

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 on Wednesday, 14 November 2018.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Mrs E Bolton, Cllr B Bradford, Cllr J Burden, Cllr M Dearden, Cllr F Gooch, Ms S Hamilton, Cllr R Hogarth (Substitute for Cllr P Fleming), Cllr MJ Holloway, OBE, Cllr A Horton, Cllr M Rhodes (Substitute for Cllr N Heslop), Cllr H Tejan and Cllr P Todd

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M Scott (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner), Mr A Harper (PCC's Chief of Staff) and Mr Robert Phillips (PCC's Chief Finance Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Cook (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

293. Introduction/Webcast Announcement

(Item 1)

The Chairman stated that it was with great regret that he noted the very sad passing of Mike Campbell, the Panel's Policy Officer; he offered his and the Panel's condolences to Mike's family.

Mike had been involved with the Panel for many years and was an invaluable source of advice and support.

The Commissioner also offered his sympathies and condolences to Mike's family. Mike was a tremendous public servant who had provided fantastic support to the Commissioner's Office and the Panel.

294. Membership

(Item 2)

1. The Clerk stated that Cllr Ann Napier had replaced Dr Eddy on the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel.

2. The Commissioner paid tribute to the contribution Dr Eddy had made to the Panel.

295. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 27 September 2018

(Item 5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2018 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

296. Update on PCC's Expenditure to Support the Police and Crime Plan

(Item B1)

1. The Commissioner introduced this item which updated Members on the PCC's expenditure to support the Police and Crime Plan. The report outlined ways in which the Commissioner sought engagement and partnership working to keep Kent a safe place to live.

2. In relation to advertisements, the Commissioner had, in a bid to increase the number of people responding to the Annual Policing Survey, placed full page adverts in six local authorities' magazines which were delivered to households free of charge. The advertisements did not increase the level of engagement to the extent the Commissioner would have liked, and he commented that whilst the exercise provided valuable feedback, it probably didn't provide value for money so would not be repeated in the same way next year. A Member recommended that the design of publications be reviewed; the Commissioner explained that the aim was to have a simple advert that people would engage with, however he took on board the comments of Members.

3. In relation to Commissioned Restorative Justice (RJ) Services, the Commissioner explained that this was a way in which victims could engage with offenders to support the repairing of harm caused enabling both parties to move forward in a positive way. The value of the commissioned contract was £46,000. A Member mentioned the small number of people (15%) quoted in the report who would not recommend RJ to others. The Commissioner said he would report back to Members on the satisfaction rate locally.

4. Regarding Chaplaincy, this provided a valuable service to police forces and the Commissioner was pleased to support the chaplaincy service.

5. In relation to CrimeStoppers Trust, this charity did an excellent job allowing people the opportunity to report crime anonymously, by phone and online, 24/7, 365 days a year. The Chairman asked whether the Commissioner was content that CrimeStoppers received enough funding. The Commissioner regularly engaged with CrimeStoppers and said the issue of funding was difficult, but he had increased funding this year in recognition of their important work. CrimeStoppers also relied on support from other areas and it was hoped that in future it would be possible to find other ways in which to support them.

6. In response to a question about crime recording accuracy, the Commissioner reassured Members that the Kent Police crime and incident recording team reviewed all reports from CrimeStoppers to determine if a crime should be recorded. In relation to concerns around the disproportionately high number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities using CrimeStoppers, the Commissioner confirmed that the Force was trying to address this.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the Commissioner's update on expenditure to support the Police and Crime Plan.

297. Progress on Recruiting and Deploying Additional Officers

(Item B2)

1. The Commissioner explained that Kent Police was required to find over £9million in cost savings this year, irrespective of the precept level set by the

Government. There was some flexibility in setting the precept, equivalent to £1 per month for a Band D property, and this combined with the cost savings, savings made in the OPCC, and the use of some reserves gave the Chief Constable the ability to recruit up to 200 additional officers and over 80 police staff in 2018/19. The Force had seen positive results in terms of the numbers of people going through the recruitment process. The Commissioner said the Force was hopeful it would be in a position to announce the recruitment of the additional 200 officers, making a total of 400, by January 2019.

2. There had been an increase in female recruits and these now made up 38% of new officers. There had also been an increase in the number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic recruits, but the drive continued to better reflect the population the Force served.

3. The Commissioner had worked hard to publicise the Force's recruitment drive, holding a blue lights jobs fair and visiting diverse communities to encourage applications from all backgrounds.

