

## **Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel report for the period 2012-2015**

### **Panel's functions, duties and meetings**

1. The Panel has both general and specific duties. Its general duties are to review or scrutinise decisions made by the Commissioner or actions taken by her (Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act s28(6)) and to exercise its powers with a view to supporting the effective exercise of the PCC's functions (PRSR Act s28(2)).
2. The Panel has specific duties to
  - Agree or otherwise the PCC's proposed precept
  - Consider and publish a report on the PCC's Police and Crime plan
  - Consider and report on the PCC's Annual Report
  - Agree or otherwise the proposed appointment of a Chief Constable, PCC's Chief Executive and PCC's Chief Finance Officer
3. The Panel was formally established in November 2012, coinciding with the election of the Police and Crime Commissioner. In 2012 the Panel met formally on one occasion but also met once, prior to November 2012, as a Shadow Panel in order to determine its method of operation. In 2013, 2014, and 2015 the Panel met on 6 occasions (plus 2 informal meetings in 2014).

### **Initial arrangements**

4. In the early months of 2013 the Panel established its method of operating and worked with the Commissioner to establish sound working relationships. An initial procedure for advising the Panel of significant decisions was adopted in 2013 but, in
5. 2014, this was found to be too onerous and was replaced by adoption of Local Government Association guidelines on notifying Panels of PCC decisions.
6. The Panel also established a work programme setting out draft agendas for meetings over the next twelve months. The purpose this programme was to give sufficient flexibility to enable current topics to be discussed, to give the PCC adequate warning of matters the Panel wished her to report on and also to ensure that, over her period of office, all aspects of the PCC's Police and Crime Plan were considered by the Panel.
7. Panel members were briefed at the outset on their role and the powers of the Panel.
8. The Deputy Chief Constable also gave Panel members a briefing on the policing priorities at the time. As new members have joined the Panel a briefing on the role of the Panel has been offered by officers.

### **Review of the Commissioner's decisions and actions**

9. The topics that were considered most frequently at Panel meetings (in addition to those which the Panel is required to consider each year) were:
  - Youth Commissioner and youth engagement
  - Crime performance and crime recording
  - Victim support and Victim Centre
10. The Commissioner has a duty to publish decisions of significant public interest and the Panel asked that these be reported to the Panel at each meeting. The

Commissioner decided to discharge her duty to hold the Chief Constable to account through a series of Governance Boards, held in public, and the Panel asked that the minutes of these meetings be added to Panel agendas for information. Panel members have also attended Governance Board meetings to observe her holding the Chief Constable to account at first hand.

11. Over the PCC's period of office the Panel has sought to be supportive of the PCC wherever possible. The Panel has been particularly supportive of the work undertaken by the PCC to remove a target-driven culture within the Force and of her and the Force's very positive response to the HMIC report that identified some inaccurate crime recording. The Panel was pleased to note that the current level of accuracy is very high and that crime levels are generally falling.
12. The Panel has also been supportive of the work by the Commissioner, following her acquisition of responsibility for victim support in 2014, to establish a Victim Centre in Kent.
13. With the exception of 2014, all precept proposals have been approved by the Panel, the Police and Crime Plan has been supported each year and the proposed of a Chief Constable, 2 Chiefs of Staff and a Chief Finance Officer have all been supported.
14. Where necessary the Panel has been critical of the Commissioner and has asked her on occasion to reflect on the Panel's views. In 2014, the Panel did not agree to the PCC's proposal to increase the precept by 3.5%, if permitted without a referendum, although there was not a sufficient majority to veto the proposal. In the event the PCC raised the precept by 2%, the maximum permitted without a referendum.
15. When the Commissioner explained her decisions (in both 2013 and 2014) to recruit a Youth Commissioner the Panel's view was that a single appointment was not the best way to achieve the laudable goal of engaging more fully with young people and it made its views clear on several occasions. When, in 2015, the Commissioner decided to establish a Youth Advisory Group the Panel expressed their support for this approach.
16. The Panel was also critical of some of the PCC's public relations work in the first part of her term of office. Following the Commissioner's appearance in a Channel 4 documentary the Panel discussed her approach to public relations work and endorsed her decision to move away from a campaigning role, to undertake less 'big bang' publicity, to focus less on the Commissioner as an individual and to adopt a more corporate style on her website. The Panel also received an assurance that the Commissioner's engagement style with Police Officers and staff, Panel members and other partners would be modified. The Panel was pleased to note that the PCC has taken note of the Panel's views.

### **Panel communications**

17. The Panel adopted a Communications Protocol to ensure that public statements were made by the Chairman and that, where appropriate, there is liaison with the PCC and any statements she might wish to make. The Panel agreed that all its public meetings should be webcast so that the public can see it doing its work. In 2015 the Panel established its own webpage, where all its papers and minutes are available, to explain its work more fully and to provide a commentary on its meetings.

### **Conclusions**

18. The Panel has settled into its role since its establishment in 2012 and has provided both support and challenge to the Police and Crime Commissioner. It has discharged all its specific responsibilities whenever required and has ensured that, over her period of office, it has discussed and reviewed all aspects of the Commissioner's work. The Panel has welcomed the Commissioner's willingness to meet informally with Panel members and to explain the work she and her staff are doing. Panel members have been encouraged by the Commissioner to observe her work at Governance Boards and on other public occasions. The Panel has always sought a constructive working relationship with the Commissioner and, particularly since the latter part of 2014, the relationship has been generally constructive.