

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### 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, 7 September 2021.

PRESENT: Mr G Sandher (Vice-Chairman), Cllr L Dyball (Substitute for Cllr P Fleming), Cllr G Hackwell, Cllr Mrs J Hollingsbee, Cllr S Mochrie-Cox, Cllr R Palmer, Cllr J Purle and Cllr R Wells

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M Scott (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner), Mr A Harper (PCC's Chief Executive) and Mr R Phillips (PCC's Chief Finance Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mr M Dentten (Democratic Services Officer)

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

*Mr G Sandher, Vice Chair of the Panel, in the Chair.*

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

No declarations were made.

#### **16. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 17 June 2021** *(Item 4)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2021 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

#### **17. Commissioner's Annual Report** *(Item B1)*

1. The Commissioner welcomed the new Panel Members and began the overview of his annual report by paying tribute to the Panel for its scrutiny, his Office for producing the report as well as Police Officers and staff for their work over the last year. He addressed five key areas included in the report: the Covid-19 pandemic; commissioning; finance; key achievements and the outlook for the future.
2. A summary of significant developments since the onset of the pandemic was provided by the Commissioner and included: the positive impact of IT procurement in enabling work arrangement changes; HMICFRS rating Kent Police 'exemplary' following an inspection of pandemic working arrangements; regular virtual Performance and Delivery Board meetings and Commissioner-Chief Constable briefings; sufficient levels of PPE equipment throughout the

period; and the decision to sell Kent Police's Headquarters. He reassured the Panel that the success of flexible working arrangements and capacity across the estate had made the sale of the Headquarters viable.

3. Further detail on commissioned services was provided by the Commissioner. He confirmed that victims services had continued throughout the pandemic and that an emergency fund had been established to further support services. Additional funding had been received from central government in relation to domestic abuse, sexual violence and Safer Streets, he noted that his Office had made successful bids to all available funds. It was confirmed that a recent grant had been secured from the Safer Streets 2 fund and that active bids to the Safer Streets 3 and Safety of Women at Night funds had been made.
4. The Commissioner spoke on the financial position of Kent Police. He recognised the challenge posed by a lower retirement rate. It was noted that PPE costs had created a cost pressure, though reassurance was given to the Panel that 80% of Covid-19 related costs had been recuperated from central government. The Commissioner invited the Panel to a financial briefing, to be delivered by his Office, ahead of the 2022/23 budget proposal.
5. The Commissioner updated the Panel on delivery against the Police and Crime Plan. He confirmed that the Cadets programme had expanded, with a new intake in Dartford. It was indicated that the Schools Team had successfully established itself, with the expansion of the team continuing. In relation to county lines gangs, he reassured Members that it remained a priority and that new Knife Crime Prevention Orders (KCPOs) would be utilised. Concerning crime rates, it was noted that whilst rates had continued to fall since before the pandemic, fluctuations in the coming year were anticipated.
6. 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:
  - a. What had the Commissioner done to ensure that Kent Police was fairly funded by central government? The Commissioner confirmed that he had continued to make the case to government and recognised the impact a reduction in funding would have on staff and the people of Kent. He affirmed that he did not want a reduction in funding to lead to Police Officers covering support staff functions.
  - b. Would different types of antisocial behaviour (ASB) be considered to allow for a greater distinction in crime statistics? The Commissioner recognised the need to examine types of ASB further and noted that it had been used as a catch all category in many instances.
  - c. Following a question from a Member, the Commissioner confirmed that Canterbury and Ramsgate would be the Safer Streets 2 focus areas.

- d. What could be done to share the key parts of the Annual Report with the public, in an accessible format? The Commissioner recognised that social media and community newsletters were the best ways to share key information from the report. He acknowledged that it was important for people to see how their council tax had been spent.
- e. How districts in Kent had become 'county lines free'? The Commissioner explained that a combination of targeted operations, regular warrants and swift action had eliminated county lines in 2 districts. He acknowledged that other organisations sought to meet demand when county lines were extinguished, though reassurance was given that local 'postcode gangs' had also been extensively disbanded.
- f. Whether the Commissioner's finance team would be at full strength in the next financial year? The Commissioner confirmed that a permanent Head of Finance had been appointed and that the finance team would be fully staffed.
- g. Whether the Home Office had covered all costs incurred by Kent Police in relation to the policing of Napier Barracks, Folkestone? The Commissioner verified that the Napier Barracks special grant had covered 75% of the £850,000 total costs.
- h. What impact the £38m possible savings outlined in the report would have on front line policing? The Commissioner reminded the Panel that his Medium-term Financial Plan was based on minimal precept increases and that £100m had been saved since 2010. He recognised the need for a rural premium in funding agreements, to balance funding with service provision in those areas. It was noted that further innovation in procurement and commercial activity along with shared services, including streamlining commissioning would further alleviate financial pressures on front line services. He asserted that it would be hard for the front line not to be impacted in the medium term if there was no change in funding.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **18. Police Uplift Programme**

*(Item B2)*

1. The Commissioner gave a verbal summary of the Police Uplift Programme and cited the progress made in the report. He confirmed that Officer recruitment had continued, with 3,911 Police Officers total as of April 2021, which marked an increase of 729 since 2016. It was noted that the first 450 of 729 were funded by the council tax precept, with the remaining Officers funded through the Home Office funded Programme. He remarked that existing policing teams had been expanded as a result of the uplift. The Commissioner acknowledged that Officer numbers fluctuated in year due primarily to retirement. He recognised that new recruits, as well as the Force overall, had become younger and less experienced, though reassured Members that

training and supervision had been used extensively. Concerning diversity, he highlighted the overall improvements made over the past 5 years and stressed the need for Kent Police to represent its population. The Investigate First programme and transferees from the Metropolitan Police were cited as two drivers of improved diversity.

