

## 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, 14 October 2025.

PRESENT: Mr G Sandher (Chair), Mr J Moreland (Vice-Chair), Cllr M Blakemore, Mrs E Bolton, Cllr P Cole, Cllr P Feacey, Mr M Harrison, Mrs S Hudson, Cllr H Perkin and Mr P Webb

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M Scott (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner), Mr D Paul (PCC's Chief Executive ) and Mr N Wickens (Head of Policy Coordination & Research, OPCC).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Romagnuolo (Research Officer – Overview and Scrutiny).

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **31. Introduction/Webcast Announcement**

*(Item 1)*

#### **32. Apologies and Substitutes**

*(Item 2)*

1. Apologies were received from Cllr A Birch, Cllr D Croxton, Cllr D Keers, Cllr T Murray, Cllr C Nolan, Cllr E Peake, Cllr R Wells and Cllr L Wright.
2. There were no substitutions.
3. The Chair informed the Panel that this was Mrs Bolton's last meeting as an Independent Member of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel. He said that Mrs Bolton had been an Independent Member of the Panel for 8 years. The Chair expressed his gratitude to Mrs Bolton for her professionalism and invaluable contribution to the work of the Panel.

#### **33. Declarations of Interest by Members in Items on the Agenda for this Meeting**

*(Item 3)*

1. Cllr Feacey declared that he was Chairman of Ashford Volunteer Centre and Chairman of the Repton Connect Community Centre.

#### **34. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 16 July 2025**

*(Item 4)*

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2025 were an accurate record.

### **35. Kent Police and Crime Commissioner - Annual Report 2024-25**

*(Item B1)*

1. Mr Matthew Scott (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner) informed the Panel that his Chief Finance Officer, Mr Rob Phillips, was on paternity leave and wished him and his family well. Also, Mr Scott thanked Kent Police officers, PCSOs, staff and volunteers for their exceptional work throughout the year in order to keep Kent residents safe.
2. Mr Scott said that there had been a consistent reduction in many different types of recorded crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB). There were some areas where recorded crime saw an increase, such as shoplifting, although this was mainly the result of an increase in businesses coming forward to report theft.
3. Changes in legislation, such as on the sharing of indecent images, caused other crime types to increase too - particularly those involving sexual offences.
4. Tackling violence against women and girls remained a strategic priority for policing. Domestic abuse in parts of Kent accounted for between one-fifth and one-third of all the crime dealt with by Kent Police.
5. New powers around domestic violence meant that police officers had more tools to protect women and girls. In addition, new services had been commissioned for male victims of similar offences, as men were victims of domestic violence in between 27% to 33 % of cases.
6. County lines continued to reduce; the only reason for their increase at one stage was Kent Police's reinvigoration of the intelligence model which resulted in the identification of additional lines.
7. In October 2022, the average waiting time for a 101 call was 15 minutes and 50 seconds. Kent Police's Force Control Room was now one of the top performers in the country; the average time to answer a 101 call was 31 seconds.
8. In terms of holding the Police to account, Mr Scott said there were several mechanisms but one of the main changes introduced during his term of his Office was police complaint reviews, where he became the appellate body for members of the public who complained to Kent Police and were dissatisfied with the response from PSD.
9. In terms of holding other agencies to account, one of the main challenges was in relation to the wider criminal justice system. There were still challenges around insufficient physical court capacity and a national shortage of judges.
10. In local Magistrates Courts there was still a need for additional legal advisors. One consequence of arresting and charging more people was the additional workload into the system.
11. The Safer Streets Fund ended in 2024/25. It provided dedicated funding for hotspot policing and extra support for local communities, such as CCTV in

Folkestone, active bystander training in Sittingbourne and Sheerness Town Centres as well as Street Marshals, CCTV and youth programmes in Chatham.

12. In answer to a question about national and local initiatives aimed at tackling the backlog of court cases, Mr Scott said Kent was a priority for capital investment to increase local capacity.
13. A Member asked the Commissioner what he felt the greatest challenge was, and how he was going to address it.
  - a. The Commissioner replied that, in his view, it was Kent Police's investigative capability. The Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection identified this to be a weakness for the force across two successive inspections, and requiring a substantial amount of work to address it.
14. In reply to a question about Violence Against Women and Girls and any additional work to look at the causes of misogyny within schools, Mr Scott explained that the Child-Centred Policing Team was tasked predominantly with work around young people, and responded to the concerns of teachers, head teachers and parents within local schools around some of those behaviours.
15. In response to a question about what mechanisms were in place in the force to report racist, misogynistic and homophobic behaviour, the Commissioner said that an anonymous reporting mechanism was introduced allowing police officers and staff to report such incidents in confidence.

RESOLVED: To **review** and **comment** on the Annual Report.

### **36. Safer Streets Summer Initiative** (Item B2)

1. The Safer Streets Summer Initiative was a government initiative aimed at reducing crime and ASB in town centres across England and Wales. It ran from 30 June until 30 September 2025 and involved over 500 town centres and high streets.
2. The initiative included increased police patrols, local action to tackle high street crime and targeted enforcement powers against troublemakers. It was part of the government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, which aimed at tackling high street crime and restoring faith in the police by increasing the presence of police officers in every community. The Initiative was led by Police and Crime Commissioners, supported by the Home Office in partnership with Chief Constables and other essential local partners such as councils, schools, health services, business, transport and community organisations.
3. Fifteen Kent town centres were identified as priority areas based on extensive analytical work which ensured that the selected areas represented locations with the greatest need for targeted interventions. The areas were: Canterbury, Dover, Tunbridge Wells, Sittingbourne, Maidstone, Dartford, Ramsgate, Sheerness, Chatham, Margate, Gravesend, Rochester, Folkestone, Gillingham and Ashford.

