

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, 6 December 2022.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Mr G Sandher, MBE DL (Vice-Chairman), Mrs E Bolton, Cllr J Burden, Mr I S Chittenden, Cllr A Clark, Cllr L Dyball, Cllr P Feacey, Cllr G Hackwell, Cllr Mrs J Hollingsbee, Mr M A J Hood, Cllr S Mochrie-Cox, Cllr R Palmer, Cllr L Parfitt-Reid, Cllr H Tejan and Cllr N Warne

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M Scott (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mr M Dentten (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

64. Declarations of Interests by Members in Items on the Agenda for this Meeting
(Item 3)

No declarations were made.

65. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 27 September 2022
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2022 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

66. Chief Constable Confirmation Hearing
(Item A1)

Tim Smith (Temporary Chief Constable, Kent Police) was in attendance for this item.

1. The Chairman reminded Members that the Confirmation Hearing was not a re-interview of the candidate but an opportunity for the Panel to ensure they were satisfied that due process and reasonable judgement was used by the Commissioner in making his decision to recommend Mr Tim Smith as the new Chief Constable of Kent Police.
2. The Panel were provided with a report of the Commissioner, in adherence with Schedule 8 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, which detailed the Competency and Values Framework for Policing criteria used for assessing the candidates, appointment process and proposed appointment of Mr Smith to the role of Chief Constable.
3. The Commissioner gave an overview of the two-day interview process, which included: a presentation from candidates on tackling violence against women

and girls as well as their strategy proposals; a media exercise based on a mock HMICFRS report; and a long form interview. He confirmed that the interview panel consisted of himself, Cllr Matt Boughton (Leader, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council) and Henu Cummings (Chief Executive Officer, Mid Kent Mind), with assistance from his Office. He reassured the Panel that the College of Policing guidelines were followed throughout the process. It was noted that there was considerable competition in the market with many other forces, including Hampshire and Thames Valley, in the process of recruiting Chief Constables. Members were assured that Mr Smith was aware of the relationship between the Commissioner and Chief Constable, as well as how he would be held to account in public and private. The Commissioner concluded by sharing his confidence that Mr Smith would drive forward improvements to policing in Kent.

4. A Member asked whether the candidates were given the opportunity to meet residents and voluntary and community sector representatives on the briefing day. The Commissioner confirmed that the charity Victims Support had been involved in the process, and as part of his Annual Policing Survey he had asked what residents wanted from their Chief Constable. He noted that good communication, people skills and integrity were the key areas raised. It was explained that there was no direct engagement with residents or voluntary and community sector representatives on the two interview days.
5. A Member asked the Commissioner why he had elected to offer a 10% enhancement to the advertised salary for the role of £172,218. The Commissioner stated that the enhancement reflected the need to attract high quality candidates and salaries of recent Chief Constable appointments made to other forces.
6. Following a question from a Member, the Commissioner reassured the Panel that he had not disadvantaged any candidate based on their local knowledge, with candidates provided the same information at the briefing day.
7. Members shared their concerns at the low number of applicants for the position. The Commissioner explained that applications were low nationally, with eight other recent Chief Constable recruitment processes receiving between one and five applicants. It was noted that in three instances there was only one candidate. He added that it was his intention, in collaboration with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, to make recommendations to the College of Policing and Home Office, suggesting ways to increase the number of suitably qualified chief officers.
8. A Member highlighted engagement as an issue and asked whether Mr Smith had shared his views on how it would be improved. Mr Smith explained that improving 101 response times, with call attrition already halving during his tenure as Temporary Chief Constable, and engaging the force on future changes would be priorities. Regarding engagement with Kent Police officers and staff, he explained that all staff affected by the neighbourhood policing review were consulted and that local councils would also be engaged in due course. He added that he would use increased resources, where available, to

prioritise neighbourhood policing and was aware of the challenges faced by the serious crime units.

