

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, 18 April 2023.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Mr G Sandher (Vice-Chairman), Mrs E Bolton, Cllr G Hackwell, Cllr Mrs J Hollingsbee, Cllr S Mochrie-Cox, Cllr R Palmer, Cllr H Tejan, Cllr S Jeffery and Cllr L Dyball

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M Scott (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner) and Mr A Harper (PCC's Chief Executive)

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

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

No declarations were made.

81. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 1 February 2023 *(Item 4)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2023 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

82. HMICFRS PEEL Inspection 2021/22 - update *(Item B1)*

1. The Commissioner introduced the report which updated the Panel on Kent Police's progress in addressing the findings from HMICFRS' PEEL Inspection 2021/22. He assured the Panel that he continued to hold the Chief Constable to account for performance. He noted that HMICFRS had commenced their next PEEL Inspection of the Force and that progress and formal closure of the Areas for Improvement (AFIs) would form part of that process. He assured Members that his Performance and Delivery Board continued to focus on the AFIs. Concerning the Force's responses to the public, which were assessed as requiring improvement, he noted that the resourcing of the Force Control Room had been enhanced, which had significantly improved call attrition and response times. He stressed the importance of sustained long-term improvement. It was noted that Kent Police worked with forces which performed well in the areas which required improvement, to identify best practice, including Bedfordshire Police on offender management. He stated that he was satisfied that Kent Police was on the right trajectory and that

reassurance had been received from the Chief Constable that the next inspection would show progress in all of the areas requiring improvement.

2. The Commissioner confirmed, following a question from a Member, that increasing demand and service resourcing were Kent Police's greatest challenges. The importance of ensuring that adequate training and supervision were in place for what was a young and developing workforce was underscored. He assured Members that he challenged the Chief Constable on Force resourcing against its demand profile. The pressure placed on Kent Police from other agencies was highlighted, including in relation to mental health and the wider justice system.
3. In response to a question from a Member concerning performance management, the Commissioner reassured the Panel that a well-rounded framework was in place, overseen by the Deputy Chief Constable and included enhanced monitoring and scrutiny.
4. A Member stressed the importance of residents feeling the progress made and asked for assurance that feedback from residents was sought and taken on board routinely. The Commissioner noted that the three areas for improvement directly involved the public and agreed that residents and victims especially needed to feel that policing had improved. He noted that he continued to hold partners to account at Kent Criminal Justice Board and that Kent Police relied on a strong relationship with the public for information sharing.

RESOLVED to note the report.

83. Vetting, Counter Corruption & Pension Forfeiture

(Item B2)

1. The Chair introduced the item and stated that the Panel sought reassurance from the Commissioner that Kent Police had robust vetting and counter corruption measures in place, following a succession of high profile issues in other forces.
2. The Commissioner introduced the report which provided an overview of Kent Police's Central Vetting Unit and Counter Corruption Unit's functions; the policing Code of Ethics; how the Chief Constable was held to account on officer and staff integrity and standards; and the pension forfeiture process which he could consider in certain circumstances following the conviction of an officer for a criminal offence. He stressed the importance of removing sexist, discriminatory and criminal officers from the Force. He explained that vetting resources had been increased, to handle higher recruitment levels. Reassurance was given that recruitment standards hadn't been reduced during the Police Uplift Programme and that systems were in place to scrutinise social media use. He added that assurance had been received from the Deputy Chief Constable, that any individuals who hadn't had the correct level of vetting were now appropriately vetted. Members were told that proactive counter corruption measures were in place and that the Counter Corruption Unit's priorities remained: sexual misconduct; inappropriate and notifiable associations; misuse of Force systems and disclosure of information;

and misuse of drugs. He added that infiltration; financial vulnerability; social media; and officer morale were the Unit's four identified emerging threats. The independent whistleblowing system, facilitated by Crimestoppers, for reporting wrongdoing was highlighted. Regarding pension forfeiture he cited the cases detailed in the report and noted that he had recommended that the Home Office streamline the process and remove the qualification that the offending must be connected to the officer's service. He concluded by confirming that 65% of the public funded portion of the pension could be forfeited and that in the cases he sought forfeiture, he considered what was proportionate to the crime or misconduct.

3. The Chair commended the use of Crimestoppers for independent whistleblowing and asked the Commissioner whether he was confident that cultural change had occurred in the organisation. The Commissioner assured the Panel that he was confident positive change had occurred and that adequate systems were in place.
4. In response to a question from the Vice Chair, the Commissioner stated that the findings of all internal cases as well as the Casey Report had been taken into account and that the Chief Constable should have further powers to remove officers for misconduct.
5. The Commissioner agreed to provide information on how the public could report police misconduct, following the meeting.
6. Mr Harper confirmed, following a question from a Member, that he met regularly with Kent Police's Head of Professional Standards and that the majority of investigations were instigated by officers. He stated that this reflected good organisational culture.
7. A Member asked whether a Casey Report style investigation into Kent Police would be considered, to assess the current culture within the organisation. The Commissioner stated that the approach would not be necessary at the present time and that many additional measures including culture boards, which officers could attend and were supported by staff associations, were in place to ensure a healthy organisation-wide culture.
8. The Commissioner agreed to confirm, following the meeting, whether the uplift in the Central Vetting Unit would be permanent.

RESOLVED to note the report.

84. Questions to the Commissioner

(Item D1)

Question 1

The Commissioner has sought, through his budgets and Police and Crime Plan, to ensure that information sharing about crimes and investigations between partners, including local authorities, is essential as part of the need to communicate, ensure ongoing feedback and engagement between partners and those that experience crime and ASB.

Does the Commissioner feel that Kent Police are fully resourced, including with enough personnel to ensure that investigations and communication of investigations with partners, victims and communities take place in good time and on a regular and ongoing basis?

(Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox, Gravesham Borough Council)

1. In response to the question, the Commissioner emphasised the importance of public feedback to policing and assured the Panel that he continued to hold the Chief Constable to account for Kent Police's compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code). He confirmed that Kent Police's victims' team and Force Control Room had been further resourced to enhance victim support. He stressed the importance of proactive communication with communities and partners being a by-product of the ongoing neighbourhood policing review.

Question 2

With the work the Police and Crime Commissioner and his office have carried out on Violence against women and girls (VAWG). Can you let us know how Kent Police have used it to improve the service they provide to victims and survivors and what improvements have been seen as a result?

(Mrs Elaine Bolton, Independent Member)

2. Following the question, the Commissioner outlined the key pieces of work which he and his office had undertaken on Violence against women and girls, including his formal Inquiry which published its report in July 2022. He reminded the Panel of the high number of survey responses, trends identified from the responses and areas where partner efforts had been focused, including through more walk and talk events with local community safety partnerships as well as patrolling changes. Concerning the recommendations of his Inquiry, he confirmed that measures were in place to carry out independent victim satisfaction surveys. He addressed the progress made with big data, explaining that it had led to a fundamental rethink about how perpetrators were profiled and looked at five years' worth of violent offences committed by men against women. He concluded by informing Members that as a result of measures implemented following the survey and Inquiry, Kent Police was now considered to be the best force in the country for handling stalking.

RESOLVED to note the responses to the questions.

85. Panel Annual Report - 2022/23

(Item E1)

RESOLVED that the report be approved.

86. Future work programme

(Item E2)

RESOLVED to note the report.

87. Minutes of the Commissioner's Performance and Delivery Board meeting held on 30 November 2022

(Item F1)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Performance and Delivery Board held on 30 November 2022 be noted.

88. Future meeting dates

(Item F2)

RESOLVED that the future meeting dates be noted.