Safety Partnership funding by 10%, which he hoped would allow for better long-term planning to for Districts so they could build on the already excellent work being delivered around reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

RESOLVED that the update on expenditure be noted.

277. Mental Health - verbal update

(Item C2)

1. The Commissioner provided an update on Mental Health work in Policing. He drew the Panel's attention to the increase in s136 detentions, rising from 1089 to 1532 annually over the last three years.
2. The Commissioner advised the Panel that he wanted to see further progress being made in other agencies taking responsibility for managing mental health issues rather than defaulting to a police response, which he explained had a significant resource implication for the police and also was not in the best interests of those people suffering mental health crises.
3. He advised the Panel that the Mental Health Oversight and Policing Board was continuing to scrutinise Kent Police and the Kent & Medway Partnership Trust (KMPT). This supported a key part of the plan to improve joint working and understanding between relevant partners.
4. The Commissioner explained that the Street Triage Pilot scheme had concluded in June and that the model was being reviewed to take into account the findings of the Pilot before any long-term plans were finalised.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

278. Police officer recruitment - verbal update

(Item C3)

1. The Commissioner provided an update on the Police recruitment drive. He explained that 3181 Officers had been in post when he took office and over 3400 were planned to be post by 2019. He noted that the increase in total numbers was not significant but advised the Panel that this was better than other Forces. There had been 935 applications and 430 if these were in the pre-selection process. He explained that much of the police recruitment process was nationally mandated but highlighted that Kent had been managing a good turn around from application to training within three months.
2. He advised the Panel that the increase in Officer numbers was made possible by having strong finances in place and that this was evidenced by Kent Police successfully saving £20m while still maintaining or increasing key staff numbers.
3. In terms of overall timescale, the Commissioner explained the indications were good that the target of 200 additional Officers would be met. He drew the Panel's attention that the increase in overall total Officer numbers had to take into account of Officers leaving through resignation or retirement, so the actual recruitment figure required to achieve this would be closer to 400 new Officers joining the Force.
4. Responding to questions, the Commissioner explained that there had been a significant increase in applications from BME individuals and that there had been a slight increase in the number of female applicants compared to previous recruitment periods. The Commissioner also advised the Panel that due to the necessary, extensive training process involved in becoming a Police Officer, none of the recruits would be deployed to active service for some time. However, he explained that once ready for deployment, a large portion of the additional officers would go into visible policing roles and others would work in the high harm investigation teams.
5. Responding to questions, the Commissioner explained that Kent Police was also committed to ensuring retention and that this was evidenced through continued support for the Occupational Health department and Chief Constable impact assessments for when Officers are assaulted on duty. Additionally, the Commissioner advised that it should be recognised that Police Constables, were the main strength of the Force and would always make up 66 to 75% of the Police workforce and that meant that lateral career development and specialism opportunities were available to Constables as an alternative to promotion through the rank structure.

RESOLVED that the update on recruitment be noted.

279. Accountability - how the PCC holds the Chief Constable to account

(Item C4)

1. The Commissioner introduced the report into the various ways he holds the Chief Constable to account. He explained that the main method was the Performance and Delivery Board meetings which met in public. The Chief Constable was required to attend these meetings to provide information and answer questions

on strategic matters, emerging threats and local issues raised to the Commissioner by partner agencies or members of the public. The Commissioner explained that he also met with the Chief Constable every Monday to discuss pressing issues.

2. In terms of future development, the Commissioner explained that he intended to make the meetings more thematic so that they could better focus on particular issues on a rotating basis. While the Commissioner was reassured by the good PEEL inspection results, he was mindful that there were still areas of business to consider, review and make recommendations on. The Commissioner advised that Panel that he expected the PEEL assessments would be streamlined in future, which would reduce their impact on front line staff. He also commented on the monitoring of Police complaints which involved liaison between the Commissioner's Office and the Independent Office of Police Conduct.
3. Responding to questions regarding action taken to hold the Chief Constable to account in relation recent reports regarding the filing of cases despite there being a named offender, the Commissioner and his team explained that the most common reason for filing, making up half of the total listed in the report and large proportion of the remainder involved other evidential difficulties. This meant that there was strong justification for the filing of the cases in majority of incidents referenced in the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

280. Complaints against the PCC

(Item E1)

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that it be recognised that the number of complaints continue to be low.

281. Future work programme

(Item E2)

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

282. Questions from Panel Members

(Item F1)

Question 1: In light of the significant recruitment drive being undertaken by Kent Police, can the Commissioner tell the Panel about his vision for the next generation of Policing in Kent, which I hope will ensure a forward thinking and future-proofed service, and advise what steps he is taking to hold the Chief Constable to account for delivering this long-term goal alongside maintaining current core police business?

(Cllr Malcolm Dearden – Folkestone & Hythe District Council)

1. The Commissioner explained that he wanted to keep Police recruitment open to a wide range of people, with no plans to exclude non-graduates from the process. Likewise, the Commissioner confirmed that the Police needed to be more representative of the population it served.

2. In terms of future development of staff and the organisation, the Commissioner advised that there were some significant challenges being posed to Forces by the College of Policing plans.
3. Key points the Commissioner was focusing on including encouraging applications from all sections of the community, highlighting the continuing importance of neighbourhood policing and recognising the growing threat and resource implications of fraud and cyber-crime, which now made up half of all crime. These key commitments would be supported by work on further collaboration and joint work with partners and other services, more use of specialist volunteers.
4. The Commissioner reassured the Panel that he held the Chief Constable to account on these issues via the Performance and Delivery Board.

Question 2: Can the Commissioner reassure the Panel that, as part of holding the Chief Constable to account for delivering the 'Fight Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour' priority within the Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan, consideration is being given to the needs of town centres, with particular reference to issues related to street drinkers and rough sleepers (distinct from the homeless)?

(Cllr Michael J Holloway – Dover District Council)

1. The Commissioner advised the Panel that crime was taken seriously whenever it happened and that there was a commitment within the Plan to tackle urban crime appropriately. In terms of the specific issues raised, the Commissioner advised that these had not been raised to him previously as a significant concern and he believed it was an operational matter for local areas to manage.
2. The Commissioner explained that he was aware that there was good work taking place at a local level from an enforcement side but he was keen that all involved services worked to better understand the driving forces and seek to support preventative approaches and refer people to appropriate support services.
3. Responding to supplementary comments from the Member regarding street drinkers and rough sleepers contributing to an environment of crime, the Commissioner accepted that where criminality takes place the Police should take appropriate action but he believed it was more important to focus on the potential for support, treatment and preventative measures rather than enforcement.

RESOLVED that the Commissioner's answers be noted.