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To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel – 2 February 2017

Subject: Proposed National Association of Police and Crime Panels

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## **1. Introduction**

1.1 This report asks the Panel to decide whether to express interest in the creation of a national association of Police and Crime Panels.

## **2. Background**

2.1 The Vice-Chair and officers attend a meeting of Panel members and officers in the Eastern Region. This meeting is arranged by Frontline Consulting. At the most recent meeting there was discussion of the merits or otherwise of establishing a National Association of Police and Crime Panels and it was agreed that each Panel would be asked to consider the idea. The issue was also discussed at a recent national conference of Police and Crime panels. The Chairman asked officers to prepare this report to enable a discussion.

2.2 Historically there have usually been national associations of bodies involved with oversight of policing. Police authorities formed the Association of Police Authorities (APA) and Chief Executives of Police Authorities formed the Association of Police Authority Chief Executives (APACE). Following the changes to police governance in 2012, Police and Crime Commissioners formed the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and PCC Chief Executives formed the Association of PCC Chief Executives (APCE). These bodies have sometimes provided comment on matters of national interest and would be consulted by Government if changes are being proposed. Similar arrangements exist within local government (e.g. Local Government Association (LGA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)).

## **3. Existing arrangements**

3.1 Up to now liaison and discussion between Panels has been undertaken informally. As noted above the Vice Chair and officers attend meetings, about 3-4 times per year, with a selection of other Panel representatives across the East region (Kent, Thames Valley, Bedfordshire, Essex, and Cambridgeshire). Officers have joined an informal network of Panel officers across the South East, which meets 2-3 times per year (Kent, Hampshire, Thames Valley, Surrey, and Sussex). Similar informal arrangements exist in some other parts of the country (e.g. East Midlands). Frontline Consulting have arranged three national

conferences of Police and Crime Panels some of which the Chairman and Vice-Chair and officers have attended.

#### **4. Benefits of a National Association**

4.1 Panels currently have no corporate voice in discussions with the Home Office or other parties so any concerns that Panels about their role, responsibilities and powers have no means of national expression.

4.2 The benefits of having a national association include:

- having a recognised voice to represent views at a national level
- providing support and development to Panel members
- being better able to provide national leadership and influence change
- consulting members to develop consolidated views
- disseminating best practice and identifying efficiencies by working together
- providing a forum for debate
- representing and promoting the interests of panels to key stakeholders and partners
- increasing the visibility and status of panels
- providing support and guidance
- enabling panels to prepare for change, for instance if/when PCCs become responsible for oversight of the Fire service.

#### **5. Other points to consider**

5.1 Members may wish to consider whether the above benefits (which are largely those put forward in support of any national association within local government or policing) justify the creation of a national association of Police and Crime Panels. Existing informal arrangements provide a means to discuss common concerns and exchange information so members may wish to consider the extent of any added benefits provided by a national association. Unlike PCCs, Police Authorities, and local authorities, Panels have very few formal powers and therefore the number of issues on which Government are likely to seek the views of Panels nationally or on which Panels might wish to speak with a national voice is quite limited.

5.2 A national association would presumably require a subscription from members. At present the Home Office grant provided to the Panel to meet its running costs is significantly underspent so any subscription could be accommodated within the existing grant. It would not cause additional cost for any Council in Kent or Medway.

#### **6. Conclusion and recommendation**

6.1 As all Panels in the Eastern region are being asked to consider the idea, officers will provide a verbal update at the meeting of any known decisions by other Panels.

6.2 That the Panel decides whether to support the formation of a national association of Police and Crime panels or not at this time.

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