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To: Police and Crime Panel – 28 May 2014

Subject: Outcomes and actions from informal Panel discussion with the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Panel agreed at the end of 2013 that it would be a good idea to meet informally with the Commissioner to review the Panel's work since it was established and to see if there are opportunities to improve or enhance the Panel's effectiveness and the working relationship with the Commissioner. This report advises the Panel of action taken in the light of conclusions reached at the informal meeting and makes recommendations.

2. Preparation for Panel meetings

- 2.1 Panel members thought it would help to make Panel meetings more productive if the Chairman and the Commissioner discussed the draft agenda before each meeting. The Panel Chairman and the Commissioner met, together with officers, to discuss the agenda for today's meeting and similar meetings are being arranged prior to all future Panel meetings. It should be noted that the Commissioner has no right of veto for items appearing on the Panel's agenda but this early engagement of likely discussion items is helpful in order to give the Commissioner and her team as much time as possible to prepare for formal meetings. In addition, each Panel meeting will be preceded by a verbal briefing for Panel members by its officers. The existing arrangements whereby Panel officers and staff of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner meet regularly to exchange information and to facilitate the smooth working of the Panel will continue.

3. Profile of the Panel

- 3.1 Panel members made several suggestions that they felt would raise the profile of the Panel with the public in Kent and Medway. At present details of Police and Crime Panel membership, meeting papers and minutes are on a page within the KCC website. As a result of Panel members' views arrangements are in hand to create a more detailed page, still within the KCC website, that, in addition, describes the functions of the Panel and provides direct links to the Police and Crime Plan and budget, explains the procedure for making complaints against the Commissioner and contains any agreed protocols. The revised webpage is

expected to go live in Summer 2014. If Panel members agree, each authority with a member on the Panel could be asked to provide a link to this page on their own website.

- 3.2 Panel members also discussed the idea of the Panel issuing more press releases. The need to do this will depend on the matters discussed at each meeting and the comments made by Panel members. It is therefore recommended that a flexible approach be adopted and that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman meet immediately after each meeting to decide whether to issue any press release and, if so, to determine the content.

4. Panel agendas

- 4.1 Panel members suggested that, in order to ensure, over time, they discharge their responsibility to review all aspects of the Commissioner's work, it might be useful to have themes for some or all Panel meetings. The Commissioner supported the concept and pointed out that her Governance Board meetings (at which she holds the Chief Constable to account) also had themes. The suggestion has been further discussed by Panel officers and the Commissioner's Chief of Staff. The Commissioner's staff have said that the Commissioner will provide reports on series of themes if that is what the Panel wish. It is considered that adherence to a series of themes might mean that important current issues were not discussed whereas time is spent on less current aspects of the Commissioner's work. However, if agendas are driven entirely by current or specific issues the Panel may not, over time, fully discharge its duty to review the Commissioner's work.
- 4.2 In order to meet the Panel's point it is suggested that there is no automatic theme to each meeting, but that agendas are determined primarily by current issues or particular matters which either the Panel or the Commissioner wish to discuss. However, Panel officers will bear in mind the need for the Panel to consider all aspects of the Commissioner's work over a period of about 18 months and will suggest themes for particular meetings to ensure that this happens.

5. Matters the Commissioner was asked to consider

- 5.1 At the request of Panel members the Commissioner agreed to consider several points. The Commissioner was asked to consider publishing a forward plan of her decisions so that the Panel could identify those in which they had a particular interest and /or would like to receive some background information. The Commissioner's Chief of Staff has indicated that a forward plan could be produced but he has pointed out that it would consist very largely of the statutory decisions which already have a statutory timescale (e.g. Annual report, precept, police and crime plan). Apart from that most of the Commissioner's decisions move from the point of inception to proposal and then to decision quite quickly and would probably not be capable of inclusion in a forward plan. In discussion

Panel officers have noted the limited nature of any forward plan but said that the Panel would nevertheless like to receive a plan. To help the Panel understand fully all the Commissioner's decisions it has also been agreed with the Chief of Staff that, when decisions are made, the Commissioner will provide a little more detail on the background and reasons (without generating lengthy committee-style reports) and the decisions reported on today's agenda reflect this revised approach. The Commissioner publishes her decisions on a monthly basis. Panel officers will circulate these decisions to Panel members once they are published so that Panel members can ask questions straight away, albeit outside of Panel meetings.

- 5.2 The Commissioner was also asked to consider the possibility of shared public platforms with Panel members. Discussions with the Commissioner's officers highlighted that any shared platform should not detract from the Commissioner's role and responsibilities nor should it confuse the public as to the Panel's role and its relationship with the Commissioner. It was felt that there might be relatively few opportunities for shared platforms and that the best approach would be for Panel officers to discuss specific events with the Chief of Staff.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 That Panel members nominated by local authorities ask their Authority to put a link on their website to the enhanced Panel page on the KCC website
- 6.2 That the Panel authorises the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to decide whether to issue press releases on behalf of the Panel and to determine the content.
- 6.3 That the Panel note the conclusions of discussions with the Commissioner's Chief of Staff at paragraphs 4.2, 5.1 and 5.2.

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