

## KENT AND MEDWAY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel held Online on Tuesday, 8 September 2020.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Mr Gurvinder Sandher (Vice-Chairman), Mr N J Collor, Cllr L Dyball (Substitute for Cllr P Fleming), Cllr P Feacey, Cllr F Gooch, Ms S Hamilton, Cllr Mrs J Hollingsbee, Cllr S Mochrie-Cox, Cllr R Palmer, Cllr M Rhodes, Cllr H Tejan, Cllr R Wells, Cllr G Hackwell, Mrs E Bolton and Cllr J Burden

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), Mr M Dentten (Democratic Services Officer) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **348. Virtual Meeting protocols**

*(Item 2)*

1. The Clerk provided a verbal overview of the Protocol, highlighting legislation, etiquette, motions, amendments and voting as key areas.
2. The Panel agreed to, as far as possible, accommodate the needs and technological capacity of all Panel members.

RESOLVED that the Panel agreed to adopt the Virtual Meeting Protocols.

#### **349. Apologies and Substitutes**

*(Item 3)*

1. Apologies were received from Cllr Clark, Cllr Fleming and Cllr Game. Cllr Dyball substituted for Cllr Fleming.

#### **350. Declarations of Interests by Members in Items on the Agenda for this Meeting**

*(Item 4)*

1. Independent Members Mrs Bolton and Mr Sandher declared interests in relation to Item D1 and agreed to leave the meeting for the duration of the Item.

#### **351. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 6 February 2020**

*(Item 5)*

1. Mrs Bolton asked the Commissioner to update the Panel on his progress in improving victim satisfaction, following the Panel's previous concerns. The Commissioner confirmed that he had raised this issue with the Chief Constable and

expected improvements with the creation of a Crime Academy later this year which would improve case file quality. It was also confirmed that backlogs relating to Investigation Management Units had been cleared. He further emphasised that a focus on improving rural victim satisfaction and community engagement was a current priority.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2020 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chair.

### **352. PCC Annual Report 2019/20**

*(Item B1)*

1. The Commissioner began the summary of his report by paying tribute to the Panel for its rigorous scrutiny, his Office for producing the report as well as Police Officers, staff and volunteers for the physical sacrifices they had made in the last year.
2. He noted that the report reflected two stark periods, both before and during the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Commissioner confirmed that from January 2020 the Chief Constable and he had focused on multi-agency liaison in the event of a possible pandemic.
3. The Commissioner confirmed that Officer recruitment had remained a priority during the 2019/20 financial year, with Officer numbers surpassing 2010 levels by the conclusion of the year, he noted further that the recruitment of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) had also continued.
4. In outlining the changes in crime levels in Kent, the Commissioner highlighted the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) crime data integrity audit as an important event nationally, with many areas witnessing increases in crime levels, he stated however that Kent had experienced a 5% fall in crime during 2019/20.
5. The Commissioner explained to the Panel that he had commissioned a range of new projects, focusing on violence reduction he commended the work of the many charities which had delivered these projects and had engaged school children across the county in the process. In addition to this he outlined the new work undertaken to support Kent's youth citing the Medway Task Force as an effective multi-agency service.
6. The Commissioner paid his respects to the families who had lost loved ones as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, those in recovery, the work of Kent Police Officers and staff and the overall cooperation of the people of Kent during the Covid-19 Lockdown.
7. Members asked a range of questions in relation to the Police and Crime Commissioner's Annual Report. Key issues raised by the Panel and responded to by the Commissioner included the following:
  - How had Kent Police acted on reports of anti-social behaviour to strengthen public trust concerning reporting low-level crime. The Commissioner confirmed that

the creation of Task Forces in Margate, Medway and Maidstone had made multi-agency responses to anti-social behaviour more efficient and effective. He further highlighted the important work of newly created crime prevention PCSOs who worked with communities to improve anti-social behaviour prevention services.

- How had increased Officer and PCSO numbers translated into better service delivery, especially for those from vulnerable backgrounds. The Commissioner identified the newly formed vulnerability investigation team, which supported victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence as well as the strengthened Fraud and economic crime team and mental health team, as three examples of services made possible through increased Officer numbers.
- What had the greatest challenges been in holding Kent Police to account during the pandemic? The Commissioner stated that the greatest difficulty in holding the force to account had been balancing priorities and resources, tackling rural crime had been a key issue though the rural crime team had been bolstered to respond to this challenge.
- How could perceptions that anti-social behaviour was not a serious crime be changed? The Commissioner reassured the panel that anti-social behaviour would be taken more seriously with the increase in Officer and PCSO numbers in the community, stating that anti-social behaviour often escalated to become violent crime, as such improved Officer numbers and multi-agency Task Forces would stifle escalations.
- Following the success of multi-agency efforts in tackling anti-social behaviour could the Commissioner confirm that he would continue to invest in nights of actions and other similar projects? The Commissioner confirmed that he currently had no intent to end the partnership work currently undertaken to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Had 101 response times continued to fall? The Commissioner confirmed that withstanding spikes around Christmas and parts of summer 101 response times had remained below 90 seconds.
- Would the Commissioner work with the criminal justice system to lobby for Police and Crime Commissioners to have greater criminal justice powers? The Commissioner informed the Panel that he had argued that Commissioners should have greater powers in relation to probation and rehabilitation, confirming that the Home Office had begun reviewing Police and Crime Commissioner powers. He invited the Panel's involvement in the process and emphasised their importance should further powers be granted.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

