

To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel
Subject: Draft refreshed 'Making Kent Safer' plan and 2024/25 precept proposal
Date: 6 February 2024

Introduction:

1. The [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#) (PRSRA 2011) sets the requirement for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to issue a police and crime plan that covers their term of Office.
2. A police and crime plan must include the following information:
 - the police and crime objectives to be delivered;
 - the policing that the Chief Constable should provide;
 - the financial and other resources to be provided to the Chief Constable to exercise their functions;
 - the means by which the Chief Constable will be held to account for the provision of policing; and
 - the crime and disorder reduction grants that will be made and any conditions associated with them.
3. Whilst every plan will be localised in nature, they all share a common aim in communicating a PCC's vision and objectives.
4. PCCs are required to keep the plan under review and at any time, may issue or vary a police and crime plan; in doing so, they must have regard to the [Strategic Policing Requirement](#) (SPR) which is issued by the Secretary of State and was updated in February 2023.
5. Before issuing or varying a police and crime plan, PCCs must:
 - prepare a draft of the plan or variation;
 - consult the Chief Constable in preparing the draft plan or variation;
 - send the draft plan or variation to the Police and Crime Panel;
 - have regard to any report or recommendations made by the Panel in relation to the draft plan or variation;
 - give the panel a response to any such report or recommendations; and
 - publish any such response.
6. In exercising their discrete functions, PCCs and Chief Constables must have regard to the issued police and crime plan.
7. However, the police and crime plan also impacts upon a wide variety of stakeholders and has a number of intended audiences including the public, victims of crime and witnesses, police officers and staff, the Secretary of State, Police and Crime Panels, community safety partners, criminal justice agencies and the private and voluntary sector.
8. The PRSRA 2011 also requires PCCs to notify the Police and Crime Panel of the precept which is proposed to be issued for the financial year.
9. The Police and Crime Panel must review the proposed precept and make a report to the PCC, which may include recommendations, including as to the precept that should be issued for the financial year.
10. This report fulfils the requirements set out in paragraphs 5 and 8.

Refreshing the 'Making Kent Safer' plan:

11. On 1 April 2022, the PCC published his police and crime plan, titled 'Making Kent Safer – April 2022 to March 2025'.

12. In accordance with the PRSRA 2011, the PCC is committed to consulting with victims and the wider community and to keeping the plan under review, particularly in light of changes to the SPR and/or recommendations made by the Police and Crime Panel. More formally, the PCC has determined that the plan will be refreshed annually.
13. Attached as Appendix A is the 2024 refreshed version of 'Making Kent Safer' in text only format. Once the text has been finalised, photographs and graphics will be added. It will be presented in a similar format to the current plan.
14. As a refresh, the plan has been tweaked but not fundamentally altered as it reflects the PCC's ambitions, with the priorities designed to drive the work of Kent Police, partners and the Office of the PCC (OPCC) until March 2025, as well as setting the strategic direction for policing and community safety in the county.
15. In approaching each refresh, the PCC is committed to positively encouraging feedback from individuals, communities and partner agencies. With circa 1.9 million people living in diverse urban, rural and coastal communities across Kent and Medway, the PCC commenced his formal consultation in the summer of 2023.
16. The PCC launched his Annual Policing Survey in July 2023 and it remained open to November 2023. A total of 4,538 responses were received which is the highest return rate for the survey to date.
17. Against a total Kent and Medway population of circa 1.9 million, 4,538 responses is considered statistically significant at the 95% confidence level (a commonly accepted level of probability).
18. A report outlining the survey methodology, and the full results is attached as Appendix B (and can also be viewed [here](#) on the OPCC website).
19. Below is an overview of some of the key questions and a precis of the results (previous year's figures are also included where comparative data are available):

Q1. On a scale of 1-10, how much do you trust Kent Police? (1 = not at all / 10 = very much)

- Respondents across Kent and Medway trusted Kent Police 6.0/10

Q2. Overall, how well do you think Kent Police perform?

<i>Extremely well</i>	12.7%
<i>Quite well</i>	27.2%
<i>Neutral</i>	26.1%
<i>Quite badly</i>	22.1%
<i>Extremely badly</i>	11.8%

Q3. On a scale of 1-10, how safe do you feel where you live? (1 = very unsafe / 10 = very safe)

- Respondents across Kent and Medway felt 6.3/10 safe where they live
[2022 = 7.2 / 2021 = 7.0 / 2020 = 7.0 / 2019 = 6.4 / 2018 = 6.5]

Q4. Have you been a victim of crime in the last year?

- 22.7% of respondents indicated 'Yes'
[2022 = 17.9% / 2021 = 16.8% / 2020 = 15.9% / 2019 = 19.7% / 2018 = 23.3%]

Q6. Did you report this crime?

