

Meeting Notes

- Title:** Performance and Delivery Board
- Date & time:** Wednesday 29 November 2023
- Venue:** County Room, Sutton Road, Maidstone (also broadcast via Microsoft Teams Live)
- Attendees:**
- Office of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner:**
- Matthew Scott - Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
 - Adrian Harper - Chief Executive (CE)
 - Rob Phillips - Chief Finance Officer (CFO)
- Kent Police:**
- Tim Smith - Chief Constable (CC)
 - Peter Ayling - Deputy Chief Constable (DCC)
 - Ian Drysdale - Deputy Chief Officer (DCO)

1. Welcome & Introduction

- Welcoming the CC and his team, the PCC expressed his thanks for the meeting papers.
- The PCC also welcomed any members of the public watching the meeting live online.

2. Notes of Previous Meeting – 13 September 2023

- The notes were agreed as a true and accurate record and the following actions discharged:
 - Force to provide data on case file quality measures outside of meeting - received with thanks.
 - OPCC to monitor the impact of the increase in ISVA and other referrals on commissioned services – to be monitored as part of Commissioning Team’s regular oversight of commissioned services.
 - Force to provide a briefing on the new Code of Practice for Non-Crime Hate incidents (including update on training) outside of meeting - received with thanks.
 - Force to provide figures for driving whilst impaired through drink or drugs outside of meeting - received with thanks.
 - Provide a briefing on how the Force compares across the Beating Crime Plan call handling performance measures outside of meeting - received with thanks.

3. Rural Crime

- Expressing his thanks for the paper, the PCC highlighted that rural crime was now a priority in the Control Strategy and said local communities had welcomed its inclusion.
- The CC commented that there were specific issues that affected rural communities more than urban communities.
- With regards to the new Neighbourhood Policing (NHP) model, he said Beat Officers would be covering rural wards therefore providing a named officer and face for those communities. He added they were very much about catching criminals, reducing crime as well as community engagement.
- The CC noted the Force investment in the Rural Task Force (RTF) and its success, adding that he couldn’t underplay the reputation of the team in rural communities. Advising there were some excellent staff working in the RTF which was reflected in the results, he said the Force had made further investment with the addition of a Sergeant and seven PCSOs, although not all posts were filled yet.
- The CC said the examples in the paper demonstrated how the RTF was utilising Farm Watch and their investigative skills to achieve good results in rural communities.
- In terms of partnership working, the Force worked with all the local authorities as well as other rural partnerships. The CC stated operations were regularly run around specific issues, for example fly tipping and illegal waste carrying with enforcement activity often leading to the detection of other offences.
- Referring to the Rural Crime Week of Action, the CC stated the Force policed 365 days a year, so whilst such weeks of heightened activity were helpful they were an addition to daily business and not instead of it.
- The CC said the Force was committed to supporting national operations and each example in the paper enabled the Force to take enforcement action along with its partners and had a positive impact on rural communities

- In terms of the benefits of the investment, the CC highlighted the RTF winning National Wildlife Operation of the Year at the National Wildlife Crime Conference in October.
- With regards to unauthorised encampments, the CC stated that local authorities had the lead role under Government guidance but the Force was an active partner. He advised there was specific legislation that policing regularly enforced, but it was recognised that at times the police would need to take decisive action. Noting the Force worked closely with the local authorities, at an operational level he said the right response was usually found, with the Force often supporting the exercise of their powers. The CC explained that KCC and Kent Police had re-launched a joint working group with all the Councils, which he hoped would ensure decisions were made correctly and enable all agencies to resolve issues stemming from unauthorised encampments.
- In concluding, the CC stated there was a real commitment to tackling rural crime and Kent would not be a Force only seen in towns and cities. Acknowledging there was a need to police 365 days per year across the county, he said rural areas faced some unique threats and so the investment in resources and specialisms would continue.
- Noting the popularity of Whats App with farms and rural businesses for sharing intelligence and information, the PCC said he understood it was being reviewed by the Force and wondered if it was going to continue. Noting there was an issue around sharing of images the Force would tighten up on, the CC said the Force had no plans to change how it operated. The DCO added it had been successful and there had been no information security breaches, so based on the dispensation awarded when it came in, his recommendation would be that it continued.
- Acknowledging the Force's efforts to crack down on GPS thefts, in terms of Operation Walrus, the PCC asked about the number of thefts and whether there had been a substantial increase. Under Operation Walrus, the CC advised the Force recorded seven offences, but said multiple systems were often stolen which had a huge impact on farmers' livelihoods. He said the Force did not have a specific marker for agricultural GPS systems but it was thought likely there were three or four similar offences in the previous year.
- Noting the update on unauthorised encampments, the PCC asked if the Force had used the new powers and if so, the number of times. The CC advised there had been 10 incidents since the Act was amended where the Force had utilised its powers under Section 61, but Section 62 had not been used because it related to transit sites of which there were none in the county. From a police point of view, the CC said it was something the county should consider as part of the solution to the challenge of unauthorised encampments. Noting that staff had been trained and understood the powers, he said they would be used when they were needed, adding there were other enablers that could be put in place to reduce the impact of unauthorised encampments even further.
- Thanking the CC, the PCC said it was reassuring and the rural community appreciated the RTF's efforts.

