

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, 5 February 2026.

PRESENT: Mr G Sandher (Chair), Mr J Moreland (Vice-Chair), Cllr M Blakemore, Cllr P Cole, Ms Croxton, Ms H de Jong, Cllr P Feacey, Mrs S Hudson, Cllr S Jeffery, Cllr D Keers, Nolan, Mr P Webb and Cllr R Wells.

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

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

50. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

1. Apologies were received from Cllr A Birch, Mr M Harrison, Cllr T Murray, Cllr E Peake and Cllr H Perkin.
2. As this was the first public meeting for new Independent Member Mrs H de Jong, the Chairman welcomed Mrs de Jong to the Panel.

51. Declarations of Interests by Members in Items on the Agenda for this Meeting

(Item 3)

1. Councillor Feacey confirmed that he was the Chairman of the Ashford Volunteer Centre and Trustee and Chairman of the Repton Connect Community Centre.

52. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 16 December 2025

(Item 4)

RESOLVED Members agreed that the minutes of the meeting which took place on the 16 December 2025 were an accurate record and a paper copy be signed by the Chairman.

53. Draft Refreshed Police & Crime Plan and Precept Proposal 2026-27

(Item B1)

1. The report was presented by the Police Crime and Commissioner, Mr Matthew Scott.

2. Mr Scott said that the Plan was less than a year old and that there were no significant changes in the refreshed version. He discussed the data from his Annual Policing Survey which indicated that over 90% of respondents supported each of the four pillars of the Plan. A substantial number of the respondents were also in the under 18 category as a significant amount of work had been put into liaising with local schools who now shared the survey with pupils.
3. The Rural Policing Team had also conducted their Rural Crime Survey and received over 800 responses. The survey showed that issues around antisocial behaviour were particularly important to rural communities; the key issues reported were fly tipping, nuisance vehicles and property theft.
4. Mr Scott said a further 65 officers had been deployed within Neighbourhood Policing in 2025-26 in order to improve visible policing within Kent's town centres.
5. There was a slight reduction in the number of people who had experienced antisocial behaviour, although there was still a significant number who were not willing to report it.
6. He explained that his Plan remained focused on delivering his manifesto commitments to cut crime, support victims and build trust. The priorities centred around four key areas:
 - Protecting People
 - Protecting Places
 - Protecting Property
 - Productive Partnerships.
7. As outlined in his Plan, 'Protecting People' centred on tackling violence against women and girls, serious violence and gangs, providing support to victims of crime and building trust through integrity.
8. 'Protecting Places' focused on making communities safer - including town centres and rural communities, and promoting public contact with the police.
9. 'Protecting Property' acknowledged that retail crime and burglary remained key issues, although the number of burglaries in the county had decreased substantially over the last few years.
10. In terms of 'Productive Partnerships', the Criminal Justice Board, which the Commissioner chaired, would focus on reducing the courts' backlog and improving victims' experience of the Criminal Justice System.

11. In response to a question, Mr Scott explained that he promoted regular campaigns to encourage people to report crime. His Retail Crime Board engaged directly with retailers and the police in order to afford retailers an opportunity to provide feedback on policing in the county and discuss opportunities for collaborative working.
12. There were also campaigns around reporting via 101, the non-emergency police contact number in the UK, used to report crimes or issues that did not require an immediate police response. Kent Police now had one of the top performing force control rooms in the country because of the investment and effort that had gone into it.
13. In reply to a question about the funding formula, the Commissioner said that there was finally going to be a review which was planned to take place after the proposed creation of a new National Police Service and merger of police forces.
14. With regard to the Policing Precept proposal for 2026-27, Mr Scott said that the Government had not yet finalised the detail of all relevant funding streams and that some of the detail was still not clear. Nonetheless, he was confident in the accuracy of the figures that had been provided to the Panel.
15. The Commissioner said he was proposing an increase in the precept of £15 a year, or 5.6% for a Band D property alongside a savings requirement of £2.9m. This was the maximum precept allowed under the referendum principles.
16. In response to a question about the increase, Mr Scott explained that his decision had not been taken lightly. While he was determined to make policing in Kent more efficient and effective, the increase was essential in order to mitigate the Force's increasing funding pressures. While the Core Police Grant from the Government had increased, 80% of the budget was expenditure on employees and it did not include any funding for pay awards. Overall budget pressures in 2026-27 amounted to £30m.
17. A Member asked about the annual pay increase in the budgeted figures.
 - a. Mr Scott explained that police officers receive an increment every year for the first seven years of their service. As many Kent police officers had less than five years' service, that represented a substantial budget pressure that had to be factored into the medium-term plan, hence some of the bigger challenges around savings. On promotion there was a three year increment programme as well which needed to be taken into account.

RESOLVED:

- That the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel support the refreshed version of the Commissioner's Cut Crime, Support Victims, Build Trust: Kent Police and Crime Plan 2025 – 2029.
- No member of the Panel voted to veto the Commissioner's proposal to increase the police precept for 2026-27 by £15 per year, or 5.6% for a Band D property, equivalent to £1.25 a month, or 4.1p per day.
- That the Panel Officer draft a report for the Chair's approval that will be sent to the PCC.

54. Questions to the Commissioner

(Item C1)

1. *The Home Secretary has promised faster response times by setting new targets for 999 calls, together with greater accountability. Can Kent Police meet, or continue to meet, these and other targets without increased funding?*

Cllr Mike Blakemore, Folkestone and Hythe District Council

- a. In response to this question the Commissioner said that the targets which the Home Secretary had advised she was going to bring in would be 15 minutes for an immediate incident in an urban area and 20 minutes in a rural area.
 - b. Mr Scott provided assurance that Kent was under the 20 minutes across both urban and rural areas at the moment, although there was still room for improvement and the force was looking at how it could respond even quicker.
2. *We have been advised that the additional income from raising the precept would be used primarily to meet the running costs of the force, rather than being linked to specific arising local needs or improvements. Given this, how does the PCC justify proposing the maximum allowable precept increase, and what assurance can be provided that future budgets will be planned in a way that enables the force to be run sustainably without regularly requiring additional contributions from the community?*

Mrs Heddie de Jong, Independent Member

- a. In reply to this question, Mr Scott said that one of the key challenges around police funding since he had been in his post as Commissioner was that there had been an increasing expectation that the gap in national funding would be filled by local taxation. There were cost pressures in the region of £30 million which meant losing police officers and staff if the funding gap was not addressed.

- b. He said that he had been lobbying central government to change the way policing was funded because he believed that the shift in burden from central to local level was neither fair nor right.

RESOLVED: to note the responses to the questions.

55. Work Programme

(Item D1)

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

END