

## **KENT AND MEDWAY POLICE & CRIME PANEL**

By: Anna Taylor – Panel Officer  
To: Kent and Medway Police & Crime Panel  
Subject: Draft Panel Annual Report – 2021/22  
Classification: Unrestricted

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### **Summary:**

Preparation and publication of an Annual Report by the Panel is a legal requirement under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The Panel is asked to consider and approve the below content for the 2021/22 Panel Annual Report.

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### **Draft Annual Report**

#### **Introduction**

1. This report summarises the work of the Panel between February 2021 and February 2022. It follows annual reports that have been produced every year since the Panel was established in November 2012. The objective of the Panel is to scrutinise and support the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner in his role in helping tackle crime and disorder in Kent and Medway.

#### **Meetings**

2. During this period (2021) the Panel met formally 4 times – 4 February, 17 June, 7 September and 8 December. The Panel also received a Covid-19 focused briefing from the Chief Constable in February focusing on policing through Covid-19 and the Covid-19 response. In addition to this, the Chair communicated with the Commissioner to assist and support the smooth running of Panel business.

#### **Panel business**

3. The Panel met its statutory duty in February 2021 to consider and make recommendations on the Commissioner's refreshed draft "Safer in Kent: The Community Safety and Justice Plan – Continuation for April 2021 to March 2022", as well as his proposed budget and precept. The Panel supported the Plan.

4. The Panel approved the Commissioner's proposed maximum permitted precept increase of £15 for the year for an average Band D, which equated to a 7.4% precept increase. The Panel noted that this would keep Kent in the lower quartile of precepting PCCs.
5. The Panel met its statutory duty to consider the Commissioner's Annual Report for 2020/2021, which it considered at its meeting on 7 September 2021.
6. The Commissioner has stepped down as the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners lead for Mental Health but remains committed to ensuring that vulnerable people and those suffering mental ill health get support from the right agencies.
7. An open and thorough recruitment process was held for the recruitment of two Independent Co-optees to the Panel. All applicants were interviewed by a sub-committee of the panel and following this process the interview sub-panel unanimously recommended that the Panel re-appointed Mrs Bolton and Mr Sander as Independent Members of the Panel for a further four years – this was approved by the main Police and Crime Panel in December 2021.
8. The Panel received reports on the following issues between February 2021 and February 2022:
  - a. The Commissioner updated Members on the Police complaints process and reminded Panel Members of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's and Professional Standards Department's (PSD) complaint responsibilities. Within the Commissioner's area there had been a significant increase in casework due to a widening of the complaint definition. The Commissioner and his officers met with the PSD regularly and received annual complaint reports, the Commissioner's Monitoring Officer oversaw the operation of the complaints process.
  - b. An Overview of the Commissioner's Forward Plan to 2024 – this set out the Commissioner's priorities for his term in office with the following 7 key areas:
    - i. A new Police and Crime Plan
    - ii. Continuation of the Police Officer uplift programme
    - iii. Commissioning
    - iv. Tackling violence against women and girls
    - v. Strategic relationships and partnerships
    - vi. Budgetary considerations
    - vii. Pandemic response and evaluation

- c. The Commissioner's Annual Report 2020/21 – the report highlighted the continuing domination of the Covid-19 pandemic which had created unprecedented challenges. He addressed five key areas included in the report: the Covid-19 pandemic; commissioning; finance; key achievements and the outlook for the future.
  - d. The Police Uplift Programme (PUP) which was created following the Government's announcement in 2019 to increase the number of police officers in England and Wales. The report stated that the PUP aimed to recruit 20,000 new officers by March 2023 with a direction set by the Home Office to enhance ethnic minority and female applications and recruitment as part of the uplift ambition.
  - e. The Panel received a report on complaints received against the commissioner covering the period June 2019 – June 2021 it was noted that there was no significant change to the number of recorded complaints made against the Commissioner. Following submission of this report to the Panel a recorded complaint was considered by the Complaints Sub-Committee and this is covered in the below Complaints paragraph.
  - f. Victim Satisfaction, one of the Commissioner's key priorities within his Safer in Kent Plan 2021-22.
  - g. Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) inquiry, this report detailed national and local VAWG developments.
  - h. The Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit, the Commissioner noted that the Unit was in its third year of operation, highlighted its strategic objectives and noted its benefits in streamlining multiple authorities' work into one response. The Panel asked for a further report on the performance of the Unit be reported back to the Panel at an appropriate time.
9. "Questions to the Commissioner" continued as a regular item at each meeting. The Panel welcomed the Commissioner's willingness to answer questions, of which he had been given prior notice. This agenda item continues to provide a greater opportunity for Panel members to raise issues with the Commissioner that do not form part of his formal reports. Question topics included issues such as tackling the issue of e-scooters, graffiti, speed enforcement, visible neighbourhood policing and community policing.

