

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, 4 February 2014.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Cllr R Turpin (Vice-Chairman), Cllr G Galpin (Substitute for Cllr G Clarkson), Cllr P Todd, Cllr T Martin, Cllr Mrs A Blackmore, Cllr L Wicks, Cllr M Dearden, Cllr Mrs I Johnston, Cllr M Lowe (Substitute for Cllr P Fleming), Cllr K Pugh (Substitute for Mr A H T Bowles), Cllr M Rhodes, Cllr J Cunningham, Mr R A Latchford, OBE, Mr G Cowan, Mr I S Chittenden and Mr Dan McDonald

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs A Barnes (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner), Mr M Stepney (Commissioner's Chief of Staff) and Mr S Nolan (Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Campbell (Policy Officer) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

63. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 December 2013
(Item 4)

1. The Scrutiny Officer, KCC, explained that Mr Galpin was present at the meeting on 20 December and that the minutes would be amended to reflect this.
2. The Chairman noted the Commissioner's request that in future her office be given more time to review the minutes for accuracy.

RESOLVED that subject to the above amendment the minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2013 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

64. Draft Police and Crime Plan 2014/15
(Item B1)

1. The Commissioner introduced her draft refreshed Police and Crime Plan for 2014/15. The Plan was similar to the original plan which was approved by the Panel. She explained that this plan reflected the people of Kent's priorities and changing priorities throughout the year. The key changes were the removal of numerical performance targets, the inclusion of partnership objectives to demonstrate the value of working with partners the inclusion of the PCC's responsibility for commissioning victims services and implementation of a Victims' Centre. In terms of Community Safety Grants there is a commitment to giving out what comes in but this has had to suffer the same cuts as the general. The Panel welcomed the emphasis on partnership working within the Plan and the opportunity that the Commissioner had given to Panel members to comment on an early draft of the Plan.

2. Members of the Panel noted that the refreshed Plan contained no numerical targets, whereas the previous version had set a number of targets over the period of the Plan. Panel Members sought clarification of how the Commissioner would assess Force performance and judge success if there were no targets set. The Panel noted that the Commissioner intended to use satisfaction with the service, partnership working and visible presence on the streets to judge success and to ensure that the force delivered a quality service to the people of Kent. The Panel noted that the Commissioner considers her approach to be supportive of efforts to avoid a performance driven culture in the Force and to be consistent with the approach to targets taken by the Home Secretary and HMIC. The Commissioner explained that HMIC advice had been that rigid targets skewed activity. She explained that the Chief Constable was held to account at the Governance Board meetings.
3. One Member commended the Commissioner on removing the targets and the community would hold the Commissioner to account with regards to delivery. Regarding public engagement it was vital that the community were aware of visits and it was thought that there were some hard to reach groups which still might find it difficult to access the Commissioner. The Commissioner explained that in her work with the community the public had confirmed that they did not want a deputy commissioner. Regarding accessing hard to reach groups she had worked closely with the University and Learning Disability Groups more recently in relation to hate crime.
4. The Panel asked the Commissioner about the recruitment and deployment of PCSOs and whether their powers could be usefully extended. The Panel noted the Commissioner's support for PCSOs but understood recruitment was linked to funding and that decisions about deployment and powers were for the Chief Constable to determine. The Commissioner explained she had written to the council leaders offering to speak with each Council, along with the Chief Constable, to talk about the neighbourhood policing model.
5. In response to a query about the 'one stop shop' for Kent's Victims and whether this would be an adequate resource for such a large County. The Commissioner explained that this wouldn't be limited to a physical building and would also act as a signposting service where victims could get help. It was still in the early stages of planning but it would look at wrapping services around people and could include looking at how families of victims could also be supported. The Panel supported the intention to establish the Victim Centre.
6. The Panel questioned the Commissioner on how she intended to retain the focus on visible community policing when neighbourhood officers had been reduced and initiatives such as Predictive Policing were being used. The Panel noted the Commissioner's intention to ensure any future changes to the policing model were based on neighbourhoods. The Commissioner had tasked the Chief Constable to ensure the policing model in Kent was based on community policing, in response to a query the Commissioner reminded members that anti-social behaviour was not solely a policing issue. The work of the Community Safety Partnerships was valued and in addition to the funding provided to the Community Safety Partnerships the Commissioner had put in place a fund for partners to bid to to support delivery. .

