

**Report by:** Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel

**SUBJECT:** Kent Police and Crime Commissioner's draft refreshed Police and Crime Plan 2013-17 and proposed precept for 2016/17

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2016

## **PANEL DECISION**

That the Panel supports the refreshed Police and Crime Plan and approves the Commissioner's proposal to increase the police precept by 3.4%.

## **Background**

1. The Panel have a statutory duty under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and associated Regulations to:
  - Review and report on the Commissioner's draft Police and Crime Plan; and
  - 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

## **Report**

2. The Panel were provided with the Commissioner's draft refreshed Police and Crime Plan and budget, together with a report explaining the consultation on the draft, the main changes and continuing themes. The report also set out the Commissioner's reasons for an increase in the precept of 3.4% and provided information about the medium term financial picture and use of reserves. The Commissioner's report included a commentary by the Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer.
3. The Panel noted that the Commissioner had consulted widely in preparing the draft refreshed plan and budget and had consulted further once she was aware of the possibility of increasing the precept by more than 2% without a referendum. The Panel noted that those consulted had been generally supportive of her plan to increase the precept, although they noted that the Commissioner's view that a decline in support towards the end of the consultation period may have been the result of people becoming aware of the plans of local authorities to increase the Council tax.
4. The Panel noted that the refreshed Plan contained an increased emphasis on child sexual exploitation and on public safety, an updated narrative on victim services and a focus on working with partners to protect children in care. The Panel also noted

that visible community policing remained at the heart of the Commissioner's plan but that it was also intended to enhance the Force's specialist capability to protect communities from national and international threats

5. The Commissioner explained that she sought approval for an increase in the police precept of 3.4%, (equivalent to £5 per week for a Band D household) The Commissioner explained to the Panel that the additional 1.4% increase, permitted without a referendum because her precept was amongst the ten lowest in the country, would be used to enable the recruitment of 24 additional firearms officers. The Panel noted the Commissioner's comment that the police precept in Kent would still be well below the national average. The Commissioner explained that; although the Chancellor of the Exchequer had announced no decrease in police grant, cost pressures within the Force, such as increased national insurance contributions, cost of increments, meant that there would still be a need to make £8.7m of savings in 2016/17. The Commissioner also advised the Panel that medium term financial planning was being conducted on the basis that the Force revenue budget would need to be reduced by £33m by 2020.
6. The Panel expressed support for the new areas of emphasis within the Plan. They also commended the Commissioner for her decision to maintain grants to Community Safety Partnerships at the same level as in 2015/16.
7. The Panel sought an assurance from the Commissioner that the additional money she planned to raise for the specific purpose of increasing the Force's firearms capability would be used by the Chief Constable in this way. The Commissioner pointed out that operational decisions were a matter for the Chief Constable but she knew that he wished to increase capacity and was confident he would use the money for this purpose. The Panel noted that the money would pay for the salaries of officers but would not fund their training and equipment, and that the Commissioner planned to use reserves to fund these costs.
8. Panel members asked that the Commissioner consider a specific reference, within the section of the Plan related to Crime prevention, to restorative justice, which members felt played an important role in preventing future crimes. The Panel was pleased to note the Commissioner's agreement to consider this.
9. Panel members sought an explanation from the Commissioner of the main elements that remained to be achieved in the last year of her plan and were advised that these were the areas with increased emphasis in the refreshed Plan.
10. Members discussed the level and use of reserves and received an assurance that they were prudent but would be reducing significantly over the next few years as funds earmarked for capital projects were used for that purpose.
11. Members noted that, while the medium term financial plan set overall savings targets for the next few years, there was as yet no detail on how these savings were to be achieved. Members sought and received an assurance from the Commissioner that the Chief Constable had been asked to supply detailed proposals in the next few

months and that some plans had already been drafted, when it had been expected that larger savings would be required.

### **Conclusion**

12. After discussion the Panel supported the refreshed Plan and unanimously approved the proposed precept.