

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

KENT AND MEDWAY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 27 June 2023.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill OBE (Chairman), Mr G Sandher MBE (Vice Chairman), Cllr M Blakemore, Mrs E Bolton, Cllr P Cole, Cllr P Feacey, Cllr Mrs J Hollingsbee, Cllr E Jayes (substitute for Cllr R Palmer), Mr J Meade, Cllr S Mochrie-Cox, Cllr C Nolan, Cllr T Osbourne, Cllr N Warne and Cllr R Wells

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M Scott (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner), Mr A Harper (PCC's Chief Executive), Mr R Phillips (PCC's Chief Finance Officer), and Mr N Wickens (PCC's Head of Policy Coordination and Research)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Ms L Tricker (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

89. Election of Chair

(Item 2)

1. The Scrutiny Research Officer asked for nominations for Chair of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel.
2. Cllr Hollingsbee proposed and Cllr Feacey seconded that Mr Hill be elected Chair of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel. No other nominations were received.

RESOLVED that Mr Hill be elected Chair of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel.

90. Election of Vice-Chair

(Item 3)

1. The Chair proposed and Cllr Wells seconded that Mr Sandher be elected Vice Chair of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel. No other nominations were received.

RESOLVED that Mr Sandher be elected Vice Chair of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel.

91. Membership

(Item 4)

1. The Scrutiny Research Officer outlined the following changes to the membership of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel:

- Cllr Connie Nolan has replaced Cllr Ashley Clark (Canterbury)
- Cllr Charlotte Zosseder has replaced Cllr Oliver Richardson (Dover)
- Cllr Mike Blakemore has replaced Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee (Folkestone and Hythe)
- Cllr Lauren Edwards has replaced Cllr Habib Tejan (Medway)
- Cllr Perry Cole has replaced Cllr Peter Fleming (Sevenoaks)
- Cllr Heather Keen has replaced Cllr George Kup (Thanet). Noted that Cllr Keen will be unable to take her seat so a replacement will be found.
- Cllr Tristan Osbourne has replaced Cllr John Burden (Medway co-optee)

RESOLVED that the Panel noted the changes in membership.

POST MEETING NOTE: Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee and Cllr Jordan Meade joined the Panel filling the Conservative vacancies.

92. Declarations of Interests by Members in Items on the Agenda for this Meeting (Item 6)

No declarations were made.

93. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 18 April 2023 (Item 7)

Mr Sandher stated that he had attended the meeting but had not been included on the official minutes. It was confirmed this amendment would be made.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2023 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

94. Neighbourhood Policing Review (Item B1)

1. The Commissioner presented the report which outlined Kent Police's Neighbourhood Policing Review which had begun 15 months ago under the previous Chief Constable. He said he had received an assurance from the previous Chief Constable that the model would be good as, if not better than the previous one. Acknowledging the loss of PCSOs was regrettable and not a choice he would have made if the circumstances different, he added it was one where he thought communities would see benefits in having police officers instead. The proposed model and implementation would be structured around five main pillars: the Beat Team with ward-based police officers replacing PCSOs on an almost like-for-like basis; the Child-Centred Policing Team which would work with schools and youth centres had seen a small uplift in officers and the number of PCSOs retained; the Neighbourhood Task Force which continued to evolve the Task Force model, but for every district and where PCSOs would remain; the Rural Task Force which was previously considered a central team but was now part of the model and would help develop links with the ward-based Beat Officers; and the Prevention Hub which would focus on anti-social behaviour and licensing at a

county level to support Districts and Divisions. He explained that a number of PCSOs would regrettably be lost under the new model to reduce spend and use the council tax precept effectively, but some PCSOs would be replaced with police officers, and the force would continue to consider areas with the greatest need and the level of resourcing they received. Advising that every ward would have a named police officer, the Commissioner said there was a need to clearly define what the ward was and this would be communicated to councillors and members of the public as soon as possible. Some ward-based police officers had already begun their role, but implementation of the model would be phased until 2024. He affirmed that the ward-based police officers would be better ringfenced and Kent Police would work to ensure they remained in their areas as much as possible.