9. A Member asked the Commissioner why Chief Constable turnover had increased nationally in recent years. The Commissioner explained that the average time in office had decreased from 4 ½ to 2 ½ years, pension regulations were cited as a leading factor.
10. Members thanked Mr Smith for his recent briefing, in his capacity as the Temporary Chief Constable. They emphasised the importance of maintaining a strong Panel-Chief Constable relationship, without undermining the Commissioner's role in holding the Chief Constable to account. The Commissioner agreed that continued Chief Constable Panel briefings would be appropriate.
11. Mr Smith made a long-standing commitment to Kent, welcomed the Commissioner's scrutiny and pledged to work with the Commissioner to maintain a strong relationship between Kent Police and the Panel.

RESOLVED to:

- a) review the Chief Constable appointment process;
- b) review the proposed appointment; and
- c) agree to the appointment of Mr Tim Smith as Chief Constable of Kent Police.

67. Update following HMICFRS PEEL Inspection 2021/22

(Item B1)

1. The Commissioner introduced the report which provided an update on Kent Police's progress responding to the findings of HMICFRS' PEEL Inspection 2021/22 report as well as his scrutiny of performance. He reminded Members that he had held a bespoke Performance and Delivery Board to consider the measures put in place by the then Temporary Chief Constable, one year after the inspection. He summarised the measures put in place and confirmed that he had received assurances from the Chief Constable that HMICFRS would find significant improvements when conducting their next inspection of the force. He emphasised that the Chief Constable would be held to account against the commitment. Regarding 'protecting vulnerable people', he noted that the Domestic Abuse Hubs had 100% user satisfaction, whilst the overall rate of domestic abuse had decreased by 7%. Concerning 'investigating crime' he told Members that an Assistant Chief Constable now chaired an investigation quality assurance board to ensure standards and improvement in that area of policing. He informed the Panel that he planned to visit other police forces, who were outstanding in areas that Kent Police was found to require improvement in.
2. Following a question from a Member on what operational governance measures were in place to monitor response times, the Commissioner confirmed that Chief Inspectors reviewed attendance times and absence rates locally, with analysts monitoring the long term trends as well as discrepancies between districts as well as urban and rural areas.

3. The Commissioner confirmed, in response to a question from a Member, that there were mechanisms in place for officers to follow up emergency calls.
4. A Member asked for reassurance that the areas of policing, which were not found to require improvement, had not been negatively impacted by a reorganisation of resources to respond to the findings of the PEEL report. The Commissioner confirmed that the Chief Constable had deployed officers from across force in order to spread demand and build experience across force. He reassured Members that he had requested a list of the teams impacted by force control room staffing from the Chief Constable.
5. In response to a question from a Member on data usage, the Commissioner confirmed that officers from sergeant and above, as well as his Office, had use of Kent Police's data hub, which included outcome rates and district breakdowns. He noted that the data hub was utilised when holding the Chief Constable to account on performance. He acknowledged that it took time for the reporting of new offences, such as stalking, to increase to a level that local trends could be understood.
6. A Member asked how Kent Police's approaches to tackling domestic abuse were enhanced by commissioned voluntary and community sector organisations. The Commissioner confirmed that both his Office and Kent Police worked with a number of organisations, with DAVSS based at Tunbridge Wells police station given as an example. He added that Protection Against Stalking delivered training for Kent Police in order to enhance the understanding of the impact and signs of domestic abuse as well as share lived experiences, whilst Interventions Alliance worked with the force to better understand and change perpetrator behaviour.

RESOLVED to note the report and agree to a further update at the April 2023 meeting.

68. Update on the Violence Against Women and Girls Inquiry
(Item B2)

1. The Commissioner gave an update on the work underway to action the recommendations of his Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Inquiry report. He reminded the Panel of the extensive public interest in the Inquiry, with over 8000 responses to the survey. He drew Members' attention to the key findings of the big data exercise which analysed Kent Police victim and offender profiles and trends, concluding that 10% of perpetrators caused 63% of harm. He noted that the findings had been helpful in identifying high harm individuals and targeting patrols on VAWG hotspots. Regarding performance, he committed to continue using the Performance and Delivery Board and his chairmanship of Kent Criminal Justice Board, alongside performance monitoring by his Office, to improve outcomes for female victims and reduce VAWG. It was confirmed that residents' views and priorities for tackling VAWG would continue to be received through the Commissioner's Annual Policing Survey. Concerning advice and signposting, he explained that Collaborate Digital had been commissioned to create age-appropriate messaging on

