

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, 27 September 2022.

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

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

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

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

Cllr Clark declared, in relation to Item B1 'Commissioner's Annual Report 2021/22' and the financial information contained within the report, that he was in receipt of a Kent Police pension.

53. Presentation to Chief Constable Alan Pughsley QPM *(Item)*

Alan Pughsley QPM (Chief Constable, Kent Police) was in attendance for this item.

The Chair expressed the Panel's appreciation to Chief Constable, Alan Pughsley QPM, on his departure from Kent Police after 13 years' service with the force, including 9 as Chief Constable. He commended the force's strong performance under his leadership, which included the response to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, EU Exit and English Channel small boat crossings. The Vice Chair thanked the Chief Constable for his support and engagement with communities across Kent. The Chair presented the Chief Constable with a gift as a sign of the Panel's appreciation for his service.

54. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 16 June 2022 *(Item 4)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2022 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

55. Commissioner's Annual Report 2021/22 *(Item B1)*

1. The Commissioner presented his Annual Report for 2021/22. He began by giving thanks to his Office and Kent Police for their support and work progressing his Police and Crime priorities over the previous year. He recognised that 2021/22 had been a particularly challenging period for the police and public. He highlighted three key operational areas where significant progress had been made: prevention, which included the impact of the countywide PCSO problem solving task force; neighbourhood policing, which included the work of the rural task force and town centre teams reducing crime and anti-social behaviour; and combating county lines, through the work of the drugs and organised crime teams which had halved the number of active county lines in Kent over the period. It was noted that there had been a reduction in crime by over 19,000 offenses, when compared to pre-pandemic levels. He addressed future risks, which included a less experienced police force, with a higher proportion of officer with under 5 years' service as well as 999 and 101 line underperformance. He confirmed that he had received reassurance from the Temporary Chief Constable that a plan would be put in place to strengthen performance. In relation to victim satisfaction, he explained that there had been an overall improvement and that, as part of the retendering of victims' services, an all-encompassing survey would be commissioned. The success of the Dads Unlimited male victim domestic abuse support service which he had commissioned was highlighted, along with its Save Dave (Domestic Abuse Victim Empowerment) service which could be accessed through 01233 680160 or www.SaveDAVE.org.uk. The Commissioner invited the Panel's views on drugs enforcement, the force control room performance and public engagement, including the measurement of victim satisfaction.
2. Following a question from the Chair on how rising costs had impacted Kent Police's finances, the Commissioner replied that Chief Financial Officers had produced a report on the anticipated cost increases and pressures. He noted that construction costs, in particular, had increased rapidly which directly impact the capital programme. He recognised that the government's three-year settlement had set expectations straight and allowed for more accurate medium term financial planning.
3. Members raised concerns regarding the poor performance of the 101 non-emergency enquiry line and requested a report from the Commissioner explaining what he had done to ensure that measures are put in place to improve call response times. Specific concerns highlighted by Members regarding the poor performance included: that poor response times would transfer crime reporting onto other authorities, including district community safety teams; that poor performance would lead to congestion of the 999 line with non-emergency enquiries, impacting the reporting of emergencies; and that as the main point of contact with the public, poor response times would negatively impact the public perception of Kent Police and reduce the feeling of community safety. In response to the concerns raised by the Panel, the Commissioner committed to improve 101 response times, noting that current performance was unsatisfactory. He explained that protection of 999 which

had experienced an increase in call volume of over 300 calls per day, as well as a considerable number of vacancies had been the main causes of the poor 101 response times. He agreed to report back to the Panel on the progress made to improve performance.

4. Following a question from a Member on when it was appropriate to use 999 or 101, the Commissioner clarified that 999 should be used for emergencies, when lives were in danger or crime was in progress, whereas 101 should be used to report non-emergencies or incidents that had already taken place.
5. The Vice Chair commended the cadet scheme's positive impact on young people and asked what had been done to enlarge the scheme. The Commissioner stated that current access to the scheme was broad, with units across the county, and that a pathway to leadership programme connected to the scheme had yielded positive results. He paid tribute to the volunteers and officers involved in the cadets and mini-cadets schemes. The Panel were assured that ways of increasing capacity were being investigated.
6. A Member asked whether the reduction in the rate of burglary had been solely a result of the pandemic. Whilst the Commissioner acknowledged that burglary had reduced during the pandemic, he noted that the rate had continued to decline following the lifting of social restrictions, which was coupled with an increase in the charge rate, with more than 2,500 charges issued.
7. The Commissioner was asked what was in place to ensure that victims of stalking had continuity of service and a single point of contact with Kent Police. He confirmed that there were dedicated liaison officers for victims of domestic abuse and recognised that continuity of service could be improved in other areas.
8. In response to a question from a Member on how intelligence submitted by the public informed operations, the Commissioner explained that Kent Police remained one of the most extensive users of CrimeStoppers, which allowed members of the public to anonymously report crime, with the organisation triaging out what they believe to be actionable by Kent Police. He noted that this system had yielded arrests. Hot spotting tools were also mentioned, with the impact on crime and anti-social behaviour reduction recognised. He added that he would be meeting with senior officers to discuss the neighbourhood policing review the following week. Community Trigger, which gave victims of persistent anti-social behaviour reported to any of the main responsible agencies the right to request a multi-agency review of their case where a local threshold is met, was also highlighted by the Commissioner.
9. The Commissioner explained following a question from a Member that there had been a degree of fluctuation in the in-year budget with increased goods costs and the planned removal of the National Insurance increase. The Panel were told that the budget setting process for the 2023/24 budget would begin shortly. Regarding efficiencies, he highlighted BlueLight Commercial and 7 Force Commercial Services as examples of how cross-authority services had