2. The Chair thanked the Commissioner for his assurance that wards would be clearly defined, and this would be communicated. He felt that it was important for the new ward-based police officers to build a connection with their communities, as PCSOs had previously done. He sought assurances that ward-based police officers could successfully tackle low-level crime and assist vulnerable people. He also asked how long the new police officers would remain in their posts, and if they would be communicating regularly with elected ward members. The Commissioner explained that it was very important to maintain a local beat. The new training programme for neighbourhood policing would also teach new officers the different skills they would need including problem solving and working with the community, and these officers would have more powers than PCSOs so would have increased intervention abilities. He agreed that continuity of police officers in the community was important, so Kent Police had tried to encourage officers to apply for new neighbourhood policing roles where they had previously expressed an interest in this field of work.
3. A Member shared their concern regarding the continuity of ward-based police officers and asked how long a police officer would remain, and if data regarding how often they were moved from their ward could be reported publicly. The Commissioner confirmed that a police officer could be moved if needed, but data regarding this issue could be shared at the Performance and Delivery Board once the model was embedded. He added that several of the new ward-based police officers were formerly PCSOs so already had longstanding links with their communities.
4. The Vice Chair sought reassurance that Kent would not be impacted by the long lead in for implementation of the full model, which was scheduled for September 2024. He also asked that the ward-based police officers link in with charities, business organisations and faith groups to better understand their communities. The Commissioner explained that September 2024 was a worst-case scenario, and the goal was to have an increasing percentage of roles filled at key dates up until early 2024, and this would be monitored closely. He added that ward-based police officers would be engaging with their communities through groups such as NextDoor and My Community Voice, as well as directly. The Vice Chair asked what would happen when the ward-based police officer was on annual leave or sick leave. The Commissioner agreed that it was important for residents, in the absence of their ward-based police officer, to be able to contact somebody. He agreed

an action to understand what would happen in the scenario of absence or illness of a ward-based police officer, and who residents could contact.

5. The Commissioner explained, following a question from a Member, that 101 received approximately 30,000 calls per month and used to be the predominant method of communication with the police, but it was now 999. The new Chief Constable was working with the Commissioner's office to improve accessibility to 101 and reduce call attrition to less than 10% using a flex resourcing model during peak times, which was successfully reducing wait times and providing residents with a better service. The Performance and Delivery Board was regularly monitoring 101 and it was important that members of the public knew that 101 was an option to report non-emergency enquiries.
6. A Member asked if implementation of the Neighbourhood Policing Model could be brought back to the Panel throughout the year. She also queried the morale in the neighbourhood policing model, and if some staff had already moved roles. The Commissioner confirmed that he was happy to bring regular updates to the Panel, as the implementation progressed. He also confirmed that the review had impacted morale amongst some officers and staff who had left for other roles such as with Border Force. The length of time from the announcement of the review to its implementation had meant some officers had chosen to leave, but there were no compulsory redundancies, although some staff had chosen voluntary redundancy. He acknowledged the challenge of improving morale, as this was the largest review since 2017, but many impacted staff had received their preferences and the role they sought.
7. A Member stressed the importance of communication when undertaking reviews, particularly communications with PCSOs. The Commissioner agreed that initial communications with PCSOs regarding the review had been poor, and the force had tried to retain as many PCSOs as possible or train them to become police officers. He agreed that there were communications lessons to be learnt from the review.
8. The Commissioner confirmed, following a question from a Member, that the Chief Constable was working to embed a culture change in neighbourhood policing through increased supervision, support and opportunities for officers. He explained that the force was also considering changes to ways of working through remote deployment, meaning police officers would not need to go back to their police station to do paperwork and could work from anywhere with a secure Wi-Fi connection, such as fire stations or parish council offices, as well as working from other police stations not in their ward.
9. The Chair confirmed that an update on neighbourhood policing would come back to the Panel, and it was agreed that a report would be presented at April's meeting, but verbal updates could come before then if necessary.

RESOLVED to note the report and agree to a further update at the April 2024 meeting.

95. Update on Fraud

(Item B2)

1. The Commissioner presented the report which highlighted the prevalence of fraud, as it equated to 40% of all crime reported. The outcomes of fraud in Kent were better than other comparable areas due to increased investment in the Serious Crime and Economic Crime Unit. He explained that Action Fraud remained the main reporting tool for fraud crime, but only 5% of reports made to Action Fraud were passed to the police for investigation, as many were filtered out due to high criteria for submission. The fraud teams within Kent Police worked closely with partner organisations such as local council's and trading standards teams, as well as with the police's prevention team to support businesses and raise public awareness of fraud. Victim support for fraud was co-ordinated at both a national and local level, and forces worked together to share best practice. The Commissioner confirmed that the national Fraud Strategy had been published in May which introduced a new Fraud Squad and increased international working, and an update had been received at the Performance and Delivery Board. He summarised and stated that there remained challenges with fraud as not enough cases were passed from Action Fraud to the police and confidence in Action Fraud amongst the public remained low.
2. The Chair echoed the importance of partnership working, and asked what work could be undertaken at a local level to improve confidence in the police's handling of fraud. The Commissioner agreed that local fraud detection was needed, but the National Fraud Strategy and improvements to Action Fraud should improve residents' confidence.

RESOLVED to note the report.