7. Members asked what role the Special Constables played in the Commissioner's Plan, the Commissioner explained that the Governance Board had an item on Special Constables and how they had developed, they were a highly valuable resource and would like to see more in the county but it was costly to recruit and train them. There were around 300 Specials contributing approximately 100 hours per year each. They were warranted officers facing the same issues as regular Police Officers. The Commissioner had provided additional funding to train Special Constables. They had a high turnover due to the voluntary nature of the work.
8. In response to a question about serious organised crime in Kent the Commissioner reminded members that the present Chief Constable had a background in the serious organised crime. There was a joint Serious Crime Directorate with Essex which targeted organised crime, there was close working with the south east region and the National Crime Agency would be visiting to discuss close working.
9. The Panel asked whether, in respect of grants, the Commissioner had considered having a general fund which could be used to target resources where there was most need. The Panel noted the Commissioner's view that decisions on grant allocations were the result of engaging with partners and directing money where it would be of most value in relation to her Plan.
10. One Member asked about internet safety amongst young people and how this fitted into the Plan and with the new Youth Commissioner. The Commissioner explained that Schools Liaison Officers had a comprehensive programme with secondary schools but it was also necessary to engage with the primary schools. The Commissioner was funding a programme with upper primary schools to educate young people on internet safety. The Youth Commissioner would also have a key role in communicating with young people and the Community Safety Partnerships. The Safer Schools Partnership was a matter for the Chief Constable.
11. The Chairman and other Panel Members noted that whilst the Plan mentioned harnessing innovation from the private sector it did not contain proposals to outsource back office functions, which some members felt might produce significant savings. The Panel noted the Commissioner's intention to find ways of bringing private sector best practice into back office functions whilst reiterating her opposition to the privatisation of Kent Police.

RESOLVED that the Panel welcomed the opportunity that the Commissioner had given to Panel members to comment on an early draft of the Plan and noted the Commissioner's Draft Refreshed Plan 2014/15.

65. Precept Proposal
(Item B2)

1. The Policy Officer, KCC, explained that the Panel had a statutory duty under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and associated Regulations to:
 - Review and report on the Commissioner's proposed level of precept.

In addition the Panel may:

- Make any recommendations on the draft plan or proposed precept; and
 - By a two thirds majority, veto the proposed precept.
2. The Commissioner advised that Panel that, after widespread consultation, she had found public support for an increase to the precept without triggering a referendum. The Commissioner explained that she had not yet received confirmation of the rules relating to when a referendum trigger was required before a precept increase could be implemented. Last year's Police & Crime Plan assumed a 2% precept (increase £2.80 per year) each year but if the commissioner could go to 3.5% (£4.95 per year per household in a Band D property) without triggering a referendum then this would be the precept level proposed. The Commissioner asked the Panel for flexibility and would they agree to a precept maximum of 3.5% or an increase to the trigger level.
 3. The Commissioner explained to the Panel that the costs of a referendum, together with the fact that there would be restrictions on what could be said to explain the proposal during a campaign, meant it was not sensible to propose an increase that would require to be put to a referendum. The Commissioner, therefore, proposed a precept increase of 3.5%, or the maximum permitted without calling a referendum if this was lower.
 4. Panel Members sympathised with the Commissioner's difficulty in not knowing the rules relating to a referendum at this late stage but pointed out that the draft budget which the Commissioner had presented assumed a 2% increase in the precept and questioned the Commissioner as to why she needed an additional 1.5%. The Commissioner said that the extra money would be used to keep 20 Police Officers or a larger mixture of Police Officers and PCSOs who might otherwise be lost due to anticipated reductions in Government grant in 2015/16. The Commissioner also confirmed that Kent was in the bottom quartile for its policing precept in the Country, significantly less than the national average.
 5. Panel Members sought clarification of the consultation which the Commissioner had carried out and which had led her to state that there was support for a precept increase for local visible policing
 6. . The Commissioner referred to a range of events and activities, including a large stakeholder event in December 2013.
 7. Panel Members questioned the Commissioner on whether the Force had explored every option to reduce costs exhaustively, pointing out that many Councils in Kent and Medway had looked to reduce costs further rather than increase Council tax. The Commissioner explained that every budget line had been closely scrutinised. HMIC also completed Value for Money profiles and in terms of efficiency these showed Kent Police as being good.
 8. Panel Members said that they were supportive of the need to maintain officer numbers and asked in the Commissioner could give a guarantee that, if they supported a 3.5% precept increase, the money would be "ring-fenced" for more

police officers. The Commissioner explained that it was her intention that the money be used in this way and that additional funds would be used to offset the anticipated loss of Government grant.