yielded procurement and commercial savings. He reassured the Panel that future savings would be made sensitively.

10. A Member asked how Kent's rate of Section 136 detentions compared nationally. The Commissioner explained that whilst Kent had previously been an outlier with particularly high Section 136 detention rates, that they were on track to half the number of Section 136 detention, when compared to the peak of 2,100. He noted that the progress had achieved through improved partnership working and use of the 836 officer support line. He emphasised that the priority in this area was getting people the right care.
11. The Commissioner was asked what had been done to ensure that there was a greater police presence in communities. He explained that the main uplift in officers had been in the vulnerabilities investigation team, which constituted over 900 officers, handled 1 in 5 crimes reported to Kent Police and included responding to high priority domestic abuse cases within its remit. He reminded Members that there were community policing teams in every district, which conducted proactive community policing and traffic monitoring, with additional monitoring from the road safety team.
12. A Member suggested that local intelligence be further incorporated into efforts to combat drug dealing, especially when offenses were in progress. The Commissioner agreed that local intelligence was vital for combatting drug dealing in communities, though he mentioned that there had been a decrease in public reporting in this area in the year to date and noted that he would respond to the Home Office's consultation on 'Swift, Certain, Tough: New Consequences for Drug Possession' which closed on 10 October.

RESOLVED to review and comment on the Annual Report.

56. HMICFRS PEEL Inspection Report 2021/22 verbal update

(Item B2)

1. The Chair introduced the item and provided brief summary of the Panel's previous consideration of HMICFRS's 2021/22 PEEL Inspection Report at the Panel's June meeting.
2. The Commissioner gave a verbal update. He confirmed that monthly meeting had continued with the Chief and Deputy Chief Constables on the progress made to address the areas for improvement. He noted that he had received assurances that the three areas assessed as requires improvement would be at least adequate when reassessed. In relation to the three areas, the Commissioner outlined the progress made to address the concerns. Concerning 'responding to the public' he reassured the Panel that the force was compliant with national guidance and had continued to promote My Community Voice Kent as a means for police-public interaction, with 69 additional officers assigned to community policing to ensure better public contact. On 'investigating crime' he confirmed that additional resources and staff had been deployed to improve investigations. On 'managing offenders,' Members were told that a comprehensive fails policy was in place and that

Superintendents conducted 6 monthly reviews of all offenders released on bail. He reminded the Panel that the PEEL report had highlighted good management of sex offenders.

3. The Chair asked the Commissioner whether he was confident that recovery was on track. The Commissioner confirmed that he had confidence from the regular reports and assurance received from the Temporary Chief Constable Tim Smith. He reiterated that performance scrutiny would continue, most notably at the 31 October bespoke HMICFRS Peel Inspection Improvement Plan Performance and Delivery Board meeting.
4. The Commissioner reassured the Panel that he would directly intervene further to ensure that the Chief Constable delivered improvements, following a question from a Member on what measures would be put in place if future investigations continued to fall below expectations.

RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

57. Police Uplift Programme

(Item B3)

1. The Commissioner introduced the report which provided an overview of Kent Police's progress as part of government's Police Uplift Programme. He informed Members that all targets to date had been met and that the force was on track to meet the overall target by March 2023. Concerning 2021/22 he noted that there had been a dip in the number of applicants which reflected the national trend. Highlighting the increase in officers from black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds he recognised that there was more work to do to increase representation, although there had been a good volume of recent applications. The Panel were told that outreach events would continue. Regarding risk, he stated that the Metropolitan Police's recent recruitment campaign, which included a one-off bonus of £5,000 for experienced officers transferring to the MPS, represented the foremost risk to Kent Police achieving the uplift. He confirmed that 46 officers had left Kent Police over the past year as a result of the campaign. He shared his concerns with the development and explained that home counties PCCs had written to the Mayor of London to share their concerns, which he had followed up personally. Regarding officer attrition, he expounded that there was a high attrition rate among new officers with 8% leaving within their first year and 16% within their first two. Recognition that new officer retention could be improved was shared with the Panel.
2. The Chair referenced the concerns shared by the Commissioner in February 2022, when presenting his budget and precept, that staff costs presented a significant costs pressure to the force and represented over 80% of its overall revenue budget. He asked what the rationale had been behind accepting the Home Office's over allocation of 43 officer and what financial impact this had. The Commissioner informed Members that Kent Police received significant financial incentives as a result of the over allocation, which included £20,000 per officer in addition to the ordinary Police Uplift Programme rate.