4. **Making Kent Safer Plan: Delivery & Performance**

Work with residents, communities and businesses to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour

- The CC reported that All Crime and Victim Based Crime continued to reduce, adding the solved rate for All Crime had increased by one percentage point on the previous year, from 10.4% to 11.4% with 122 additional charges. Noting it was a similar pattern for Victim Based Crime, he commented that as crime was reducing, the Force was arresting and charging more people.
- With regards to ASB, the CC reported an increase of 4.8%, with the largest increases in motor vehicle nuisance and rowdy or nuisance gathering in public.
- In terms of Safer Autumn, noting he had recently provided the PCC with updates on some operations, the CC advised he was unable to give a full breakdown of the results as yet. He added there was a clear commitment to each campaign with a different response by the Force to the changes in crime and ASB experienced with each season.
- Commenting that it was a challenge for the Force to respond to, the CC reported an increase in Shoplifting and Retail Crime but also an increase in charges and the solved rate. Noting the paper included examples of policing activity, he said first and foremost the Force looked to charge offenders, but some of the other orders and powers were equally beneficial when applied in the right set of circumstances.
- The CC highlighted the introduction of a new App called 'Making Time Count'. He advised it was 50% funded by the Home Office and aimed to make the process of dealing with out of court resolutions (formerly known as out of court disposals) more efficient and effective. Reporting it had been rolled out across the Force, he said they were not a replacement for arresting and charging people, but evidence showed applied appropriately they could correct behaviours and most importantly, prevent and reduce crime.
- The CC reported that Burglary Residential, Violent Crime, Robbery and Hate Crime continued to show reductions.
- With regards to the Crime Squad, the CC advised some of the reduction in offences and performance improvements were down to their enforcement activity, as evidenced by the great results referenced in the paper.
- Acknowledging the reduction in Victim Based Crime was good news, the PCC questioned whether it was driven by particular crime types or consistent across the board. The CC advised it was driven by Robbery, Burglary Residential, Burglary Business and Community, Vehicle Crime and Violence Against the Person in particular. He said the Force was conscious of its commitment to tackling hidden harms and wanted more people to come forwards, but overall the mission was to reduce crime. He added the Force was not complacent as there were increases, for example in Shoplifting and Retail Crime which needed to be looked at in terms of commitment and resourcing.
- With regards to Shoplifting and Retail Crime, the PCC was pleased to see the number of suspects being interviewed and charged steadily increasing, but asked about the volume of offences in 2023 compared to 2022. The CC reported that for the period August to October 2023 there were 4,041 shoplifting offences compared to 3,276 in the previous

year, an increase of 23% or 765. The PCC said it was helpful as it showed not only were offences increasing, but charges as well.

- Referring to the launch of the national campaign Pegasus, the PCC asked how Kent Police were involved and whether any intelligence had been received yet. The CC confirmed the Force was engaged and supporting the national initiative; highlighting analytical work to identify the top 20 individuals of most concern, he reported seven were already in prison and five had orders ready to go or already served on them. Through Pegasus, he reported the charged rate for the year so far was 20.4% - a significant increase on the previous year. He said whilst some national media had suggested police forces had stopped dealing with retail crime, it was an area the Force had never shied away from, with a particular focus on organised criminality.
- With regards to the App 'Making Time Count', the PCC asked if there were any particular examples of how it had been used effectively during the pilot. The CC reported that prior to the pilot in East Division there was an average of 21 conditional cautions per month which had now increased to 31, and the number of Community Resolutions issued for Victim Based Crime had increased by 28% compared to the previous year. Whilst it was only rolled out in October, he said there were early indications that it was encouraging greater confidence in how and when to apply out of court resolutions. The PCC said in due course it would be helpful to measure victim satisfaction; the CC agreed.