## **Complaints**

10. The Panel, via its Officers, maintained oversight over formal complaints made against the Commissioner under the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2012. One complaint was progressed to a Complaints Sub-Committee hearing in October 2021. The Panel resolved that the complaint not be upheld and no formal action should be taken against the commissioner. Officer contact with other Panels suggests that the number of complaints (recorded or otherwise) against the Kent Commissioner remains low compared with other Commissioners.

## **Commissioner's decisions**

11. The Commissioner published the following decisions during this period:

- a. Schemes of Consent – June 2021
- b. Athena Contract Extension – June 2021
- c. South East & Eastern Region Police Insurance Consortium (SEERPIC) Section 22A Agreement – June 2021

## **Panel terms of reference**

12. The Panel's terms of reference require them to be reviewed annually. It is considered convenient to do this at the same time as the Panel reviews its work over the past year. Minor wording changes, clarifications or consequential amendments to address changes in law or external arrangements may be made from time to time by Officers, subject to review by the KCC Monitoring Officer. No significant changes to the terms of reference are proposed at this time for the Panel's consideration and approval. The full terms of reference can be found by following this [link](#).

## **Panel budget**

13. The Panel's terms of reference also require the Panel to review its budget on an annual basis. Finance for the Panel's work comes from an annual Home Office grant of £69,860. The expenditure incurred is predominantly on staff support to the Panel, but also relates to subscriptions to relevant membership bodies and payment of co-optee member allowances and expenses. In light of the changed ways of working since covid-19, meeting costs have reduced and produced a saving since the 2019-20 financial year. The forecast outturn for 2021-22 is £34,900 (compared to £37,594 in 2020-21 and £37,710 in 2019-20). The Panel has, while meeting all statutory obligations and undertaking appropriate work as a Panel, kept its costs contained well within the existing Home Office Grant, demonstrating that Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel continues to deliver good value for money.

## Conclusions

14. The Covid-19 pandemic continued throughout this period placing a huge strain on all parts of society with the police playing a major role in the response along with many other sectors. This year saw the re-election of Matthew Scott at the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2021 (postponed from May 2020). In response to Covid-19 the Government legislated to permit remote attendance by Elected Members at formal meetings but this legislation expired in May 2021 which led to a return to physical meetings. The Panel adapted well to the virtual arrangements and again returning to the Council Chamber, with good attendance and engagement. Meetings of the Panel have continued to be webcast to promote public engagement. The Panel also welcomed the positive approach taken by the Commissioner in his management of his Performance & Delivery Boards, ensuring continued access to observe the Commissioner hold the Chief Constable to Account. As in previous years, the professional and balanced approach taken by all parties involved, with an emphasis on transparency and constructive criticism, has ensured that Panel Members have been able to make appropriate challenges to and ask important questions of the Commissioner, who has in turn been in a position to provide relevant information, assurances and commitments for the benefit of the wider public. This process allows for transparency around the strategic criminal justice and policing arena in Kent and Medway and also highlighted the many examples of excellent work by Kent Police. The Panel and Commissioner have, at several of the formal meetings this year, jointly recorded their praise for frontline officers, who face significant daily challenges in their role, notably during the increased risk period of the pandemic. They have also recognised the vital contribution made by support and specialist officers and staff whose work allows policing to function effectively.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

To consider and approve the draft Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel 2021/22 Annual Report.

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