- 81.7% of victims indicated they did report the crime
[2022 = 79.4%]

Q7. If so, how did you report it?

		<u>2022</u>
<i>Online</i>	34.3%	27.4%
<i>999</i>	23.6%	17.6%
<i>101</i>	25.2%	22.7%
<i>In person (i.e. at police station, to an officer/PCSO)</i>	10.4%	20.5%
<i>Other (e.g. Crimestoppers)</i>	6.5%	11.7%

Q12. Would you be prepared to pay more council tax to support policing in Kent?

- 41.9% of respondents indicated 'Yes'
[2022 = 52.4%]

Q13. If so, by how much per year?

		<u>2022</u>
£5	20.8%	19.3%
£10	33.0%	30.9%
£15	46.2%	49.8%

Q15. Which of the following issues do you feel are the most important?

- Respondents could select up to six issues from a pre-defined list; the top five were:
 1. Serious violence, including gangs / weapon offences
 2. Sexual offences, including rape
 3. Child sexual exploitation
 4. Antisocial behaviour
 5. Burglary / robbery

20. Whilst not mandatory, to monitor how representative the sample was of Kent and Medway's population, respondents were also asked to provide demographic information and indicate whether they worked for, or volunteered with Kent Police.

21. It should be noted that the survey formed only one element of the consultation. As well as feedback received throughout the year from engagements undertaken by the PCC, it took account of the thousands of pieces of correspondence received by the OPCC and a number of other inputs. These include the SPR, feedback and observations from the Police and Crime Panel, criminal justice bodies and community safety partners, emerging local threats and national guidance.

22. The Chief Constable has also been fully consulted, and of course the PCC's own ambitions and objectives, as well as overall vision for policing and community safety in the county remain at its core.

23. Further to any recommendations made by the Panel, the refreshed plan will be published on 1 April 2024.

24. The PCC would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who completed the survey and provided feedback on policing and crime across the county.

25. With PCC elections scheduled for 2 May 2024, it should be noted that the plan may be superseded prior to March 2025.

Changes to the 'Making Kent Safer' plan:

26. As previously indicated, being a refresh some of the plan content has been tweaked; it has not had a major re-write.

27. Based on the survey results, it is important to note the top five issues respondents felt were most important were consistent with previous years and therefore already included in the plan, notably:

- Serious violence, including gangs / weapon offences
- Sexual offences, including rape
- Child sexual exploitation
- Antisocial behaviour
- Burglary / robbery

28. Acknowledging that there are some minor wording changes, the following is an overview of the most significant amendments:

- Integrity and transparency
 - College of Policing Code of Ethics – link updated as January 2024 saw the launch of the revised Code of Ethics consisting of ethical policing principles and guidance for ethical and professional behaviour in policing.

- Kent Police’s Priorities – 2022 to 2025
 - Work with residents, communities and businesses to prevent crime and ASB – change in terminology to ASB Case Review (formerly known as the Community Trigger).
 - Combat organised crime and county lines – priority changed to ‘Combat organised crime, county lines and drugs’ on the basis that illegal drugs are the root cause of much offending and therefore Kent Police must ensure it takes robust enforcement action to reduce harm in local communities.
- National expectations
 - Policing Vision – updated to reflect that the Policing Vision 2025 has been superseded with the publication of Policing Vision 2030.
 - Legislation – titles of legislation updated to ensure they are current.

29. In addition, the section titled ‘Resources and Medium Finance Plan’ has been extensively re-written to take account of the latest financial information.

30. In accordance with the PRSRA 2011, the PCC will keep the plan under constant review, particularly in light of changes to the SPR and/or recommendations made by the Police and Crime Panel.

Policing precept proposal for 2024/25:

31. On 14 December 2023, the Rt Hon Chris Philp MP, Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire announced the provisional police funding settlement for 2024/25. In a written statement to the House of Commons, the Minister said:

“For 2024-25, the council tax referendum threshold for PCCs in England will be £13 for a Band D property. This Government remains committed to ensuring the police are properly funded without placing an excessive burden on local taxpayers. When setting their budgets, PCCs should be mindful of the cost of living pressures that householders are facing.

“...it is imperative that policing continues to deliver on driving forward improvements to productivity and identifying efficiencies where possible. The Government will continue to work with the sector to unlock the full range of opportunities and benefits of productivity and innovation to enable officers to have the tools to deliver on their core mission of keeping the public safe.