4. The analysis also included temporal patterns to inform when and where resources should be deployed, ensuring that police and partner agencies could address the most pressing issues effectively. Public feedback through the 'My Community Voice' platform was also used to refine the priorities and support community confidence.
5. Kent Police placed significant operational resources on tackling Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) and ASB in town centre public spaces. For instance, in Maidstone, multiple stop searches were conducted and a male identified matching the description of an offender for a historic exposure offence. In Canterbury, three arrests were made for domestic abuse and public order offences, with one offender recalled to prison.
6. In terms of anti-social behaviour, for instance, a range of proactive measures were implemented across Thanet, including dispersal zones. In Broadstairs and Margate, 66 dispersal orders were issued. Officers conducted days of action, resulting in arrests, drug seizures, and community resolutions. Ramsgate saw increased patrols and 11 dispersals, alongside joint efforts with Thanet District Council to tackle street drinking and rough sleeping.
7. With regard to youth engagement and intervention, Kent Police implemented several multi-agency youth engagement initiatives across the county which focused on safeguarding, diversionary activities and proactive interventions to reduce ASB among young people.
8. In relation to community engagement, Neighbourhood Policing teams organised and participated in numerous community events involving local statutory and voluntary sector partners which were designed to build trust and confidence, and provide practical crime prevention advice and foster positive relationships between local officers and their communities.

RESOLVED: To **note** the report.

### **37. Questions to the Commissioner** (Item C1)

1. There has been significant community tension recently in the many places in Kent that have seen demonstrations and counter demonstrations regarding asylum seeker accommodation. Could the Commissioner please outline the impact of this on police resourcing and what plan is moving forward to ease tensions in our communities?

(Councillor Hannah Perkin, Swale Borough Council)

- a. In response to this question, Mr Scott said any locations that have or are associated with accommodation have response plans and patrolling strategies. It was part of the force's responsibilities to respond to lawful, peaceful, planned protests, and counter protests. Local District Commanders made sure that there were resources in place and liaised regularly with the managers of venues.

- b. There were local patrolling strategies in place for the prevention and mitigation of hate crime and Beat Officers had built effective relationships with the local community that enabled targeted and timely responses. Positive action was taken when crimes were reported and they were investigated in line with all crimes reported to police.
2. There is to be a roll out of a new digital case file system (DCF), starting in Wales in around mid-2026 then spreading nationwide, including in Kent.

Please can you confirm whether Kent Police or another authority is meeting the cost of training and implementing this new system? Is there an estimate on the likely financial cost of implementing this new system in Kent?

Further, my understanding is the Proportionate File Build currently being piloted in Kent will not be compatible with the new DCF. Please may you offer any comments in relation to this lack of compatibility?"

(Mr John Moreland, Kent County Council)

- a. The Commissioner advised the DCF programme would enable case file information to be entered 'right first time' on forces' key systems. It would be delivered by providing enhancements to force Records Management Systems (RMS – Athena in Kent) and the CPS case management system. He confirmed development of RMS functionality was being undertaken by a centrally funded national programme and RMS providers. Local implementation, including training, would be delivered and covered by forces.
  - b. The Proportionate File Build was being piloted in Kent. It was not directly related to the DCF, although both used the Athena system. The DCF development team were aware there may be compatibility issues and once the two pilots were complete, they would make any necessary changes.
3. We understand that there is a possibility the Crime Reduction Grant could be cut in 2026. Based on the issues Boroughs are facing with ASB and County Lines, why would such important funding be withdrawn, and how could you justify not opposing the potential withdrawal of this funding?

(Councillor Deborah Croxton, Gravesham Borough Council)

- a. The Commissioner said that national funding for several initiatives had been cut and that one of the key challenges of police funding being from year to year was that it was difficult for him to provide any funding guarantees. For instance, the previous year, victim support services funding was cut by 4.2 % at the last minute. No decisions had been confirmed with regards to third party funding for 2026 -27 because it was not known what funding would be allocated by the Home Office or the Ministry of Justice.

RESOLVED: To **note** the responses to the questions.

### **38. Complaints against the Commissioner - Annual Report 2024-25** (Item D1)

1. The Panel Clerk, Mr Gaetano Romagnuolo explained that the Police and Crime Panel received an annual report in relation to complaints made against the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).
2. Between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025, 14 complaints were received against the Commissioner for assessment against the regulations. 3 were received and not recorded either because they were not complaints against the Commissioner or they were queries about complaints that had already been addressed.
3. In the 11 cases where the complaint was recorded, the Regulations were disappplied on the grounds that they were “vexatious, oppressive, repetitious or an abuse of the complaints process” – these categories are defined in the Regulations. The reasons for disapplication and non-recording, were provided to and discussed with Panel officers at the time and officers are fully satisfied that the PCC’s Monitoring Officer made the correct decision in every case.
4. In this period the Complaints Sub-Committee was not convened to consider and resolve any complaints as no complaint was recorded and passed to the PCP for further action.
5. While the data showed an increase in the number of recorded complaints made against the Commissioner in 2024-25 when compared to last year and 2021-22, it was explained that it tended to fluctuate and that no complaint evidenced any misconduct on the part of the Commissioner.

RESOLVED: To **note** the contents of the report.

### **39. Work Programme**

*(Item D2)*

RESOLVED: To **note** the Work Programme and contact the Panel Officer with any items that the Panel would like to add to it.

### **40. Minutes of the Performance and Delivery Board Meeting held on 28 May 2025**

*(Item E1)*

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Performance and Delivery Board meeting held on 28 May 2025 **be noted**.