### **353. COVID-19 Emergency Funding** (Item B2)

1. The Commissioner introduced the report on Kent Police's Covid-19 Extraordinary Funding, he confirmed that the Ministry of Justice had made additional

funds available for the support of victims and survivors of domestic abuse during the pandemic. He added that he ensured that Kent's funding had been used to support ongoing projects, charities and work with new partners.

2. The Commissioner highlighted an example of positive feedback from a user of a Children's Domestic Abuse Counselling Service which had been commissioned with the extraordinary Ministry of Justice funding.

3. Members asked the Commissioner to what extent Covid-19 had had a negative impact on Kent Police's finances. The Commissioner confirmed that he anticipated a £6m loss in income due to the predicted loss in Council Tax revenue. Though he noted Kent Police's financial resilience to this issue, when compared with other public institutions in Kent, as the majority of Kent Police's funding had been received directly from Central Government. Regarding Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) he reassured the Panel that all costs to Kent Police had been reimbursed by the Department of Health and Social Care.

4. The Commissioner thanked many Kent businesses for their support in supplying Kent Police during the pandemic.

5. Members asked the Commissioner how he thought the pandemic would impact rates of domestic abuse in the long-term. The Commissioner confirmed that Kent Police had seen normal levels of demand relating to domestic abuse during the pandemic, with 5-6% spikes, he then stated that reports of child sexual exploitation and domestic abuse may increase once individuals are able to talk to professionals, following a further easing of social restrictions.

6. The Commissioner was asked by Members how he had monitored the effectiveness of the grant funded services. He confirmed that all services are subject to existing monitoring protocol which include regular reporting requirements, information is also fed back to the Ministry of Justice. The Commissioner also assured the Panel that there had not been any issues with the quality of the grant supported services to date.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

### **354. Mental Health - Verbal Update**

*(Item B3)*

1. The Commissioner provided a verbal update indicating that as a result of Lockdown the overall demand on Kent Police in relation to mental health had decreased, citing the reduction in Section 136 Mental Health Act detentions as a key indicator of the trend, overall Section 136 detentions had increased in recent years until the end of the 2019/20 financial year. He noted further that the decrease in incidents and detentions was likely the result of less third-party reports from the public environment rather than a decrease in Mental Health issues.

2. Regarding future trends, the Commissioner stated that restrictions to public life remained and will likely continue the trend of an overall decrease in the number of Section 136 incidents and detentions.

3. The Commissioner highlighted additional services which had supported public mental health in Kent and Medway, commending the multi-agency support he cited the four new NHS England funded 'Safe Havens', Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust's extended 7 day a week Mental Health Service and Kent and Medway's 24/7 help lines.

4. He confirmed that his Office had working with the Department of Health and Social Care on ways to integrate volunteer responders into Kent Police's mental health support.

5. The Commissioner affirmed that he had met with the NSPCC, Department of Health and Social Care, Home Office and NHS England to discuss rejuvenating the Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat nationally. He also asserted that he participated on 25 June 2020 in a virtual panel meeting involving the Chair of the Medway Youth Council, South Kent Mind and Dads Unlimited which is publicly available via the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner's YouTube Channel.

6. The Chair asked the Commissioner whether any information relating to the effectiveness of the Safe Havens in reducing the demand on Kent Police existed. The Commissioner confirmed that no information currently existed due to the service's age, though endeavoured to update the Panel following his receipt of this information.

RESOLVED that the content of the update be noted.

### **355. Officer Recruitment - verbal update**

*(Item B4)*

1. The Commissioner began by thanking the Panel for its continued support of Kent Police's recruitment initiatives, confirming that:

- The recruitment of Officers had continued, with shortlisting, briefings and interviews being conducted virtually.
- Kent Police were an early adopter of the College of Policing's Online Assessment Centre.
- Q&A sessions as well as School, University and Military recruitment days had taken place online.
- Social media engagement with recruitment materials had remained strong.

2. The Commissioner confirmed that Officer recruitment will meet the Home Office's requested uplift by October 2020, this will be ahead of the 31 March 2021 deadline. He continued by highlighting that the ratio of Officers joining Kent Police from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background had increased as had the number of women, both as new recruits and through the Detective Investigate First Scheme. He confirmed that there are three further Officer intakes planned in 2020/21, October, January, March, though budgetary restrictions will prevent recruitment at full capacity.

