

## KENT POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER AND KENT POLICE AND CRIME PANEL – THE FIRST SIX MONTHS

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**By:** Stuart Beaumont, Head of Community Safety & Emergency Planning

**To:** Kent Community Safety Partnership

**Subject:** Progress report on the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner since her election

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary.** The report summarises and comments, from a KCSP perspective, on the decisions and actions taken by the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner since her election in November 2012 and on the operation of the Kent Police and Crime Panel.

### 1. Introduction

1.1 In November 2012 police authorities were abolished and Police and Crime Commissioners were elected for each police area outside London. In Kent Mrs Ann Barnes was elected. Her role is to hold the Chief Constable to account for Kent Police's performance, to publish a Police and Crime Plan setting a budget and performance goals for Kent police and how she intends to work with other criminal justice agencies, to set the precept for policing, to commission services and to give grants to criminal justice agencies. She receives funding from Central Government including money that previously went to other criminal justice and community safety agencies. The Commissioner also has the power to combine Community Safety Partnerships and to require attendance at meetings to discuss community safety strategies

### 2 Initial priorities

2.1 The Commissioner has made it a priority to be both visible and accessible. She has organised a number of "Meet the Commissioner" events around the county where members of the public can ask her questions directly and she has visited a large number of shopping centres and other community areas to engage directly with the public. Her stated aim is to understand what the public expects from the police and to use these views to influence policing priorities.

She is now in the process of meeting all CSP's and has met a number of other stakeholders. She attended the last KCSP meeting.

### **3 Progress to date**

3.1 The Commissioner has met her legal obligation to determine a procedure for making and publishing her decisions and she has published a policy on information disclosure.

3.2 She made immediate decisions to appoint temporary advisers to strengthen her Office. She has established a Governance Board to hold the Chief Constable to account and this has met once. A programme of bi-monthly meetings has now been set up.

3.3 A joint Audit Committee with the Force has been set up. She is in the process of appointing a Chief of Staff following the departure of the former Authority Chief Executive.

3.4 She has prepared and adopted a Police and Crime Plan, issued an increased precept and decided to maintain grants at their 2012/13 level for 2013/14. The Plan operates formally from 1st April 2013 so it is too early to expect significant progress. However, plans for a number of mini-mobile police stations are well advanced and will start to operate from July. The increased precept was to fund additional officers and PCSO's. 20 additional officers will join the Force in July and 60 additional PCSO's will have joined by July.

3.5 The Commissioner appointed a Youth Commissioner but the individual subsequently resigned.

### **4. Key future issues**

4.1 Funding. The Commissioner has said that her decision to maintain grant funding at the same level as in 2012/13 for 2013/14 will not be repeated in future years. She does not think grants should be used to pay staff salaries and she is asking for clear business plans indicating not only how grants will be used but how success and outcomes will be measured. This could lead to a very different distribution of money in 2014/15.

4.2 Also, from 2014/15 the Government grant currently given to the Commissioner for policing will no longer be ring-fenced to the police. While no doubt the vast majority will continue to be given to the police, the overall size (c. £200m) means that this flexibility represents a major power of the Commissioner to commission services from alternative sources.

4.3 Joint working The Commissioner's commitment in her Plan to the Kent Community Safety Agreement and her wish to be involved in the new Agreement are both welcome. Partnership members may wish to consider how they can best enhance this approach to joint working.

4.4 Police performance Fundamental to the Commissioner's role is helping to achieve sound performance by Kent police. Her plan sets out longer term performance goals and makes clear that she will assess "direction of travel"

rather than setting specific annual targets and the Force have welcomed this approach. The Commissioner has identified some areas where improvement is needed – levels of burglary and vehicle crime and public satisfaction in particular. The Commissioner no doubt hopes that the decisions to deploy mini-mobile police stations and to increase the number of officers and PCSO's will help to improve performance but the Commissioner makes it clear in her Plan that she will expect others, including Community Safety Partnerships to work with her and the Force to reduce and prevent crime.

## **5. Police and Crime Panel**

5.1 In all police areas there is a Police and Crime Panel whose responsibility is to “review and report” on the activities and decisions of the Commissioner. It is not a scrutiny body, nor does it hold the Commissioner or Chief Constable to account. It has a specific duty to discharge its responsibilities so as to support the Commissioner. There is one member for each local authority in Kent and Medway plus co-opted members (to ensure political and geographic balance) and 2 independent members. KCC “hosts” this Panel, which involves providing administrative, legal and policy support. Government funding is provided to cover the cost of this support.

5.2 The Panel has been supportive of the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan and agreed with her decision to raise the precept. They were critical of her decision to appoint external advisers without any competition. They discussed the problems surrounding the appointment and subsequent resignation of the Youth Commissioner and while expressing support for the concept, felt there were lessons to be learnt about the way the process was handled. They have asked to see the independent review which the Commissioner has said she will undertake of the process. The Panel has established a work programme of reports from the Commissioner to make sure that it reviews all aspects of her work.

## **6 Conclusion**

6.1 The Commissioner has made a high profile start to her term of office and has been the subject of national media interest. Government policy was to introduce Commissioners in order that the public should be more aware of who was holding the police to account on their behalf and should be able to influence that person so the Commissioner's high profile is helping to achieve part of that policy goal. It is quite clear that the Commissioner is a more active player in the criminal justice landscape than the Authority and, although she has few powers of management or direction, she does have financial powers that will enable her to make a major impact if she chooses.

6.2 As yet there is little indication of how she intends to use her significant powers to disburse money and commission services to influence the criminal justice picture within Kent and Medway but, as she starts to make financial decisions for 2014/15 and onwards her intentions should become clearer.

6.3 Kent Community Safety Partnership is a statutory body so, in that sense, its future is assured. However, it will need to be responsive to the new landscape

and, in particular, to the existence of the Commissioner and her ability to promote joint working and commission services in new ways.

**Summary of Commissioner's statutory duties**

- To set the strategic direction and objectives for Kent Police
- To ensure that Kent Police is efficient and effective and gives good value for money
- To set the Force budget and the precept
- To consult and engage with the public and specifically with victims of crime
- To hold the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of police and crime priorities
- To work in partnership with community safety and criminal justice agencies to deliver efficient and effective services
- To award crime and disorder reduction grants
- To deal with complaints and other disciplinary matters regarding the Chief Constable
- To provide information to the public and to the Police and Crime Panel on her decisions and to enable both the Commissioner's and the Chief Constable's performance to be assessed