“We, therefore, expect policing to approach the 2024-25 financial year with a focus on this Government’s key priorities:

- *Maintaining 20,000 additional officers (148,433 officers in total nationally) through to March 2025.*
- *Continuing to deliver on the opportunities presented by new technology and innovation to deliver improvements in productivity and drive forward efficiencies, therefore maximising officer time and service to the public.*
- *Improving the visibility of police officers and focusing on providing a targeted approach to tackling crime and antisocial behaviour to make neighbourhoods safer, which should be a priority for all forces.”*

32. As a result of the Minister’s statement to the House of Commons, the PCC is proposing to increase the policing precept by the maximum allowable amount of £13 per year, or 5.34% for an average Band D property (equivalent to £1.08 per month, or 3.5 pence per day).

33. The proposed increase in the precept alongside funding received from the Government would support the following initiatives across the county:

- Targeted hotspot patrols – providing extra visible policing to tackle and prevent ASB and drug use in areas repeatedly affected.
- New ‘Immediate Justice’ programme – ensuring those who commit ASB undertake some form of payback within 48 hours.
- New digital forensics system - reducing the amount of time victims are left without their digital devices and freeing up officers to investigate other offences.
- Investment in new technology - to report back to victims of crime and the community.
- Road’s policing – running additional campaigns to crackdown on the fatal four (inappropriate speed, using a mobile phone while driving, not wearing a seatbelt and drink/drug driving).

34. In addition, it would mean no reduction in the record number of police officers in the county, nor the number of PCSOs; as a result, the Neighbourhood Policing model would be implemented in full. It would also enable:
- The Police Cadet scheme to be maintained and where possible grow.
 - Continued investment in the existing police estate, ensuring better use of buildings.
 - Victim services funding to be maintained at the current level.
 - Continued support for the Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).
 - Continuation of the Safer Streets 5 projects in Medway, Folkestone and Hythe and Swale.
35. Increasing the precept to the maximum allowed under the referendum principles would help mitigate but not remove the need to make savings. A shortfall in funding from the Government due to the unfairness in the funding formula as well as the need to maintain officer numbers means substantial savings will need to be made. Even with the proposed £13 increase, Kent Police will be required to make £7.3m of savings in 2024/25 – without the proposed increase, they would need to find a further £11m of savings.
36. However, over 80% of the gross budget is expenditure on employees so it is not possible to make all the savings required from non-pay areas. The Government have also incentivised funding to maintain police officer numbers, this equates to 59% of the gross budget that savings cannot be made from. It is therefore inevitable that with the level of savings required, there will be some impact on staffing. Anything less than the proposed £13 increase would require additional staffing reductions, including the further de-civilianisation of roles and a diminution in services.
37. Both the PCC and Chief Constable believe the proposed budget strikes an appropriate balance between further investment in frontline policing, alongside maintaining police officer numbers while making significant but achievable savings.
38. As in previous years, there will be no increase in the cost of running the OPCC, with the budget being maintained at £1.5m – the same level as in 2017.
39. The decision to propose the maximum precept increase allowed is not one that has been taken lightly though. The PCC is acutely aware it is a further burden when Kent residents are facing considerable cost-of-living pressures, especially with other local authorities increasing their precepts by the maximum permitted. However, even with the increase, the PCC is only able to mitigate some, not all, of the cost pressures.
40. In developing the proposal, the PCC has also considered other factors including:
- The Strategic Policing Requirement.
 - Delivery of the refreshed 'Making Kent Safer' plan.
 - Professional guidance and advice from the Chief Constable.
 - Kent Police's Force Management Statement (FMS) - a detailed self-assessment of future demand versus capacity.
 - Kent Police's Control Strategy - an annual assessment of long-term key issues.
 - The National Crime Agency's Strategic Assessment - an annual assessment of the threat to the UK from serious and organised crime.
41. By way of context, the Kent PCC council tax precept remains the eighth lowest in the country.
42. On Tuesday 23 January 2024, the PCC published a [press release](#) on the OPCC website outlining his precept and budget proposal. Whilst it was recognised that there was limited time and opportunity, members of the public were invited to comment and have their say by completing an online form.
43. Subject to the Police and Crime Panel's approval, the PCC confirms his intention to increase the policing precept in 2024/25 to £256.15 for an average Band D property. This represents an increase of £13 per year (or 5.34%) on the current precept.
44. Attached as Appendix C is a detailed report dealing with financial matters prepared by the Chief Finance Officer.

Recommendation:

45. The Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel is asked to:

- Review the draft refreshed 'Making Kent Safer' plan and produce a report which may include recommendations.
- Review the proposed precept and produce a report which may include recommendations, including as to the precept that should be issued for the financial year.

List of Appendices:

Appendix A Draft refreshed police and crime plan 'Making Kent Safer – April 2022 to March 2025'

Appendix B Annual Policing Survey report – November 2023

Appendix C Chief Finance Officer's Report