appropriate interactions, changing behaviours, relationships and online harms, which supplemented the schools intervention programme delivered by the St Giles Trust. He introduced his Victims Voice campaign, which aimed to raise awareness of victims' rights and concluded by acknowledging that reducing VAWG was not exclusively the responsibility of the police, with collaboration with councils and the Violence Reduction Unit vital.

2. Following a question from a Member, the Commissioner explained that harm was calculated using the Cambridge Harm Index. He added that the formula enhanced the force's ability to target the offenders who caused the most harm.
3. A Member asked that a greater focus be placed on focus groups and qualitative victim feedback rather than big data exercises, when understanding victim experiences. The Commissioner responded by explaining that the purpose of the big data exercise was to gain a broad understanding of how key offenders were handled by Kent Police, as well as victim experience. He agreed that victims' experiences and views of the justice system were important. He reminded Members that holding the wider justice system to account was a commitment he made in his Police and Crime Plan, with it noted that further powers to scrutinise the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) would be welcomed.
4. The Commissioner reassured the Panel, following a question from a Member, that his Victim Voice campaign as well as Kent Police's continued use of the early advice line would further improve victims' support and satisfaction.
5. A Member asked what additional resources had been allocated to tackle VAWG in Medway. The Commissioner confirmed that Medway, along with Maidstone and Thanet were beneficiaries of Safer Streets funding and that the police resource allocation was influenced by demand. He summarised the collaborative work with Medway Council as part of the Safer Streets initiative.
6. Following a question from a Member, the Commissioner confirmed that not all areas were eligible to receive investment from the Safer Streets Fund and that areas with the highest concentration of specific crime types were the focus. He reminded members that Community Safety Units (CSUs) continued to receive grant funding from his Office.

RESOLVED to note the report and agree to a further update at the June 2023 meeting.

69. Update on the Violence Reduction Unit *(Item B3)*

1. The Commissioner provided a verbal overview of the Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit's (VRU) key functions, impact and funding arrangements, in addition to the information provided in his report on the Unit's performance, structure, interventions, future plans and challenges. He informed the Panel that, due to the success of VRUs nationally, government had agreed a 3-year funding settlement. He drew the Panel's attention to the

reduced funding for future years and gave an assurance that work was already ongoing with regards to the sustainability of the programme, with regular updates at the VRU oversight board meetings, to understand what costs partners were able to support going forward and how the programme could be made sustainable. Regarding performance, he noted that the VRU had secured a significant number of positive interventions with young people and communities in addition to the successful multi-agency response to young street gangs, which had reduced from 12 to 2 over the previous year, and county lines which had reduced from a peak of 85 in 2020 to 23. He added that the 12 CSUs had been commissioned to deliver sports programmes in young people community crime hot spots as part of the Unit's work with young people. Concerning the Unit's challenges, he highlighted data sharing with NHS partners as an area which required further improvement.

2. A Member asked what had been done to ensure reductions in government funding would not place additional financial demands on councils, should services provided by the VRU be discontinued or reduced. The Commissioner reiterated his disappointment that government funding for the VRU had been reduced and reassured the Panel that the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) prevention lead had lobbied government for increased funding long term. He agreed to raise VRU funding with the prevention lead.

RESOLVED to note the report.

70. Questions to the Commissioner

(Item D1)

Question 1

Persons attempting to get through to the police on the 101 system are subjected to a barrage of pre-recorded messages, one of which states that if it relates to fly tipping, graffiti, or anti-social parking they should contact their local authority. Whilst local authorities accept their responsibilities to the clearing of fly tipped waste and litter, the removal of graffiti and breaches of local traffic orders, is this a case of the police dodging responsibility and putting out misleading information to the public? In this respect I am minded that fly tipping carries up to 5 years imprisonment, graffiti (criminal damage) carries up to 10 years imprisonment and that local authorities do not operate a 24/7 enforcement service, nor do they have powers of arrest, powers to stop and search for items relating to criminal damage, powers to stop vehicles and powers to deal with obstruction of the highway.

