

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, 6 February 2024.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Mr G Sandher (Vice-Chairman), Cllr M Blakemore, Cllr P Cole, Cllr D McDonald (Substitute for Cllr L Edwards), Cllr P Feacey, Cllr D Keers, Cllr S Mochrie-Cox, Cllr T Murray (Substitute for Cllr T Osbourne), Cllr R Palmer, Cllr L Parfitt-Reid, Cllr N Warne, Cllr R Wells, Mrs E Bolton, Cllr Mrs J Hollingsbee and Mr J Meade

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Scott (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner), Mr A Harper (PCC's Chief Executive), Mr R Phillips (PCC's Chief Finance Officer), Mr N Wickens (OPCC - Head of Policy & Research) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

110. Declarations of Interests by Members in Items on the Agenda for this Meeting *(Item 3)*

Mr Meade declared that he was Chairman of Gravesham Pastors Charity.
Mr Feacey declared that he was Chairman of Ashford Volunteer Centre.

111. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 17 October 2023 *(Item 4)*

In response to a question from the Chair the PCC confirmed that an update on the criminal justice system would be brought to the Panel at the next meeting planned for July 2024.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2023 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chair.

112. Draft refreshed 'Making Kent Safer' plan and 2024/25 precept proposal *(Item A1)*

1. The Panel received a report which detailed the Commissioner's refreshed 'Making Kent Safer' Police and Crime Plan and proposal to increase the policing precept in 2024/25 to £256.15 for an average Band D property, which represented an increase of £13 per year, or 5.34%, on the 2023/24 precept.
2. The Commissioner introduced his refreshed Police and Crime Plan and confirmed that his priorities within the plan had remained consistent. The top five issues identified by the Annual Policing Survey were already included within the plan and were:

- a. Serious violence, including gangs/weapon offences.
 - b. Sexual offences, including rape.
 - c. Child sexual exploitation.
 - d. Antisocial behaviour.
 - e. Burglary/robbery.
3. The most notable change was to the priority previously described as 'Combat organised crime and county lines' which had been changed to 'Combat organised crime, county lines and drugs' on the basis that illegal drugs were the root cause of much offending and therefore Kent Police should ensure it takes robust enforcement action to reduce harm in local communities. Other issues were becoming more prominent such as Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences, whilst there remained a clear desire for Kent Police to prioritise Violence against Women and Girls.
4. The Commissioner responded to Members comments and questions which included the following:
5. Further work should be undertaken on refining the survey to engage the voices of children and young people. The Commissioner explained that he had engaged with schools, youth groups, cadet forces to share messages and listen to the voices of young people.
6. Concerns were raised regarding the backlog within the Crown Prosecution Service and the effects of this on the confidence of the public in Kent Police. The Commissioner considered this did affect trust and confidence and also in the wider Criminal Justice System.
7. It was considered that the survey needed to show what was important for the residents of Kent and what made a difference to them. The Commissioner took the comments around the survey on board and would take this on board including responding to comments made within the service to provide a 'you said, we did' response.
8. In response to a question about survey responses from partner organisations some work would be done where possible to capture which organisations responses were coming from. The survey had been given out at street stalls and in supermarket foyers with an aim of reaching as many people as possible. Members were keen that the survey was representative of the residents of Kent and encouraged further efforts to increase responses from ethnic minority communities and young people.
9. In relation to the Commissioner's priorities and the links between mental health and crime the Commissioner explained that mental health had been one of his driving forces since beginning in his role. The relationship between the Police and Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust (KMPT) had improved, there was a shared understanding and the Commissioner commended the relevant teams for their work to improve this relationship.
10. Members discussed the national funding formula which had disadvantaged Kent against other authorities. The Commissioner was aware that a new formula

was awaiting consultation, and it was hoped that this would be brought forward as soon as possible to address historic underfunding in Kent.