4. A Member commented on the variety of activities that the Commissioner had been involved in to publicise the recruitment campaign and asked what had been most productive? The Commissioner explained that it was difficult to quantify what had worked, one individual action might have led to several different outcomes. The Commissioner considered that people appreciated the personal touch such as the blue light jobs fair which was attended by residents from all over Kent.

5. Referring to para 9 of the report, Members considered that Kent Police was not representative, particularly from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. A Member asked how the additional officers had made a difference across Kent. The Commissioner explained that he was confident that the Diversity Inclusion Team was making progress with different groups to encourage applications from all backgrounds. The Commissioner agreed to circulate information outside the meeting relating to BAME applications vs officers appointed.

6. A Member commented that a prime area for recruitment was the military; they asked if it was possible to join the Force with visible tattoos and whether there were height restrictions and eyesight requirements? The Commissioner confirmed that it was possible to have tattoos and join, but they would be assessed and should not depict violent imagery or be where they can't be covered up, such as on the face, neck and hands. There were no height restrictions on joining but applicants did undertake health screening and were required to pass a fitness test. The Commissioner stated that his priority was to boost policing numbers, however he was concerned over the available funding if the Government didn't make the right choice over Police Pension payments.

7. The Commissioner commented that if changes to police recruitment required all applicants to have a degree it would limit opportunities for developing a diverse workforce and certainly have hampered the Force's recruitment this year. Policing has changed, and with emerging challenges such as cybercrime there was a need to have a balanced workforce.

8. One Member asked for further information about where the additional resources were to be placed? The Commissioner explained that some of the

additional officers were to be placed in the rural policing team and some in the Roads Policing Unit (an additional 7 to their current 91). Recruitment was currently open for a new Crime Squad to deal with volume and serious crime and also Sexual Offences Liaison Officers. Over half of new recruits were being placed in local policing roles, including Response, Community Policing and Vulnerability Investigation Teams.

9. A Member asked about the timeline from application to initial deployment and also the cost of the recruitment process. The Commissioner explained that the team had been looking at ways to speed up the recruitment process and it now took approximately four months for an individual to start with the Force. Officers spent 19 weeks at Kent Police College, 10 weeks on Division for investigatory training, and were then deployed. The length of the application process had been halved but there was a standard training programme before officers went out on the streets.

10. In response to a question the Commissioner said he would report back to Members on the costs of the recruitment process. The drop out rate of applicants was low.

RESOLVED that the Commissioners progress report on recruitment of additional police officers be noted.

298. 999 and 101 Service - Improvements Following Recruitment *(Item B3)*

1. The Commissioner reported that in his view the performance of the 101 service in the past had not been good; he added that this had also been the view of Panel Members and members of the public. However, through a number of interventions, performance this financial year had improved.

2. There had been a review of business practices within the Force Control Room (FCR) which had been undertaken by consultants. There had been engagement with staff to understand how best to deploy resources to ensure times of peak demand were effectively covered. In addition there were now extra people working in the FCR. The online reporting system was also beneficial, and whilst it was accepted that this may not work for everyone, the Force was starting to see more incidents being reported online.

3. The Commissioner commended the team which had done a fantastic job at improving the 101 service, and said he would continue to hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure progress was sustained.

4. A Member commented on the excellent progress of the 101 service, however had concerns over the high staff turnover and asked the key reasons for people leaving the FCR? The Commissioner commented that there were 3 key reasons why people left the FCR:

- a. Recruitment - in some cases the FCR was used as an access point to join as a police officer or to move onto other roles within the organisation.
- b. It was a competitive market in Kent and there were a number of similar roles available elsewhere.
- c. Work in the FCR could be antisocial with long and anti-social shifts.

5. The Chairman commented that it was an encouraging report, and asked if the improvement was sustainable? The FCR was enormously important for public confidence. The Commissioner stated that he believed it was sustainable as there was lots of investment going into the FCR and there were no plans to put the progress at risk.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the Commissioners 999 and 101 update report.

299. Mental Health Verbal Update

(Item B4)

1. The Commissioner gave the Panel an update regarding Police involvement on mental health issues. He was pleased that the Panel continued to maintain an interest in the mental health agenda. The Home Office had published the latest national statistics on the number of people detained under the Mental Health Act which showed an increase on last year. The use of police cells to detain people had fallen substantially in recent years. Nationally, where recorded, 55% of those detained were male, 95% were over the age of 18. In terms of ethnicity 86% identified as white, 6% Black and 4% Asian.