What steps will the Commissioner take to call the Chief Constable to account and to ensure that the Chief Constable only promulgates information that is totally accurate and that officers are alerted as to their responsibilities to catching offenders for these matters.

(Cllr Ashley Clark, Canterbury City Council)

1. In response to the question the Commissioner explained the benefit of automated messages for signposting, so long as the information was correct. He confirmed that he would ask the Chief Constable to assess the automated messages as part of his review of the force control room and that messages

are fair, proportionate and do not discourage the reporting of antisocial behaviour.

Question 2

In his role in holding the Chief Constable to account can the PCC update the panel on the ongoing issues regarding 101 response times and further comment on the feedback, engagement and response process that residents can and should expect when reporting crimes to Kent Police and their investigation and outcomes to the ASB or crime(s) reported?

(Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox, Gravesham Borough Council)

2. The Commissioner confirmed that call attrition was monitored on a weekly basis, with the latest data indicating a 28% reduction in call attrition from 55% in October to 27% in November. He stressed that further improvement was required to achieve his ambition of regaining the strong performance experienced before the pandemic, with call attrition under 10% and response times below 90 seconds. He assured the Panel that he was confident that the Temporary Chief Constable had put effective measures in place. Members were reminded of the level of engagement and response which should be expected by residents, as set out in the Victims Code of Practice, which included obligations placed on the police to provide prompt updates to residents where they have been the victim of crime, particularly if it lead to an arrest, within five days and for more serious and more violent crimes within a day.

Question 3

In line with the his priorities for the Chief Constable, to 'work with residents, communities and businesses to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour' and 'be visible and responsive to the needs of communities,' can the Commissioner explain what he has done to hold the Chief Constable to account with regard to Kent Police's performance responding to youth anti-social behaviour and crime against businesses? Can he also explain how increases in the council tax precept have impacted this area of policing and crime reduction?

(Cllr Richard Palmer, Swale Borough Council)

3. The Commissioner reassured the Panel that tackling crime against businesses remained a priority and gave the Problem Solving Task Force and town centre teams as examples of units which focused on countering crimes against businesses. He added that he personally monitored shop lifting and burglary rates, which had decreased since the onset of the pandemic. It was clarified that information on antisocial behaviour was not broken down by perpetrator age and that work was underway to ensure that reductions were not a result of decreased reporting. Regarding the impact of precept increases, the Commissioner explained that the Problem Solving Task Force of 24 PCSOs, as well as crime prevention PCSOs, which had led to direct reductions in crime against businesses and antisocial behaviour in many communities, had been funded by previous increases to the precept.

Question 4

Can the Commissioner explain how he is holding the Chief Constable accountable following his decision to significantly reduce the number of PCSOs and what impact does he expect this to have on his community policing priorities?

(Cllr Jenny Hollingsbee, Folkestone and Hythe District Council)

4. The Commissioner explained that he had been involved and consulted extensively since the first proposal was made by the previous Chief Constable to review neighbourhood policing, meeting on several occasions subsequently with both the previous and current Chief Constable to outline his expectations and stress that any changes should take account of his Police and Crime Plan. He reminded Members that the previous and current Chief Constable had both given assurances that the future neighbourhood policing offer would be as good as if not an improvement on the existing provision. He noted that it was too early to discuss proposals in depth, as consultation with staff was ongoing, and proposals had not been finalised. He recognised that the review was in part an acknowledgment of the financial challenges faced by Kent Police. The Commissioner agreed to brief the Panel when a final decision is taken following the consultation period.

71. Future work programme

(Item E1)

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

72. Minutes of the Commissioner's Performance and Delivery Board meeting held on 31 October 2022

(Item F1)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Performance and Delivery Board held on 31 October 2022 be noted.