2. The Commissioner noted that there had been no issues with recruitment or applicant numbers. It was added that new officers came from a broad range of working backgrounds. He informed the Panel that bespoke military recruitment events had been established.
3. In relation to governance and accountability the Commissioner confirmed that he met with the Chief Constable monthly to discuss progress in addition to consideration at the Performance and Delivery Board.
4. Members asked a range of questions in relation to the Police Uplift Programme. Key issues raised by the Panel and responded to by the Commissioner included the following:
  - a. How had Kent Police maintained a good culture and what indicators were there of this? The Commissioner confirmed that local culture boards were used to share opinions within the Force and noted from his own experience that staff shared opinions freely. He cited HMICFRS's high grading of Kent Police's legitimacy in its recent inspection as proof of the good culture. Mr Harper added that record low sickness levels and high staff retention were significant positive indicators.
  - b. What had been done to encourage recruitment within Kent's Nepalese community? The Commissioner reassured the Panel that the positive action team had run multiple targeted community events and carried out extensive engagement.
  - c. Whether the success rates of minority applicants over the past 3 years could be investigated, to analyse the impact of the positive action team? The Commissioner agreed to include the requested information in future Police Uplift Programme updates.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

#### **19. Mental Health - Verbal Update** *(Item B3)*

1. The Commissioner began his update by reminding the Panel that he had stepped down as the Association for Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) mental health lead and stressed that he remained interested and involved in the issue. He confirmed that the APCC Mental Health & Covid-19: Phase Two Report was published at the end of his tenure and was publicly available.

2. In relation to local mental health trends, the Commissioner noted that whilst the demand for mental health services had continued to increase, the number of people who regularly contacted Kent Police had decreased, when compared with pre-pandemic levels. It was, however, mentioned that the number of new contacts with complex needs had increased during the pandemic. He acknowledged that there were no area specific trends in Kent and Medway. Regarding Section 136 detentions he informed the Panel that rates remained stable. The Commissioner confirmed that the mental health crisis board has met and received an update on Kent Police's mental health KPIs.
3. Following a Member question the Commissioner agreed to lobby partner agencies to encourage the use of trained mental health professionals in Safe Havens.

RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

## **20. Commissioner's Expenditure over £500**

*(Item D1)*

1. The Commissioner gave a verbal overview of the report on his commissioning expenditure. He detailed the purpose and progress made by each of the 4 programmes highlighted: Crimestoppers Trust's Fearless Project; Reform, Restore, Respect; Uprising Youth & Community CIO's Metanoia Project; and Signhealth. He confirmed that his commissioning strategy would continue to fund these initiatives in the coming year.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **21. Complaints against the Commissioner**

*(Item D2)*

1. The Scrutiny Research Officer gave a verbal overview of the report. The complaints process was summarised and the Panel were reminded of the number of complaints against the Commissioner received during 2019-20 and 2020-21.
2. A Member asked how complaints were judged vexatious, oppressive, repetitious or an abuse of the complaints process. The Scrutiny Research Officer confirmed that the decision was taken by the OPCC Chief Executive, in his capacity as Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Panel officers. Mr Harper, OPCC Chief Executive, explained that the judgement of complaints was focused on the action of the Commissioner outlined in each complaint.
3. Following a Member request, the Scrutiny Research Officer and OPCC Chief Executive agreed to discuss options around providing a confidential report to the Panel, in order to provide a better idea of the content of discounted complaints.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **22. Future work programme**

*(Item D3)*

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

## **23. Questions to the Commissioner**

*(Item E1)*

*One of your priorities for the Chief Constable is to “Provide visible neighbourhood policing and effective roads policing”. You have acknowledged previously the importance of community relationships with Kent Police, Officers, PCSOs and support staff in preventing and dealing with crime. How will you ensure that this priority is not hampered by turnover of staff within communities?*

*(Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox, Gravesham Borough Council)*

1. The Commissioner recognised that communities preferred consistent and familiar policing. He noted that the many factors which influenced the movement of staff could not always be controlled, these included but were not limited to: promotion; secondment; retirement; PCSO training to become officers; and wider operational considerations. He stressed that relationships were key with community policing and recommended that the Community Safety Partnerships raise specific issues, especially if they had concerns with the provision of community policing.
2. The Commissioner reminded the Panel that the Performance and Delivery Board next met on Wednesday 8 September 2021, that the meeting would be held virtually, would focus on violence against women and girls and was accessible to the public via <https://www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/what-we-do/holding-kent-police-to-account/performance-and-delivery-board/>.

RESOLVED that the answers provided by the Commissioner be noted.