Tackle violence against women and girls

- For the period August to October 2023, the CC reported Rape offences decreased by 10.1% (60) on the previous year, and the charged rate increased from 5.4% to 6.0% - the volume remaining stable. He said the Force was working with the CPS through Op Soteria to get to a position where it was getting the right outcome in each and every case and he was convinced that over time there would be steady increase in the charged rate. However, he noted it was a complex area to investigate and challenging due to the significant backlog in the court system.
- Whilst early days, the CC advised the Force had been inspected on Op Soteria compliance and was found to be in a good place in terms of structure. He added the Force was committed to Op Soteria and hoped to see the level of Rape offences reduce, impact on victims reduce and most importantly, appropriate action taken against suspects.
- The CC advised POLIT had received further investment in the form of an additional 11 detectives, as well as Digital Investigators to ensure any protective orders were enforced robustly and to tackle offending in the long term.
- The Sexual Offence Liaison Officers continued to work closely with victims, and the CC advised feedback on the care and support was positive. He added the Force continued to work closely with the Office of the PCC and commissioned services, as well as key partners to improve safety in the night-time economy.
- Sexual offences was a similar pattern to rape in terms of a decrease and increase in the charged rate, but the CC said the Force was hoping Op Soteria would have a positive impact. Noting the PCC had received briefings on potential changes to how the Force dealt with such offences in the next year, the CC advised he was confident it would improve performance and the service provided to the public.
- Noting the Force continued to invest heavily in Stalking and Domestic Abuse (DA), the CC advised there had been a lot of professional development and training with the CPS around improving the response further. He added the increase in quality was evident in the improved charged rate and proactivity in securing Stalking Prevention Orders – totalling 131, of which 117 remained live which was the highest in the country.
- Welcoming the increase in the Rape charged rate and noting the investment in Op Soteria, the PCC asked if the CC expected the rate to continue improving. Confirming he did, the CC would not commit to what it could or should be, but said it definitely needed to increase. He advised he had met with the Head of CPS Southeast and other senior leaders and they were committed to Op Soteria, as a result he believed it would increase naturally.
- With regards to Stalking, the PCC asked about the current charged rate. The CC reported that for the period August to October 2023, there were 1,100 offences and 114 charges, equating to 10.3%; in the previous year there were 1,038 offences and 87 charges, equating to 8.4%.
- Whilst welcoming the work on Stalking Prevention Orders, the PCC advised evidence he had gathered suggested male victims were much less likely to be under the protection of an order. He asked about reasons why that might be and how many male victims in the county were currently protected by a Stalking Prevention Order. The CC said it was perhaps due to a different stigma being attached to the reporting of offences by men than women. Whilst the majority of victims were women, he advised the Force recognised men were also victims and so each response was based on the outcome of the DARA risk assessment; it was not based on gender of the victim. He reported 19.8% of Stalking victims in the county were male and there were 10 Stalking Prevention Orders protecting male victims, which was 8.5% of the Force's live orders. He added 11% of referrals into the Perpetrator Programme were females and the Force treated male victims of Stalking with the same gravity and level of support and care as female victims.

Protect people from exploitation and abuse

- August to October 2023, the CC reported a reduction in DA of 14.5% (1,299) compared to the previous year and a charged rate of 7.2% for the rolling year, up 1.1% on the previous year. He said the Force was committed to dealing with DA and whilst the charged rate was improving, there was a way to go.
- The CC advised the new Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Hub would be established in the new year; he was convinced it would bring about much greater coordination across the partners in the management of risk and the response to it. He added it was a real partnership investment to help take the response to the next level.
- Advising the charged rate would continue to be a focus for the Performance Committee chaired by the DCC, he said it would equally look at the use of Domestic Violence Protection Orders and how breaches were dealt with. The CC reported 70 DVPO's were granted between August and October and 40 breaches dealt with in the same period.

- With regards to the Force's determination to prevent Fraud, the CC highlighted the Fraud Coordinators 600 contacts with vulnerable and elderly people in the period July to September 2023. Whilst Fraud would continue to challenge policing for many years to come, not just in terms of volume but also complexity, the CC said he was keen to preserve and build on the Force's investment.
- With regards to DA, the PCC asked if the Force understood what was driving the reduction. The CC referred to an increased focus on repeat perpetrators, an improved response to repeat victims, and a change in how crimes were recorded. To demonstrate the Force's proactivity, the CC reported that use of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law) had trebled from an average of 40 per month to 120. He was convinced the model of looking at the most harmful individuals would continue to have the largest impact as they were people who, whatever interventions were put in place, were unable to change their behaviour. In terms of crime reporting, he explained that previously, for every single offence identified officers had to create a crime report which was labour intensive, tied them up and was recording for the sake of it. Now, officers were able to capture all offences predominantly on one crime report, although importantly there was no difference in the action that would be taken. Whilst sure this had resulted in police forces recording less crimes, he said it was positive because every hour staff were not completing a bureaucratic form for the sake of it meant more time to combat crime and support victims. He added he was hopeful the amount of training officers and staff had received would improve the Force's capability and in turn reduce and prevent DA even further. The DCC advised that in terms of the change in recording the Force had been at pains to account for the adjustment to ensure it did not disguise a rise in a certain area, or a certain crime type – that was not the case. He added because of the value found in its hidden harms work, the Force continued to monitor victims and he was reassured they were not being left in a more dangerous set of circumstances.