3. Members asked a range of questions in relation to Officer Recruitment. Key issues raised by the Panel and responded to by the Commissioner included the following:

- How the Commissioner is holding the Chief Constable to account regarding the support of Black communities and the recruitment of Officers from within these communities? The Commissioner affirmed that recent successful engagement had come from the involvement of the Positive Action Team in collaboration with Recruitment Officers, though maintained that more will be done to address what was a national problem and that the Chief Constable will be held to account through Performance and Delivery Boards.
- The current levels of Officer retention and turnover. The Commissioner confirmed that in the 2019/20 financial year 5% of recruits left Kent Police. Stating further that Officer sickness rates during Lockdown were between 2 and 3%, far lower than the anticipated level of 10%, equally retention was strong as many Officers delayed retirement during the same period.
- The primary reasons Officers leave Kent Police. The Commissioner asserted that retirement remained the greatest factor in Officers leaving Kent Police, finances, working hours and medical retirements were common but lesser factors in Officer retention.

RESOLVED that the content of the update be noted.

### **356. Independent Co-optee arrangements**

*(Item D1)*

*Mrs Bolton and Mr Sandher left the meeting for the duration of this Item.*

1. The Chair introduced the Item outlining the intention to reappoint Mrs Bolton and Mr Sandher as Independent Co-optee Members of the Panel for a further year, to reflect the Commissioner's term, following the extension of the Police and Crime Commissioner's term for a single year as a result of the Coronavirus Act 2020 as enacted on 25 March 2020.

2. Members requested clarification on whether the extension would affect future Independent Member term lengths following the Police and Crime Commissioner's election. The Clerk confirmed that pending confirmation on the regulation of the Police and Crime Commissioner election cycle, it will be the intension that Independent Member terms align with the Police and Crime Commissioner's term.

RESOLVED that the Panel agreed:

- To extend the term of appointment of the current Independent Members until November 2021, noting that prior to this date an open application process, will be held;
- amend the Panel's Terms of Reference accordingly as set out above; and
- delegate to Panel Officers, in consultation with the Panel Chair, authority to make decisions and take other actions as necessary to facilitate the required recruitment process in 2020 and on occasions as may arise; including but not limited to, the development of recruitment packs, eligibility criteria and the establishment of the necessary appointments sub-committee.
- To consider the future term length of Independent Members following confirmation of the regulation of Police and Crime Commissioner electoral terms.

### **357. Future work programme**

*(Item D2)*

*Mrs Bolton and Mr Sandher returned to the meeting.*

1. The Panel agreed that the Commissioner provide a report concerning Kent Police's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and their involvement with the Kent Resilience Forum to the 8 December 2020 Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel meeting.

2. The Clerk notified the Panel that the work programme for the February meeting of the Panel contains the statutory requirements relating to the Safer in Kent Plan, Budget proposal and Annual Panel Report.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

### **358. Questions to the Commissioner**

*(Item )*

Question 1:

*Can the Commissioner please advise the Panel whether, as part of holding to the Chief Constable to Account for delivering the 'fight crime and anti-social behaviour' Policing Priority, he is satisfied that Kent Police have put appropriate systems in place to make best use of CCTV and other video evidence provided by third parties (including Local Authority CCTV) to support investigations and prosecutions?*

*(Richard Palmer – Swale Borough Council)*

1. The Commissioner stated that Kent Police did not have sufficient systems in place to make the best use of CCTV and third-party video evidence, though confirmed that Kent Police in collaboration with the other forces of the Seven Force Strategic Collaboration Programme are procuring a CCTV and personal video sharing system, to be used by members of the public to share footage with Kent Police, the pilot for this project will run until March 2021.

Question 2:

*How is the PCC actively working with Mental Health and Domestic Abuse agencies in preparation for the expected increase in MH/DA referrals especially in children and young people when they return to school and will you make some funds available for CSPs should there be a noticeable rise in the area?*

*(Jenny Hollingsbee – Folkestone and Hythe District Council)*

1. The Commissioner confirmed that Kent Police have been cooperating with a range of sexual violence and domestic abuse charities throughout Lockdown as set out in his report on Covid-19 Emergency Funding, confirming that he will lobby the Ministry of Justice to extend funding for these services beyond 31 October 2020. Regarding mental health the Commissioner cited Safe Havens as a key resource in tackling future increases in mental health service demand. He further cited Operation Encompass as an important engagement platform for children, with its campaigns to raise awareness and provide advice to schools regarding domestic abuse.

Question 3:

*The ASB statistics reported by Kent Police show a rise however it is clear that some of this has been Covid-19 related. Will the PCC commit to looking at the data and categories of recording to ensure that not only are all data accurate but they also meet the test for both quality and qualitative as well as quantity and quantitative?  
(Shane Mochrie-Cox – Gravesham Borough Council)*

1. The Commissioner confirmed that there are national crime recording standards which rate the consistency in the recording of crime data, the national standard for incident recording sets out when an incident should be recorded by the Police. During Covid-19 additional guidance had been provided by the Home Office to ensure that anti-social behaviour incidents were recorded correctly, forces were required to return data on a weekly basis. Further to this the Commissioner confirmed that 9% of anti-social behaviour had been tagged as Covid-19 related in March 2020, with rates reaching 55% in April, 48% in May, 16% in June and 6% in July.