

**From:** Matthew Scott, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner  
**To:** Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel  
**Subject:** Actively engaging with residents in Kent and Medway  
**Date:** 28 March 2017



### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. The Office of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) strives to achieve three key objectives through its communications and engagement activities:
  - Informing the public and partners about the statutory roles and responsibilities of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) generally;
  - Informing the public and partners about the Kent PCC's own priorities, and how he has been fulfilling the six "I will" promises in the new Police and Crime Plan '[Safer in Kent: The Community Safety & Criminal Justice Plan](#)';
  - Enabling the public and partners to engage with the PCC in whatever way is most convenient to them, to ensure their concerns are listened to and acted upon.
2. Good public engagement also improves the quality of decisions PCCs take, since they are based on a broad knowledge of the issues that matter most to local communities.
3. By keeping sight of these objectives, the OPCC ensures all engagement is efficient, effective and represents value for money.
4. To meet these objectives, the PCC has developed a varied engagement programme which enables residents to have their say on how their streets and communities are policed. The programme has been designed to allow people to express their views in a way which is most convenient for them, including in urban, rural and coastal locations right across the county, and with opportunities outside of normal office hours.
5. Methods being used include the following:
  - A more accessible website;
  - 'Street stalls' in high-footfall locations;
  - 'Question Time' events (including at the county's schools);
  - Public consultations;
  - Traditional and social media channels;
  - Direct engagement with community organisations, partner agencies and other elected officials;
  - Proactive e-news alerts.

### **A MORE ACCESSIBLE WEBSITE:**

6. At the start of March 2017 the OPCC completed a transition to [a new website](#) which has a number of significant benefits in terms of engagement and transparency. It meets national accessibility standards and is available to be viewed in a multitude of different languages; it is optimised for mobile devices; and allows users to request a meeting with the PCC or submit funding bids online. Information can be presented in a more flexible way, allowing the OPCC to better promote community safety campaigns, funding opportunities and public consultation exercises when required.

### **'STREET STALLS' IN HIGH-FOOTFALL LOCATIONS:**

7. The PCC actively seeks out opportunities to engage face-to-face with residents by setting up pop-up 'street stalls' at high-footfall locations when possible. When canvassing people's views on the priorities for the new Safer in Kent Plan, for example, the PCC undertook a tour of shopping centres and supermarkets across Kent and Medway. These street stalls are particularly effective at enabling the PCC to talk about his work with members of the public who may not otherwise contact the OPCC to have their say.

### **'QUESTION TIME' EVENTS:**

8. Community organisations and local councils are able to request a meeting with the PCC, where he can talk about his work and answer any relevant questions from residents. Some of these are 'closed' meetings –

such as a recent talk with pupils at Oakwood Park Grammar School in Maidstone – while others are advertised in advance to the public - visits to the Swale Seniors' Forum in Sittingbourne and to the Kent branch of the Federation of Small Businesses in Tonbridge, for example.

9. A list of where and when these Question Time events have taken place is posted on the OPCC website and is regularly updated.

#### **PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS:**

10. The PCC's regular engagements ensure the concerns of the public and partners are listened to and acted upon, but occasionally the PCC desires their views on a specific topic or idea. At these times the PCC will embark on a multi-channel consultation exercise designed to reach as many people as possible. For example, in autumn 2016 the PCC used various communications methods to seek the views of the public and partners on the priorities in the Safer in Kent Plan. This consultation exercise received almost 1,700 responses from a representative sample of Kent and Medway's diverse communities and received praise from the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel.

11. The PCC has also sought people's views on restorative justice and on his council tax precept proposal.

#### **TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS:**

12. The OPCC issues regular press releases to local and national media contacts to showcase the PCC's work and to demonstrate how he has been fulfilling the six "I will" promises he makes in the new Safer in Kent Plan. Where appropriate, the OPCC supplements these announcements by making the PCC available for interviews with local and national TV, radio, online and print journalists.

13. Social media offers the OPCC a further opportunity to engage with residents and partners directly, so good use is made of popular digital channels. The corporate [@PCCKent Twitter account](#) boasts more followers (10,500) than any other PCC account in England and Wales. In addition, the PCC makes personal use of Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram to keep residents and partners up-to-date with his work.

#### **DIRECT ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS, PARTNER AGENCIES AND OTHER ELECTED OFFICIALS:**

14. The PCC meets with various community organisations and partner agencies on a regular basis, both in his office and out in the community. These meetings help the PCC to understand different groups' priorities, and those groups in turn can learn how to work more effectively to make people safer, reduce re-offending and/or support all victims of crime.

15. The PCC also meets with other elected officials, including local councillors and MPs, to better understand the local priorities of people living across the various constituencies in Kent and Medway.

#### **PROACTIVE E-NEWS ALERTS:**

16. More than 5,000 people have subscribed to receive regular free news alerts from the OPCC by email. Efforts are made to encourage people to sign-up via social media and at events such as the Kent Police Open Days. These e-news alerts are useful in alerting people to significant announcements and provide the OPCC with another means to communicate with people across Kent and Medway in a way which is efficient and convenient.

17. Any personal data provided to the OPCC is used in accordance with the Data Protection Act principles. Those who have subscribed can request to have their names removed from the mailing list should they no longer wish to receive e-news alerts from the OPCC.

#### **ENGAGING WITH HARDER-TO-REACH AUDIENCES:**

18. The PCC is keen to be accessible to as many of Kent and Medway's diverse communities as possible and this requires actively seeking out opportunities to engage with harder-to-reach audiences. Previously, he has met with the Kent Equality Cohesion Council, the Show Racism the Red Card group, the Kent Minority Ethnic Police Association and discussed hate crime with representatives from the Muslim, Sikh, Baha'i and Eastern European communities at a conference hosted by Medway Youth Parliament. Next month, the PCC is due to take part in a Question Time event with young people at the Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara in Gravesend.

19. Recognising the importance of engaging with young people, the PCC visits schools and colleges to speak face-to-face about his work and his priorities. He has also drawn up a 'Backing Young People' document which sets out in more detail how he will support the under-24s, who make up around 29% of the population in Kent and Medway.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE:**

20. Following on from the success of a public Question Time meeting held recently in Gravesham, the OPCC is looking for other venues to host similar events elsewhere in the county. Meetings will be scheduled in urban, rural and coastal locations to maximise the opportunities for all of Kent and Medway's diverse communities to engage face-to-face with the PCC and to ensure their concerns are listened to and acted upon.

21. The PCC's Governance Board is being replaced by a public Performance and Delivery Board meeting where he will hold the Chief Constable to account. An additional annual meeting will be held in the evening to encourage more members of the public to observe him holding the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of Kent Police's priorities.

22. Work has begun on a new community safety campaign, led by the OPCC in which the emergency services, community safety partnerships, voluntary sector organisations and community groups will be encouraged to work together to share community safety messages on social media.

23. The PCC will continue to invest in and promote community initiatives which help Kent Police engage positively with the communities it serves, such as the Volunteer Police Cadets and the new Kent Police Museum in Faversham.

24. The OPCC and Kent Police intend to be a joint exhibitor at the three-day Kent County Show in July 2017, after an absence of several years, with the potential to engage with 80,000 show visitors. The OPCC will also again be present at the annual Kent Police Open Days which attract more than 10,000 visitors. These two events present an opportunity for the PCC to further consult with residents over some of the ideas first tested during the Safer in Kent consultation last year.