

Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel Annual Report 2018/19

Introduction

1. This report summarises the work of the Panel between February 2018 and February 2019. It follows annual reports that have been produced every year since the Panel was established in November 2012.

Meetings

2. During this period the Panel met 5 times. The Chairman also met and otherwise communicated with the Commissioner to assist and support the smooth running of Panel business.
3. An informal briefing for Panel members with the Chief Constable took place in October, at which the Chief Constable provided an update on the new policing model, which was implemented in late 2017, and briefed the Panel on Kent Police Control Strategy. The Chief Constable highlighted the excellent PEEL assessment scores, given to the Force by HMICFRS, and engaged in discussion with Panel members about policing in Kent and Medway. Panel members found this to be a very useful meeting and it is scheduled to be repeated in 2019.
4. Panel members also met informally, in April 2018, to review their effectiveness and to consider ideas for ways of doing business in the future.

Panel business

5. The Panel met its statutory duty in February to consider and make recommendations on the Commissioner's refreshed draft "Safer in Kent: The Community Safety and Justice Plan 2017-21", as well as his proposed budget and precept. The Panel supported the Plan and suggested that the wording be amended to clarify elements in the Road Policing section and to highlight the Child Sexual Exploitation elements with the Plan Priorities.
6. The Panel unanimously approved the Commissioner's proposed precept increase of 7.6% (£12 annual increase for an average Band D), noting the Commissioner's intention to use this additional funding to recruit up to 200 additional Police Officers and that the Chief Constable had given assurances that part of the additional resource would be deployed in local policing and 'high harm' crime issues. The Panel also recognised that the Commissioner had required the Force to continue to make efficiency savings and invest in innovation, rather than using reserves or precept increases to avoid any spending reductions.
7. The Panel met its statutory duty to consider the Commissioner's Annual Report for 2017/18. The Panel subsequently noted the Commissioner's accounts for 2017/18.
8. The Commissioner has placed a strong emphasis on mental health in his plan and the Panel received updates on his work at every meeting.
9. The Panel received 2 updates from the Commissioner on the 999 and 101 service. Members were reassured that work was underway to improve performance in the Force

Control Room (FCR). At the second update in November 2018 performance of the FCR had improved significantly.

10. The Panel received an update on Road Traffic Policing, this was one of the priorities set for the Chief Constable, additional officers were being recruited, a number of which were due to be deployed to the Roads Policing Unit.
11. The Panel was interested to hear about the Special Interest Group (SIG) set up by the LGA and called the National Association of Police, Crime and Fire Panels, of which the host authority for the Panel, Kent County Council, was the formal Member.
12. The Panel was given two verbal updates on the Police recruitment drive which included the first Blue Lights jobs fair in October 2018. The Commissioner had also worked hard to encourage applications from all backgrounds.
13. The Commissioner updated Members on the ways in which he holds the Chief Constable to account, the main method being the Performance and Delivery Board which met in public. The Chief Constable was required to attend those meetings to provide information and answer questions on strategic matters, emerging threats and local issues raised to the Commissioner by partner agencies or members of the public.
14. Following the 2017 report to the Panel on Crime Data Integrity which highlighted poor crime data accuracy the commissioner explained to the Panel that the Chief Constable had put an action plan in place to rectify the problem, at his direction. The Panel were advised that HMICFRS were returning to conduct a further inspection and that the results would be expected in 2019 and that initial internal assessment of progress had been promising.
15. The Panel received an update in September 2018 on preparations for leaving the European Union and were reassured that there was a team of officers at Kent Police planning for a wide range of outcomes from Brexit.
16. "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. The 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 estate management, hate crime priority, town centre policing, long-term force structure and planning, Community Safety Partnership funding, knife crime, Officer fitness requirements and proportionate use of force.

Complaints

17. The Panel received a report on complaints against the Commissioner and noted that, as in every previous year, the number of complaints was very low. It was also noted that since early 2017 no complaints have been progressed to consideration by the Panel's Complaints Sub-Committee.

Commissioner's decisions

18. The Commissioner met his responsibility to inform the Panel of decisions of significant public interest at each meeting. The Commissioner provided the Panel with a clear statement of the business case and reasons for his decisions which the Panel found very helpful. The Commissioner also published details on his website of expenditure in excess of £500 and continued to provide reports to the Panel drawing attention to some of these items and their significance. As agreed in the previous year, Panel Officers have worked with the Commissioner's Office to identify spend items for consideration by the Panel.

Regional and National Contacts

19. Unfortunately, due to exceptional circumstances the Panel was unable to send a representative to the Eastern Regional Network of Panel Members. Two Panel Members did, however, attend Frontline Consulting's seventh PCP Conference for chairs, members and officers where they were able to exchange views and ideas of Panel activity and ways of operating.

Panel terms of reference

20. 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. No changes to the terms of reference are proposed at this time. The full terms of reference can be found by following this [link](#).

Panel budget

21. 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 which has been constant at £63,340 since the Panel was established and is likely to be the same in 2019/20. In 2014/15, expenditure was £30,344; in 2015/16 it was £30,859, in 2016/17 it was £29,730, in 2017/18 it was £32,779.02, and most recently in 2018/19 is forecast to be £35,409. Expenditure consists of reimbursement of Members' expenses and the cost of administrative and policy support to the Panel. It estimated that the outturn for 2019/20 will be similar. The Panel can therefore be assured that its costs are contained well within the money provided by the Home Office.

Conclusions

22. This year the Panel's relationship with the Commissioner, elected in May 2016 has continued to develop and has been positive. The Panel is pleased that he continues to engage constructively at meetings and that he is content for Panel members to enhance their understanding of policing by informal engagement with the Chief Constable.

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