3. The Vice Chair congratulated Kent Police on its female and BAME officer recruitment, noting that whilst recruitment shouldn't be purely an exercise in proportions, that it was right to have a force representative of its communities. He asked the Commissioner to investigate what more could be done to proactively increase trust around recruitment in hard-to-reach communities. The Commissioner concurred with the view that it was right to aspire to have a representative police force and be proactive in achieving it, adding that he would continue to engage with staff associations on the issue. Regarding recruitment from hard-to-reach communities, he confirmed that he had been accompanied by a member of the recruitment team on events with faith groups, which had proved successful. Concerning the Police Race Action Plan: Improving policing for Black people, developed jointly by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and College of Policing, the Commissioner assured Members that he would ensure that the Chief Constable delivers against the Plan's objectives and that communities least confident with the police are proactively engaged.
4. Following a question from a Member on police officer allocation, the Commissioner reassured the Panel that he had held the Chief Constable to account for his allocation of officers, especially with regards to neighbourhood policing. He shared examples of when this had happened in the past and the overall impact of his efforts.
5. The Commissioner agreed to continue to lobby government to secure financial support for a universal South East police officer salary allowance, reflective of the region's higher cost of living and the impact of Metropolitan Police recruitment on officer retention. This was set within a context of home county forces funding, from their local budgets, a £3,000 allowance.
6. Following a series of questions from a Member, the Commissioner confirmed that Kent Police retained a staff association, that the apprenticeship programme was an industry standard and the main form of entry to the force, and that police cadets partook in the Duke of Edinburgh's award.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

58. Decision OPCC.D.030.22 - PCC Succession Plan
(Item C1)

RESOLVED that the decision be noted.

59. Decision OPCC.D.031.22 - Appointment of Temporary Chief Constable
(Item C2)

RESOLVED that the decision be noted.

60. Questions to the Commissioner
(Item D1)

Question 1

National figures indicate that crime is at a 20-year high and arrests for serious offences are at an all-time low, this is coupled with unacceptable delays of up to three years before matters get to trial, particularly in relation to sexual offences on women and girls.

With numbers of warranted officers in Kent at an all-time high, can the Commissioner explain what he is doing to ensure that Kent Police are not following this national trend, and how Detectives are being trained to ensure that investigations meet a standard that the public expect, in that they are unlikely to be rejected by the Crown Prosecution Service?

(Cllr Ashley Clark, Canterbury City Council)

1. The Commissioner stated that Kent was bucking the national trend with regard to crime, arrests and charge rates. He explained that compared to 2019, the first full year since pandemic had seen a reduction in crime. He reassured the Panel that arrest rates had increased, especially regarding violence against women and girls (VAWG) and domestic violence, with 25% more charges compared to previous years. Concerning detective training, he confirmed that Kent Police had continued training programmes through the pandemic, adding that the detective programme included workplace skills and case file quality, with Kent Police the highest performing force in the country on the later. Members were informed that a quality policing manager role had been introduced to uphold standards. The Panel were reminder of the early advice line for investigations. Reassurance was given that the criminal justice system had been held to account at Kent's Criminal Justice Board, ensuring that Kent Police's case files were of a sufficient standard and that the Crown Prosecution Service were accountable for any files that were been passed back due to poor quality.
2. Cllr Clark replied, he asked whether there had been any efforts to pressure the Crown Prosecution Service to fastrack prosecutions, as had occurred recently in Leicester following inter-community confrontations. The Commissioner agreed to investigate prosecution fast tracking further.

Question 2

Can the Police and Crime Commissioner explain how he is holding the Chief Constable to account for his force's failings in the investigation of crimes that are reported to his force, crime numbers are issued, and on occasions that video evidence is available but his force fails to gather the evidence or follow up on the reported crime?

