

## 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, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025.

PRESENT: Mr G Sandher MBE (Chair), Cllr M Blakemore, Cllr D Croxton, Cllr P Denman, Mr M Harrison, Mrs S Hudson, Mrs M Lawes, Cllr S Jeffery, Cllr D Keers, Cllr C Nolan and Cllr H Perkin.

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

#### **22. Apologies and Substitutes**

*(Item A2)*

1. Apologies were received from Cllr A Birch, Cllr P Cole, Cllr P Feacey Mr J Moreland, Mr P Webb and Cllr R Wells.
2. Mrs Mary Lawes substituted for Mr Webb, and Cllr P Denman substituted for Cllr Wells.

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

*(Item A3)*

1. The Chairman, Mr Sandher, declared that he was one of the two Independent Members that the Panel was recommended to approve (Item A5).

#### **24. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 14 October 2025.**

*(Item A4)*

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

#### **25. Appointment of Independent Members**

*(Item A5)*

1. Mr Gaetano Romagnuolo (Panel Clerk) presented the Recruitment of Independent Members report. He discussed the Recruitment Sub-Panel's recruitment process. He then informed the panel that, following an open application process, the Recruitment Sub-Panel had unanimously proposed that the Panel appoint Mr Gurvinder Sandher and Ms Hedwig de Jong as Independent Members of the Panel for a four-year term.

RESOLVED: To **approve** the Sub-Panel's recommendation to appoint Mr Gurvinder Sandher and Ms Hedwig de Jong as Independent Members of the Panel for a four-year term.

## **26. Holding the Chief Constable to Account**

*(Item B1)*

1. Mr Matthew Scott (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner) explained that one of his key responsibilities was to appoint the Chief Constable and to hold him to account for the force's performance. This was achieved predominantly through his production of the statutory police and crime plan, which was called 'Cut Crime, Support Victims, Build Trust'.
2. There was a key distinction between the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and that of the Chief Constable. The Chief Constable was responsible for operational policing, including the deployment of officers and misconduct issues. The PCC was responsible for holding the Chief Constable to account, in line with his statutory responsibility to secure an efficient and effective police service – therefore the PCC was unable to interfere with operational matters or criminal investigations.
3. The paper set out the various ways in which accountability was secured both formally and through regular informal engagement.
4. His engagement with the Chief Constable included weekly one-to-one meetings where he would receive operational updates. He was also able to request other briefings and meetings which were open to his Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer.
5. Another key mechanism for holding the Chief Constable to account was the quarterly Performance and Delivery Board. These were streamed online and also open to the public in the interests of openness and transparency.
6. In support of the Performance and Delivery Board the PCC also chaired two community forums which, while not attended by the Chief Constable, had representation at Superintendent level. These were the Retail Crime Board - which brought together the retail community, customer service industry, business improvement districts and business crime reduction partnerships – and the Rural Crime Board - which brought together farmers, the Environment Agency, local councils and land owners.
7. Other mechanisms which were used to hold the force to account included the Joint Audit Committee – which provided his Office and the force with assurance, oversight of financial governance and risk management, and through Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service inspections, including the regular comprehensive assessment of police forces known as PEEL (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy).
8. The Commissioner said that, while not having operational control of policing did limit his remit, the scrutiny and support function made a difference. For instance, there was now greater focus across the country on rural policing which until

recently was not a priority for chief constables. Similarly, there was significantly more attention to roads policing, and the neighbourhood policing model had become stronger.

9. Finally, a good example where the inquiry role performed by the Panel had supported him in scrutinising the Chief Constable was around the performance of Kent Police Force Control Room – which the Panel had visited recently. Its performance had improved substantially, and it was now one of the best-performing in the country.
10. A Member asked whether the PCC expected the two areas which were found in the last PEEL Inspection to require improvement – namely Investigating Crime and Responding to the Public – to be rated higher in the latest inspection.
  - a. The Commissioner said that he expected an improvement in the performance of both areas.

RESOLVED: To **note** the report.

## **27. Crime Prevention**

*(Item B2)*

1. The Commissioner presented his report and said that it was a priority to prevent crime before it took place and to support local neighbourhoods irrespective of the levels of crime that they experienced. There was a dedicated prevention command within Kent Police which dealt with the reduction and prevention of antisocial behaviour, early intervention with children and young people, and serious violence.
2. Much prevention work was carried out by local Community Safety Units which worked in partnership with local councils, housing associations and other agencies in order to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. Preventing crime by collaborating with local authorities, architects and developers to create safer environments was also important.
3. The Commissioner discussed briefly the paper provided to his recent Performance and Delivery Board by the Chief Constable.
4. He said that he allocated over £1.3 million on an annual basis to support local authorities and other organisations to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. A large portion of that funding was given to local district councils and borough councils for their Community Safety Partnerships. He said that he would be pleased to support Community Safety Partnerships next year with funding from the Crime Reduction Grant.
5. The Commissioner said that his Office was still waiting for the Government's announcement on the financial settlement for next year. Unfortunately, as this was an annual settlement, he could only provide funding allocation certainty on an annual basis.

6. He paid tribute to Canterbury in particular for the way in which local councillors and the council collaborated with Kent Police to tackle crime in the area. For example, funding was used to provide additional Street Ambassadors who offered extra safety reassurance and visibility during the summer months.
7. The work of Kent's Violence Reduction Unit was bucking the trend nationally in terms of recorded knife crime and fewer admissions into A&E for knife injuries.
8. Work with the Criminal Justice Board, which the PCC chaired, also helped prevent future crimes. One of the areas which did not receive enough attention was rehabilitation. Prisoners Building Homes was a programme which started in the west of England. The programme entailed prisoners building modular homes and learning skills to help them upon release . The programme had led to a significant reduction in reoffending and had recently won a Civil Service Award.
9. Expressing concern, a Member asked a question about levels of shoplifting.
  - a. The PCC said that the previous year there had been a 9 % increase in recorded shoplifting with just over 17,000 offences. This increase mirrored the national trend. He cautioned that this was an area where policing needed to do better in developing more effective relationships with businesses in order to address the issue.
10. In answer to a question about Crime Reduction Grant funding, the PCC said that almost every year he had allocated exactly the same amount of money. If the full funding was not spent, this did not necessarily result in funding cuts the following year.
11. In answer to a question about national crime recording standards, the Commissioner confirmed that these were set by the Home Office.

RESOLVED: To **note** the report.

## **28. Questions to the Commissioner**

*(Item C1)*

1. *People will have their own views on whether or not Police and Crime Commissioners should be abolished but I would like to know what you feel is the most significant thing you have achieved in the role, and what functions you would most want to see protected once the role no longer exists.*

Cllr Mike Blakemore, Folkestone and Hythe District Council

- a. In response to this question, Mr Scott said that his most significant achievement was probably the increase in Kent Police's workforce numbers with 1,000 more police officers than in 2016; this would probably not have materialised without encouragement from his Office or the Panel's support with the uplift programme.
- b. In terms of the functions he would most want to see protected, he said that his main concern was the future of victim services; he normally received funding from two different government departments, and there was no

certainty about this funding in the future. When elements such as inflation, the increase in national insurance contributions and minimum wage were taken into account, it was a challenging time for the third sector. He was also worried about who would speak up for these services once the role is abolished.

RESOLVED: To **note** the response to the question.

## **29. Work Programme**

*(Item D1)*

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

## **30. Minutes of the Commissioner's Performance and Delivery Board meeting held on 16 September 2025**

*(Item E1)*

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Performance and Delivery Board meeting held on 16 September 2025 **be noted**.

**END**