

KENT AND MEDWAY POLICE & CRIME PANEL

By: Joel Cook & Anna Taylor – Panel Officers
To: Kent and Medway Police & Crime Panel
Subject: Draft Panel Annual Report – 2020/21
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

Preparation and publication of an Annual Report by the Panel is a legal requirement under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The Panel is asked to consider and approve the below content for the 2020/21 Panel Annual Report.

Draft Annual Report

Introduction

1. This report summarises the work of the Panel between February 2020 and February 2021. It follows annual reports that have been produced every year since the Panel was established in November 2012.

Meetings

2. During this period (2020) the Panel met formally 3 times – 6 February, 8 September and 8 December. The Panel also received a COVID-focused briefing from the Commissioner during the summer prior to the restarting of formal committee meetings under the remote meetings regulations. In addition to this, the Chair communicated with the Commissioner to assist and support the smooth running of Panel business.

Panel business

3. The Panel met its statutory duty in February to consider and make recommendations on the Commissioner's refreshed draft "Safer in Kent: The Community Safety and Justice Plan 2017-21", as well as his proposed budget and precept. The Panel supported the Plan.
4. The Panel unanimously approved the Commissioner's proposed maximum permitted precept increase of £10 for the year for an average Band D, which

equated to a 5.18% precept increase. The Panel noted that this would keep Kent as 7th lowest precept Force in England & Wales.

5. The Panel met its statutory duty to consider the Commissioner's Annual Report for 2019/2020, which it considered at its meeting on 8 September 2020.
6. The Commissioner has continued to place a strong emphasis on mental health, in relation to policing, in his plan and the Panel received updates on his work in this area at every meeting.
7. The Panel received reports on the following issues between February 2020 and February 2021:
 - a. The Commissioner's Annual Report 2019/20 – the report identified the operating dichotomy before and during the pandemic, the increase in Officer numbers, confirmed a fall in crime during 2019/20 and outlined the projects and services commissioned during the period. Discussions focused on crime reporting, Officer impact and multi-agency efforts.
 - b. Covid-19 Emergency Funding – this updated the Panel on Central Government grant funding, financial resilience and gave assurances that Kent Police had received adequate PPE stock throughout the pandemic.
 - c. Police response to Covid-19 – this addressed the impact on staff, increased rates of Anti-Social Behaviour, changes in control room demand and the adoption of the 4 Es (Engage, Explain, Encourage, Enforce) policing approach.
 - d. Police Officer Recruitment – this allowed discussion on the continuation of Officer recruitment, the change in recruit age demographics and the use of virtual training and recruitment events.
 - e. Mental Health Update – verbal updates outlined the reduction in Section 136 detentions, increased engagement with youth organisations and led to discussions on the impact of Safe Havens in providing multi-agency Mental Health support whilst reducing the demand on Police services.
 - f. Victim Satisfaction – this confirmed an increase in victim satisfaction over the past year, addressed the impact of a new Witness Care Unit and Domestic Abuse support teams and led to dialogue on strengthening engagement, recognising the impact of prosecution on satisfaction and the introduction of new victim and witness codes.

8. "Questions to the Commissioner" continued as a regular item at each meeting. The Panel welcomed the Commissioner's willingness to answer questions, of which he had been given prior notice. This agenda item continues to provide a greater opportunity for Panel members to raise issues with the Commissioner that do not form part of his formal reports. Question topics included issues such as multi-agency Mental Health and Domestic Abuse support services, qualitative data use in crime recording, third party CCTV use in combating crime and providing evidence, the lessons learnt by Kent Police during the pandemic, increasing support for victims of Hate Crimes and encouraging a review of PCC criminal justice powers.

Complaints

9. The Panel, via its Officers, maintained oversight over formal complaints made against the Commissioner under the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2012. No complaints were progressed to a Complaints Sub-Committee hearing. Officer contact with other Panels suggests that the number of complaints (recorded or otherwise) against the Kent Commissioner remains low compared with other Commissioners.

Commissioner's decisions

10. The Commissioner published one Key Decision in 2020, which was considered by the Panel. This was to inform the Police and Crime Panel of the decision of the Police & Crime Commissioner to extend the term of appointment of Chief Constable Mr Alan Pughsley QPM.

Panel terms of reference

11. The Panel's terms of reference require them to be reviewed annually. It is considered convenient to do this at the same time as the Panel reviews its work over the past year. In year, the Terms of Reference were amended in line with updates to the Independent Co-optee recruitment process and timescales, as agreed by the Panel at a formal meeting. Other minor wording changes, clarifications or consequential amendments to address changes in law or external arrangements may be made from time to time by Officers, subject to review by the KCC Monitoring Officer. No significant changes to the terms of reference are proposed at this time for the Panel's consideration and approval. The full terms of reference can be found by following this [link](#).

Panel budget

12. The Panel's terms of reference also require the Panel to review its budget on an annual basis. Finance for the Panel's work comes from an annual Home Office grant of £64,340. Historically, expenditure increased annually in line with

support staff pay changes, the introduction of Co-optee Member allowances and relevant membership fees / subscriptions. However, the impact of virtual meetings during 2020/21 has led to a reduced forecast this year. In 2018/19 expenditure was £33,931 and in 2019/20 it was £37,710. The forecast final outturn for 2020/21 is £33,670. The Panel has, while meeting all statutory obligations and undertaking appropriate work as a Panel, kept its costs contained well within the existing Home Office Grant, demonstrating that Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel continues to deliver good value for money.

Conclusions

13. This year saw the postponement of the Police and Crime Commissioner elections, which were due to be held in May 2020. At the time of writing, the PCC elections are due to be held in May 2021. In response to COVID-19 the Government legislated to permit remote attendance by Elected Members at formal meetings. The Panel adapted well to these virtual arrangements, with good attendance and engagement in the difficult task of working with the Commissioner as a critical friend during a time of uncertainty and significant operational challenge across the whole criminal justice system. The Panel also welcomed the positive approach taken by the Commissioner in his management of his Performance & Delivery Boards, ensuring continued access to observe the Commissioner hold the Chief Constable to Account. As in previous years, the professional and balanced approach taken by all parties involved, with an emphasis on transparency and constructive criticism, has ensured that Panel Members have been able to make appropriate challenges to and ask important questions of the Commissioner, who has in turn been in a position to provide relevant information, assurances and commitments for the benefit of the wider public. This process allows for transparency around the strategic criminal justice and policing arena in Kent and Medway and also highlighted the many examples of excellent work by Kent Police. The Panel and Commissioner have, at several of the formal meetings this year, jointly recorded their praise for frontline officers, who face significant daily challenges in their role, notably during the increased risk period of the pandemic. They have also recognised the vital contribution made by support and specialist officers and staff whose work allows policing to function effectively.

Recommendation:

To consider and approve the draft Kent and Medway Police & Crime Panel 2020/21 Annual Report.

Contact: Anna Taylor / Joel Cook

Scrutiny.committee@kent.gov.uk 03000 416478 / 416892