(Cllr Richard Palmer, Swale Borough Council)

3. A written response to the question was provided by the Commissioner following the meeting, as Cllr Palmer was not present. The Commissioner's response was as follows:

“I continue to hold the Chief Constable to account via my Performance & Delivery Board meetings, including the PEEL bespoke Board on 31 October, as well as through my regular weekly briefings. [It is] important to emphasise [that] the force is not failing in totality as the question tends to suggest; rather there are key areas on which the force is focusing activity through the PEEL Improvement Plan. The force responded promptly to concerns raised by HMICFRS in respect of the resourcing of the Vulnerability Investigation Teams (VITs) who investigate domestic abuse and detective capacity was increased with further growth generated by those on the detective pathway. The Domestic Abuse Hub went live on 18 May 2022. The team operate between 8am and 8pm, seven days a week and provide support to victims using video technology to virtually respond to specific calls. This allows victims to immediately speak with an officer, enabling fast-time crime recording, statement taking and capture of evidence including the scene of the incident and any visible injuries. By having instant contact with a victim an officer can also implement immediate safeguarding and referrals to partner agencies to provide protection to vulnerable people. It is a completely optional service for victims and is not a replacement for a traditional call back or officer visit. Officers will always attend an incident or victim when needed. Early data highlights a reduction in the volume of work allocated to Local Policing, VITs and Victim Based Crime Teams. Victim satisfaction levels for those engaged with via the Hub is high (92% for the rolling year to August 2022). The Domestic Abuse Hub is supported by newly established Proactive Domestic Abuse teams who work to identify, target and relentlessly pursue domestic abuse offenders. They are focused on those who pose the greatest harm, whilst supporting those who are repeatedly targeted. The Domestic Abuse Liaison Officer (DALO) role is also being piloted and will be assessed before further roll-out across Kent is considered. These officers provide consistent and coordinated support to safeguard victims most at risk, responding swiftly to incidents to secure vital evidence and provide a first-class service. A three-day supervisory investigative improvement course has been developed which provides bespoke investigative inputs across several key areas including those highlighted as part of the PEEL inspection. Investigative performance is reviewed each month at the Crime Management and Investigative Quality Board. Current performance (August 2022) continues to show improvements in the quality of allocation, investigation plans, supervisory reviews and evidence led prosecutions:

- 471 (93.4%) of crimes were allocated in a timely manner;
- 420 (83.3%) of supervisors had outlined an investigation plan;
- 381 (75.6%) evidenced effective supervision;
- 187 (37.1%) saw the victim decline to support the investigation; evidence the police tried to progress the case without the support of the victim in 115 (61.5%).

A quarterly Victim Justice Board has been introduced, chaired by the ACC for Crime to provide scrutiny. In terms of gathering video evidence, the force’s Digital Asset Management System (DAMS) went live on Wednesday 21 September. Recognising it is early days in its implementation, eventually DAMS will enable officers, staff and the public to upload, securely store, manage and share digital assets, including:

- body worn video footage
- recorded 999 calls
- recorded interviews
- CCTV footage
- dash cam footage

- mobile phone video footage

Whilst an officer or member of staff may not attend every reported crime, I expect every report to be investigated appropriately by Kent Police. Should any Member have an example where this was not the case, I would ask that they send details to my office so it can be looked into (contactyourpcc@kent.police.uk).

Question 3

In his role in holding the Chief Constable to account can the PCC detail and explain the following for constituents across Kent, 1) how the Kent Police policy and application of Section 61 and other powers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 has been reviewed and strengthened by Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and 2) how he feels communications and requests between partners for this and other requests for action on such local issues such as drug dealing are being actioned by Kent Police?

(Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox, Gravesham Borough Council)

4. The Commissioner confirmed that Kent Police's Unauthorised Encampments Policy had been updated inline with the new legislation and NPCC guidance. He agreed to share a copy of the Policy after the meeting. Regarding communications, he recognised that there was continued work to be done between Kent Police, local authorities and landowners, in order to ensure effective responses to unauthorised encampments.

RESOLVED that the answers provided by the Commissioner be noted.

POST MEETING NOTE: A copy of Kent Police's updated Unauthorised Encampments Policy was shared with the Panel and can be accessed at www.kent.police.uk/foi-ai/kent-police/Policy/operational-partnerships/unauthorised-encampments-policy-o22/.

61. Complaints against the Commissioner - Annual Report 2021/22

(Item E1)

The Scrutiny Research Officer gave a verbal overview of the report and complaints process. It was mentioned that the level of complaints made against the Commissioner were low compared to Commissioners in neighbouring areas.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

62. Future work programme

(Item E2)

The Scrutiny Research Officer detailed the work programme and noted that an item on 101 call handling performance had been added following the Panel's request. The Panel were informed that the confirmation hearing for the next Chief Constable would take place at the Panel's 6 December meeting.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

63. Minutes of the Commissioner's Performance and Delivery Board held on 8 June 2022
(Item F1)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Performance and Delivery Board held on 8 June 2022 be noted.