9. Panel Members asked whether there were opportunities for income generation rather than a precept increase and were advised by the Commissioner that Kent Police was currently above average for income generation but that she has plans for more work in this area which she would share with the Panel later in the year.
10. Panel Members pointed out that the Commissioner's Plan was based on precept increases each year of her term of office and that, since these increases would be compounded, they amounted to a significant increase taken together.
11. The Panel voted on a veto of the Commissioner's precept, 8 Members voted for the veto and 6 against. In accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act regulations the Panel would be able to veto the Commissioner's proposed precept with a 2/3 majority (14 Members of the Panel) therefore this was lost.
12. Mr Dearden then proposed that the Commissioner should increase her precept by no more than 2% (£2.80 per year per Band D household), provided that such an increase was permitted without a referendum.
13. This was seconded by Mr Pugh.
14. The Chairman put this to the vote and it was carried.
15. The Panel also noted the Commissioner's assurance that they would be provided with details of her final budget, if it differed from the one presented to the Panel.

RESOLVED that the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel recommend that the Commissioner should increase her precept by no more than 2% (£2.80 per year per Band D household), provided that such an increase was permitted without a referendum. The Panel also noted the Commissioner's assurance that they would be provided with details of her final budget, if it differed from the one presented to the Panel.

66. Impact of Police Contact Points (Item C1)

1. The Commissioner introduced this item and explained that 6 existing vehicles had been utilised as mobile Police Contact Points. There had been national interest in the Police Contact Points and it was not sensible to measure their value by people visiting the units. The mobile vans had been used by the Community Safety Partners and on street safe days for example.
2. Members supported this initiative, particularly in relation to community events, the Commissioner explained that there had been initial communication problems with the new arrangements; however these were being worked through. The Commissioner considered that the vehicles did need to be better targeted and local councillors could be used to distribute information about Police Contact Points.

3. In response to a question about whether there were any plans for wider partnership working the Commissioner confirmed that she had encouraged the Community Safety Partnerships to use the mobile Police Contact Points, this was free of charge.

RESOLVED that the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel noted the Commissioner's report.

67. Crime Recording in the Force
(Item C2)

1. The Commissioner introduced her report and explained that she was the first PCC to commission and publish an independent report by HMIC. The people of Kent would receive a better service because of the HMIC report and Kent Police Force currently had a crime reporting rate of 97% accuracy.
2. In response to a question about a comment by the previous Chief Constable about the force 'creaking' the Commissioner confirmed that more funding was necessary.
3. A Member asked where the money raised through the 101 calls went, the Commissioner confirmed that it went to the provider.
4. The Commissioner confirmed that independent members did sit on the Culture Board chaired by the Chief Constable.
5. One Member raised the recording of domestic violence and suggested that a campaign on Domestic Violence be run in Kent, in a similar way to previous Drink Driving campaigns. The Commissioner confirmed that this would be considered.

RESOLVED that the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel note the report on Crime Recording in the Force.

68. Stage 2 Transfer Details
(Item C3)

1. The Commissioner confirmed that she was waiting for Home Secretary approval of her transfer schedule and would update Members once that was received.

RESOLVED that the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel note the report on Stage 2 Transfer Details.

69. Commissioner's Decisions
(Item D1)

1. In response to the decision made to go out to tender to recruit an innovation partner the Commissioner said she would report back to a future meeting of the Panel.
2. The Commissioner confirmed that she would also report back on the Youth Commissioner after the appointment was announced.

RESOLVED that the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel note the Commissioner's Key Decisions December 2013 – January 2014 and requests further reports on the innovation partner and the Youth Commissioner.

70. Minutes of the Commissioner's Governance Board meeting held on 3 December 2013

(Item E2)

RESOLVED that the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel note the minutes of the Commissioner's Governance Board meeting held on 3 December 2013.

71. Future work programme

(Item F1)

RESOLVED that the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel note the Future Work Programme.

Draft