

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 Thursday, 21 November 2019.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Mr Gurvinder Sandher (Vice-Chairman), Cllr A Clark, Cllr F Gooch, Ms S Hamilton, Cllr Mrs J Hollingsbee, Cllr MJ Holloway, OBE, Cllr S Mochrie-Cox, Cllr R Palmer, Cllr M Rhodes, Cllr H Tejan, Cllr R Wells, Cllr G Hackwell, Mrs E Bolton, Cllr L Krause (Substitute) and Cllr L Dyball (Substitute)

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Cook (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

335. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 24 September 2019

(Item 4)

1. It was clarified that reports on the following would be considered by the Panel in due course:
 - Support Structures for additional Officer numbers / activity
 - Victim Satisfaction in terms of Hate Crime.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

336. Update on latest ONS Crime Statistics for Kent, published 17 October

(Item B1)

1. The Commissioner introduced the report, commenting that this was an important and complex item. He explained that the update was based on data published by the Office of National Statistics on a quarterly basis, noting that this focused on the national crime survey of England & Wales which was deemed the most accurate measure as it also took into account crimes not recorded by Police. The Commissioner commented that statistics was only one factor involved in how he holds Kent police to account.
2. The Commissioner explained that he was reassured by the Police response around these figures in that the Chief Constable was moving resources to tackle problem issues and rising crime figures in certain crime types, such as the increase in the town beat officer numbers to tackle ASB and the work now focusing on violence reduction.
3. In terms of crime outcomes, the Commissioner advised that there were some challenges and that the drop in the number of charges was a concern as the rate

was now half the national average. He commented that the number of people not supporting prosecutions had increased by three times the drop-in charges (9000 victims refused to support prosecutions). The Commissioner highlighted that a charge was not always the most appropriate outcome and so in many cases, a different approach would be correct and reasonable, but he confirmed that he would be monitoring issue with a particular focus to ensure that appropriate outcomes were achieved for serious offences. He also commented that the Crown Prosecution Service were the main agency involved in this stage of the criminal justice system and that there was need for greater support from them to improve charge rates and successful prosecutions. The Commissioner gave the Panel an assurance that while the update was disappointing in some areas, he was confident that real action was being taken to address the issues.

Meeting adjourned until 15:00 due to disruption caused by members of the public

4. Responding to questions from Members, the Commissioner clarified the following points:
 - There were 22 outcomes in the current criminal justice outcome framework, and these were publicly accessible.
 - There were a range of ways in which he held the Chief Constable to account, notably via the quarterly Performance and Delivery Board meetings and weekly briefings.
 - Victim and Witness care teams provided support to vulnerable people and others needed particular support to continue through the criminal justice system towards prosecution.
 - The positive role of CrimeStoppers was highlighted for those unwilling to support prosecutions.
 - PCC role as Chair of the Kent Criminal Justice Board involved reviewing how the various agencies involved in prosecutions worked together.
 - Stop & Search was an important tool for policing, both as a deterrent and as a means to locate and identify offenders – noted that an independent advisory group monitored the appropriateness and proportionality of Kent Police’s use of Stop & Search.
 - Increase in Town Centre Officers came out of a review of crime statistics and local demand that had been raised by the Commissioner as a concern to the Chief Constable, representing a good example of holding to account leading to positive outcomes.
 - The increase in Domestic Abuse (DA) incidents being recorded should be looked at positively as it was understood that this crime type was significantly under-reported but that continued increases in reported figures suggested a rise in confidence from victims rather than increases in actual incidents.
 - Pilot programme taking place in Medway dealing with DA perpetrators to improve understanding of the impact of DA and to reduce re-offending.
 - Local crime trends were monitored by the District Community Safety Units (CSUs) and regularly shared and discussed with partner agencies.

RESOLVED that the Commissioner be thanked for the update and that the report be noted.