96. Violence Against Women and Girls Inquiry - update

(Item B3)

1. The Commissioner introduced the report highlighting that his office had undertaken an inquiry on the issue, including a large survey and a big data exercise. The results from the big data exercise had been reported in a previous paper to the Panel but had found key indicators for who was more likely to perpetrate violence against women and girls. A roundtable meeting had been held to scrutinise the proposals and recommendations from the inquiry before the outcomes were published last year which were now being implemented. The Commissioner highlighted some of the recommendations from the inquiry that were being delivered such as officer verification checks; the launch of the StreetSafe tool; and more comprehensive safeguards. He explained the Walk and Talk events and the launch of his Victim Voice initiative, as well as school intervention programmes and victim satisfaction surveys. He summarised and felt that there had been good progress implementing some of the recommendations, but there was a need to refocus efforts on others. He added that the national Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy currently included men and boys but felt that there needed to be a separate national strategy for men and boys and separate funding

streams.

2. Mr Meade declared an interest that he was the Chairman of the Gravesham Street Pastors Charity, which had been mentioned in the report.
3. A Member questioned what work was being undertaken to ensure the Walk and Talk events were reflective and representative of the local community, and what outreach could be done to include young people in these events. The Commissioner agreed that early Walk and Talk events had not been impactful as they had not been representative of the community, and this had been due to poor communication. He stated that the team were now using Twitter, Facebook, NextDoor and My Community Voice to promote these events and increase numbers of people attending. He added that the Walk and Talk events were also being more proactive and were directly engaging with members of the public, and being held in busier areas.
4. The Commissioner, in response to a question from a Member, stated that the team were now working to improve the follow-up to crimes and the investigation of crimes against women and girls, as these areas would improve residents' confidence in the police. The team worked closely with the Crown Prosecution Service to receive pre-charge advice, but the charge rate for rape and sexual assaults remained low. The Commissioner stated that Violence Against Women and Girls was a priority in his Police and Crime Plan which was a standing item at the Performance and Delivery Board, and that he met regularly with the Chief Constable to discuss the implementation of the recommendations from the inquiry.
5. A Member expressed concern that young people were not engaging with programmes for schools, and asked if the police were the right organisation to be running the Schools Intervention Programme. The Commissioner stated that this issue had been recognised amongst the force, and lockdowns during the pandemic had affected young men's behaviour, particularly an increase in misogyny and sexualisation of women on social media. He stated that the police worked in partnership with organisations such as the St Giles Trust to deliver programmes in schools and provide targeted responses to developing trends.
6. A Member highlighted the Kasey report and attitudes towards women amongst police officers and asked if Kent Police had undertaken any work regarding this. The Commissioner stated that Kent Police had responded to the Casey report by uplifting the central vetting and counter-corruption teams, as well as introducing an internal whistleblowing procedure. He stated that some officers in Kent Police had been disciplined or sacked following internal investigation in response to the Kasey report. Verification checks had been implemented immediately after the murder of Sarah Everard and this service had been used by members of the public.

RESOLVED to note the update.

97. Questions to the Commissioner
(Item D1)

Question 1

As per the Commissioners Police and Crime Plan can the Commissioner detail and explain how he is holding the Chief Constable to account for the perceived lack of Kent Police resourcing and focus in tackling the ongoing issue of ASB in our communities and our town centres with specific focus on motorbikes, mopeds, e-scooters, e-bikes and so call off road 'dirt' bikes which is perceived by residents to be of little or no priority to Kent Police with ongoing incidents and cases continuing for weeks, months and sometimes years.

(Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox, Gravesham Borough Council)

1. In response to the question, the Commissioner assured the Panel that he continued to hold the Chief Constable to account through the Performance and Delivery Board. He stated that as part of their Safer Summer campaign, the force would be prioritising anti-social behaviour (ASB), road safety and related issues, adding the Deputy Chief Constable had provided and assurance that a plan was also being put together around ASB caused by off-road motorbikes specifically. Noting that Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) were being sought in Medway and Dartford regarding this issue, he confirmed that it was a priority for the police moving forward. He stated that e-scooters were not road-safe or road legal, and this would be enforced through the police, adding his view was that they should be seized and crushed as he did not there to be a perception that they had effectively been decriminalised. Noting that enforcement powers around anti-social use of vehicles were the responsibility of the police, he said that a partnership approach was also often helpful to prevent activity such as the erection of gates and pursuit of PSPOs.

Question 2

Trust in the Police is very important to the public and recently Andy Cooke, Head of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) said that 'trust in the police was hanging by a thread and forces are failing to act on recommendations'. Can the commissioner outline to us how he is holding the Chief Constable to account on addressing this and what results he has seen as a result of holding the Chief Constable to account on these?

(Mrs Elaine Bolton, Independent Member)

2. Following the question, the Commissioner confirmed that trust and confidence in the police was paramount. He stated that he was holding the Chief Constable to account through HMICFRS reports, which provided independent assessments and had seen areas of improvement. He felt there was more work to do, for example improvements in the force control room; timely investigations being completed; improved working with the Crown Prosecution Service.

RESOLVED to note the responses to questions.

98. Future work programme (Item E1)

RESOLVED to note the report.

99. Minutes of the Commissioner's Performance and Delivery Board meeting held on 15 March 2023
(Item F1)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Performance and Delivery Board held on 15 March 2023 be noted.