11. The Commissioner summed up by confirming that further work would be done on refining the survey for the future to gain information on what was important for the public and what made a difference. Surveys would also be targeted at young people to ensure their views were represented. The Chairman suggested a question be added to the survey asking about satisfaction with Kent Police's response to the public.
12. Moving on to the proposed precept the Commissioner introduced his proposal, thanking Members for engaging in his precept setting process via briefings to inform the Panel's scrutiny of the proposal.
13. There were three key factors around the budget proposal; the economic case, the policing case and the external/public case.
14. The Commissioner proposed to increase the policing precept by the maximum allowable amount of £13 per year, or 5.34% for an average Band D property (equivalent to £1.08 per month, or 3.5 pence per day). The Commissioner considered that this increase was needed in order for the Chief Constable to maintain policing services in Kent. Kent Police had an increase in funding of £15.4million in 2024/2025 however there were cost pressures of £22.7million. Even with the proposed precept at £13, there was a gap of £7.3million. The majority of cost pressures resulted from Police Officer pay. Unachieved savings were being monitored closely; however, these had been offset by savings made elsewhere and would be carried forward.
15. In relation to the funding formula and how this disproportionately affected Kent the Chairman asked whether partners could be of help in lobbying the Government to ensure the funding formula review took place as soon as possible. The Commissioner welcomed this and following further comments from members it was agreed that a public letter would be sent asking the Chancellor and Home Secretary to fully fund Kent Police.
16. In response to a question about the impact on police staff roles, the Commissioner explained that this was difficult, and the Commissioner was having to make decisions he did not want to take.
17. The Commissioner confirmed that Safer Streets 5 projects were due to run until March 2025. In relation to Immediate Justice which was being launched in October 2024. The Commissioner had engaged with probation services and learning was being taken on board from the pilots and other organisations.
18. Regarding Value for Money, the Commissioner explained that profiles were produced on Police Forces by HMICFRS and exercises were also undertaken comparing costs between forces. The Commissioner considered that indicators of success included; recruitment and retention and outcomes for victims of crime. Retention was being monitored closely.
19. A Member asked about the introduction of the EU EES which was due to be brought in in October 2024 – would this create a pressure on Kent Police finances

in the costs of officers working overtime over this period – was there opportunity to recoup any of this money from central government? The Commissioner agreed that it was likely that increased police resources would be needed to police the roads on occasions when Operation Brock and Brock Zero were the contingency plans when there were problems on roads in East Kent. There was a multi-agency approach to these plans, and the impact on residents was not underestimated with regards to this national border issue. There was the opportunity to recoup costs via the Special Grant Programme in relation to national issues.

20. Cllr Mochrie-Cox proposed, and Cllr Palmer seconded that, as set out in paragraph 15, a public letter be sent to the Chancellor and Home Secretary requesting that Kent Police be fully funded. This motion was carried.

RESOLVED that the proposed refreshed Police and Crime Panel and Precept be approved, and a public letter be sent from the Panel Chairman to the Chancellor and Home Secretary requesting that Kent Police be fully funded.

POST MEETING NOTE: this letter was sent on 1 March 2024; a copy was sent to all Kent and Medway MPs and Leaders and is available here:

[Panel letter to Government – Police Funding](#)

113. HMICFRS PEEL 2023-25 – An inspection of Kent Police

(Item B1)

1. The Commissioner introduced this item which provided an overview of Kent Police's HMICFRS PEEL 2023-25 Inspection and outlined how the PCC would hold the Chief Constable to account. The Commissioner emphasised the importance of the HMICFRS reports to him in assisting him to hold the Chief Constable to account and provided independent assurance, or not, around the performance of Kent Police.
2. The Commissioner was pleased with the improvements made since the last report and it was positive that a couple of gradings had improved, however two categories remained in the requires improvement category. It was acknowledged that there were still areas for improvement, but the Commissioner considered that overall direction was positive.
3. The Commissioner wanted to record his thanks to Roy Wilsher, OBE QFSM HM Inspector of Constabulary and HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services and his team for their work on the inspection.
4. The Commissioner set out the key areas which required improvement, the majority of grading were good but areas such as 'storing best practice' needed to improve and it was considered that this was improving with the increased use of SharePoint. The Force Control Room grading was based on data from March 2023 and this was correct as of that time, 101 call attrition rate was 1.93% at the end of January 2024 and it was considered that this grading would move to at least adequate if the inspection were to be repeated today however it was

accepted that the grading was appropriate for its time. This continued to be monitored on a weekly basis with the Chief Constable or his Deputy.

5. In relation to investigating crime, this had improved however the category remained as requires improvement. The Commissioner had written to the HM Inspector of Constabulary with concerns that the measures used for grading this area were inconsistent.
6. The Chairman welcomed the report and the continued monitoring of the areas which were graded as requires improvement.

RESOLVED that the Police and Crime Panel note the report and agree to a further update at their October 2024 meeting.

114. Future work programme

(Item C1)

RESOLVED to note the future work programme.