337. Overview of Citizens in Policing, covering the full range of volunteers engaged in policing the county

(Item B2)

1. The Commissioner introduced the report, particularly thanking Neil Wickens (Head of Policy Coordination and Research – OPCC) for preparing the detailed paper. He explained that the report used the national term ‘citizens in policing’ to describe the broad collection of activities covered in the item. He also noted the work of Gavin McKinnon, Kent Special Constabulary Chief Officer and Director of Corporate Communications and Citizens in Policing, for leading on the portfolio.
2. The Commissioner gave an overview of the activities detailed in the thorough report, highlighting his admiration for all citizens who dedicated their time to make such important contributions.
3. Responding to questions, the Commissioner provided further information on the following points:
 - National Volunteer Cadet Programme states that 25% of cadets should be from deprived backgrounds – Kent’s programme was operating above the national target.
 - The Commissioner would engage with Kent Police to check on the geographic distribution of the Cadet waiting list around the county to check for concentration areas.
 - It was confirmed that Special Constables had the same powers as a Police Constable within their Force area.
4. Panel Members all welcomed the report and supported the plan of sharing it more widely.

RESOLVED that the Commissioner and his team be thanked for the detailed report, that the report be circulated to all Panel Members for sharing at a District / Borough level and that it be recorded that the panel wish to express their sincerest appreciation and thanks for the work undertaken by all volunteers under the banner ‘Citizens in Policing’.

338. Questions to the Commissioner

(Item)

Question 1:

I understand that the Commissioner has previously advised the Panel that the Chief Constable had arranged county-wide increases in Town Centre Beat Officer deployment, making use of the increased resources made available via the Commissioner’s increase to the Police Precept and the updated budget. I welcome the increase but to reassure concerned residents of areas getting fewer additional officers, can the Commissioner explain to the Panel if he has any specific plans or criteria for how he will hold the Chief Constable to account in terms of monitoring how well this initiative contributes to fighting crime and anti-social behaviour as well as providing visible neighbourhood policing (Police and Crime Plan Priorities – 2 and 4)?

(Ashley Clark – Canterbury City Council)

1. The Commissioner explained that he did not set targets for the Chief Constable but that he did hold him to account in a variety of ways to measure the impact of policing schemes and deployment issues. The Commissioner advised that the new Town Beat officers were deployed based on specific policing focused criteria, unrelated to the size of the town. The areas were ranked based on assessments such as violent offences, licensed premises and similar factors. He reassured the Panel that he always kept performance under constant review and that his Performance and Delivery Board would be the main process for such reviews.
2. The Commissioner acknowledged that some areas which were allocated limited or no extra resource may be disappointed but he reassured the Panel that all areas of the County would benefit from the general increase in Police Officer numbers in the Force as well as ongoing developments in new ways of working. He also confirmed that he would be discussing the Town Beat officer deployments with the Chief Constable in the future and that this would involve potentially reviewing the deployment criteria.

Question 2:

The Commissioner has regularly commented on the positive approach Kent Police has taken to maintaining a high establishment of PCSOs, particularly at a time when other Forces are cutting these posts. In view of this commitment to maintaining PCSO numbers and praising the work they do, can the Commissioner advise the Panel whether, as part of holding the Chief Constable to account for fighting crime and ASB and delivering visible neighbourhood policing (Policing priorities 2 and 4), has he considered the potential for encouraging the Chief Constable to increase the number of Policing Powers available to PCSOs (as per Police Reform Act 2002 and Police and Crime Act 2017) to allow them to undertake a broader range of activity?

(Richard Palmer – Swale Borough Council)

3. The Commissioner explained that he had given a commitment to retain PCSOs at current establishment levels, although since being elected the numbers had increased by around 28. He advised that the delegation of Powers to PCSOs was entirely an operational decision for the Chief Constable, but that he had asked him to review them previously, the result of which was the delegation of four additional powers dealing with begging, searching people for alcohol, removing those under the age of 16 to a residence and the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices for certain offences. The Commissioner commented that consideration had been given to increasing PCSO powers in relation to parking but that arrangements that had shifted responsibility for parking to local authorities made it very complex and potentially unnecessary.
4. The Commissioner highlighted that when the New Horizon Model (current Kent Police Model set in place by the current Chief Constable) was due for review, the process would involve the Commissioner asking the Chief Constable to review the appropriate delegation of powers to PCSOs. He noted, however, that he was keen for any review of PCSOs to consider their role more broadly rather than just focusing on their powers.

RESOLVED that the Commissioner's answers be noted.

339. Future work programme

(Item C1)

1. Opportunities for informal engagement regarding the Policing Precept and Budget were discussed. Panel Officers and OPCC Officers would liaise to further explore options.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.