2. In 52% of cases a police vehicle was used to transport someone to a place of safety under the Mental Health Act, rather than an ambulance.

3. The Chairman asked about the capacity of other agencies, and whether it was increasing? The Commissioner commented that some of the work undertaken locally with Kent & Medway NHS & Social Care Partnership Trust was positive, it was broadly better than it had been in the past. The significant challenge continued to be in A&E with mental health patients waiting an average of 8.5 hrs for clearance or treatment. Between May – Sept 2018 this average was based on 328 occurrences, with at least two police officers present each time. There were no current plans to increase the number of S136 suites in Kent. There was hope that additional money could be found in the budget for crisis care, investment for preventative schemes and treatment was also essential, the lack of preventative services was a problem.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the Commissioners Mental Health verbal update.

300. Sale of Police buildings

(Item C1)

1. A Member asked whether all the communities affected by the 'Sale of Police Buildings' decision had had the benefit of a visit from the Police and Crime Commissioner? The Commissioner had invited district and county councillors and MPs to make them aware that this was due to take place. There was an opportunity to see the Commissioner and ask questions.

2. The Commissioner explained that none of the buildings, with the exception of Deal, could be considered a police station, none had front counter services and they were just being used as a base for a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO). He added that in a number of the locations, PCSOs would now be based in local fire stations, and the buildings would have Kent Police branding added. In response to a comment, the Commissioner accepted that there might be a perception of a

diminishing service, but the PCSOs would remain in the area with a local base. The Commissioner confirmed that no access to the public meant that there was no front counter.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the Commissioner's decision – Sale of Police Buildings.

301. Future work programme *(Item D1)*

1. The Chairman explained that the February 2019 meeting would look at the Budget Proposals and the Commissioner's Plan. Last year the Commissioner's Office had held an informal meeting with Members in advance of the meeting – it was considered that this was very useful and in response to a request from the Chairman the Commissioner agreed to facilitate an informal meeting again in January 2019.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the future work programme and look forward to details of the informal meeting in January 2019.

302. Questions from Panel Members for verbal response from PCC *(Item E1)*

Question 1: "Despite assurances that Officer numbers are now increasing again (circa 3400 at present with a target of 3452) and that sickness absence in the Force is low, there remains a perception that fewer Officers now patrol the streets and that 'low level' reported crimes are not investigated thoroughly even when the victim feels the matter is important. These anecdotal concerns are raised with local Councillors such as myself.

With the above in mind, could the Commissioner reassure the Panel that appropriate measures are being taken to hold the Chief Constable to account for delivering the Police and Crime Plan as part of an effective and efficient Force, which includes provision for visible neighbourhood policing and reasonable investigation of reported crime?" (Cllr Malcolm Dearden).

1. The Commissioner appreciated that this perception might exist, but did not believe that this was always fair. Every crime that was reported to Kent Police, that was their responsibility, was investigated. This was either through the Investigation Management Unit or by individual teams in the local area. The new policing model was implemented to support visible policing, local policing teams were retained along with Community Safety Units and 204 PCSOs to work within local communities. The Commissioner outlined a number of mechanisms by which he held the Chief Constable to account. There was still some way to go and it was hoped that the recruitment of additional officers would help to improve the perception.

Question 2: Chief Constable Sara Thornton, Chair of the National Police Chief's Council opened the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners' conference on 1 November. She said that forces are too stretched to deal with "desirable and deserving" issues, such as logging gender based hate crimes and "wants us to solve more burglaries and bear down on violence" and "refocus on core policing"

As well as being a member of the Police and Crime Panel I am also the Vice Chair of the Independent Police Advisory Group. I sit on the Force's Hate Crime Forum and much good work is being carried out to address hate crime in the county.

In Kent violent crime and hate crime are increasing. What ways does the Police and Crime Commissioner ensure that the Chief Constable has the right balance between policing violent crime and hate crime, especially as one of Kent Police's priorities is to "Put victims and witnesses first" (Mrs Elaine Bolton).

2. The Commissioner offered assurance that despite Sara Thornton's comments Kent Police did consider hate crime to be an important issue and continued to investigate hate crime and provide reassurance to local communities.

3. The Commissioner considered that the debate was now around issues such as misogyny which some police forces were trialing logging as if it was a crime. Police Chiefs did not believe that misogyny should be added as a hate crime currently, but the Commissioner felt that this should be reviewed.

RESOLVED that the Commissioner's answers to the questions be noted.

303. Dates of meetings in 2019/20
(Item F1)

RESOLVED that the dates of meetings in 2019/20 be noted.