

Report by: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel

SUBJECT: Kent Police and Crime Commissioner's draft Safer in Kent: The Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan 2017-21 and proposed precept for 2017/18

Date: 2nd February 2017

PANEL DECISIONS

The Panel recommends that the Commissioner revises the wording in the Safer in Kent: The Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan to make clear that he owns the Plan and is responsible for delivery.

The Panel unanimously approves the Commissioner's proposal to increase the police precept for 2017/18 by 3.3%.

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

Draft Plan

2. The Panel were provided with the Commissioner's draft Safer in Kent: The Community Safety and Justice Plan 2017-21 and budget, together with a report explaining the main themes of the draft Plan. The Panel noted that, although the draft Plan fulfilled the statutory requirement to publish a Police and Crime Plan, the Commissioner had chosen to call the document the Safer in Kent: The Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan. The Commissioner presented a report and Appendices which set out the draft Plan and the results of the Commissioner's consultation on the draft Plan, proposed a precept and confirmed that the draft Plan took account of the Strategic Policing Requirement and of the views of other stakeholders. The report and Appendices also set out the Commissioner's reasons for an increase in the precept of 3.3% 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 Plan and budget. The Panel noted that the priorities in the draft Plan included most of the topics mentioned as priorities in consultation. The Panel pointed out to the Commissioner that mental health had not featured strongly in the priorities identified in consultation but noted the Commissioner's explanation that he considered this to be very important and that he wished to show leadership by including it in his priorities. The Panel noted that most of those consulted had been supportive of the proposal to increase the precept.
4. The Panel noted that the Commissioner wished to emphasise the extended role of Commissioners in criminal justice and the links to community safety and for those reasons had decided on a broader title for the Plan.
5. The Panel were pleased to note the extent of the Commissioner's consultation and were supportive of the more strategic approach he had taken to the content of the plan, with emphasis on his personal responsibilities.
6. The Panel sought clarification of the Commissioner's intentions in respect of funding for Community Safety Partnerships and CCTV and noted that the Commissioner hoped to maintain grants to Community Safety Partnerships in future years but was unable to guarantee this if his own funding was reduced. The Panel noted the Commissioner's view that other funding, for example through the Mental Health and Policing Fund he had set up, might be available for suitable projects by Community Safety Partnerships. The Panel noted the Commissioner's view that CCTV funding was not a police responsibility.
7. The Panel noted that the Police and Crime Act gave the Commissioner new responsibilities in a number of areas, including complaints against the police and noted that the Commissioner was considering the options and would bring a report to the Panel later in the year.
8. The Panel sought clarification of the references to getting "the right support from the right person" in mental health cases and noted the Commissioner's intention to engage further with social services, Clinical Commissioning Groups and the Kent and Medway Health Partnership to encourage them to become more actively involved.
9. The Panel noted that the draft Plan referred to the actions the Commissioner would take to support the plan. The Panel felt that it should be made clear that the Commissioner owned the plan and was not therefore just supporting its delivery. **The Panel recommended that the Commissioner revise the wording to clarify his ownership and responsibility for delivering the Plan.**
10. The Panel were supportive of the draft Plan and noted that the Commissioner was willing to present progress reports at future meetings.

Proposed precept

11. The Commissioner explained that he sought approval for an increase in the police precept of 3.3%, (equivalent to £5 per year or 9.6 pence per week for a Band D household) The Panel noted the Commissioner's comment that the police precept in Kent would still be amongst the lowest, which was why a larger increase than 2% had been permitted by Government without the need for a referendum. The Commissioner explained that Government decisions on grant were based on the assumption that the precept would be raised by the maximum permitted amount.
12. The Panel noted that the budget would provide for an establishment of 3260 officers (an increase of 80) and also for an increase in the PCSO establishment from 280 to 304 and that this would have a positive impact on visible policing. The Panel also noted that the Chief Constable intended to give additional powers to PCSO's.
13. The Panel expressed concern about the proposal to use £5.1m from reserves to smooth out the savings requirement for the Force but were assured by the Commissioner that any underspend would be used to replenish those reserves.
14. The Panel also sought and received an assurance that both the auditors and the Chief Finance Officer were content with the plan to reduce reserves from £65m to around £20m by 2021/22.
15. The Panel unanimously supported the proposed precept for 2017/18.