Combat organised crime and county lines

- Referring to data and examples in the paper, the CC stated that through the Serious Crime Directorate and Serious Organised Crime Teams the Force continued to be strong in dismantling Organised Crime. However, whilst performance was good, he said there was no complacency as had been borne out in HMICFRS' inspection into how the Force dealt with organised crime.
- Highlighting the ongoing threat from County Lines, the CC advised the Force continued to reduce the level of harm with the number of charges being impressive. Noting the length of sentences at over 36 years, he said they were offenders who thought they could operate their drugs business in the county and cause significant harm to communities, often punctuated by violence which resulted in serious injury and sadly on occasions loss of life. Whilst it may be an impossibility to achieve, he said the Force did not accept any level of harm in the county and his view was that it would keep going until it was eradicated completely. He added the Force worked closely with the Metropolitan Police and others to combat what was a seriously damaging crime.
- The PCC acknowledged the good work of both teams in tackling Organised Crime and County Lines. With regards to the strength of substances being cut, dealt and sold on the streets, the PCC asked if the Force had noticed any particular pattern in terms of purity. The CC advised the Force had seen a similar trend to that nationally which was an overall decline in the purity of heroin which was linked to issues with production and criminals managing the demand in a different way. He added it was not clear whether the decline in purity was linked to a reduction in the Afghan Opium Harvest, but it was monitored closely along with trends around synthetic opiates.

Be visible and responsive to the needs of communities

- Advising the new NHP model went live in June, the CC said the Force could not get it fully resourced quickly enough but it was a balance as to where the officers were taken from as new officers continued to be recruited.
- Referring to the examples in the paper, the CC said they underlined the results being achieved during the early days of the model, as well as the breadth and impact of having visible uniformed officers in Wards and on the streets.
- With regards to mental health, the CC reported s136 detentions continued to reduce and the Force was committed to the Right Care Right Person programme. Whilst it involved a lot of partnership working, training and knowledge sharing, he said ultimately it had to result in officers spending less time dealing solely with people in a mental health crisis. Noting that policing would always have a primary role in preserving life, he stated the Force was currently attending far too many incidents that health partners should be responding to. Over the next year he said he would like to see Right Care Right Person fully implemented, adding the PCC would receive regular briefings on progress.
- In terms of Citizens in Policing, he said the numbers demonstrated a very vibrant Special Constabulary and superb support from volunteers across the county. He added they were great people, helping the Force day in and day out.
- The CC reported that 999 call answering continued to improve, with an abandonment rate over the last three months of 0.3% and average answering time of 12 seconds. He also highlighted a significant improvement in 101 call answering, with an abandonment rate over the last three months of 9.4% and average answering time of 1 minute 15 seconds, although he said both had improved further in recent weeks. He advised there was a strong focus from himself and the DCC on ensuring all calls were answered, answered as quickly as possible and most importantly, providing the right response. He said the volume was quite incredible in terms of contacts every month and year, and there were a lot of dedicated and hard working staff in the Force Control Room he was proud of. He added there was no complacency and he expected the good performance to be maintained in the future.
- In terms of digital contact, the CC advised the general trend was a reduction in 999 and 101 calls and increase in online reports and Live Chat. He added the Force would continue to adapt and respond to changing public behaviour.
- Paying tribute to the work in the Force Control Room over the last 12 months, the PCC said performance was now excellent and asked that his thanks be placed on record to those involved.

- With regards to Right Care Right Person, the PCC said it was right the Force engaged with the NHS and the care sector, but asked about the relationship with third sector organisations and charities that were also part of the mental health delivery mechanism in the county. The DCC advised the Force was in a good place with the Integrated Care Board and a recent webinar had brought a number of organisations together, including the third sector to talk about implementation. Following the Metropolitan Police's implementation, he said there was concern about a sudden withdrawal of support but the Force was able to provide reassurance and describe a well organised transition, with an emphasis on how services were commissioned and preventing people from going into crisis. Within that, the Force was also able to highlight the significant contribution the third sector could and would make. He added it was early days, but he saw an important and strong contribution from the third sector that would accelerate heading into 2024.

Prevent road danger and support Vision Zero

- The CC reported in the period August to October 2023 there were 16 road deaths; a 24% decrease on the previous year. Given the impact on people's lives, the CC said he wanted to get the figure to zero and the Force's commitment and work with partners would continue with the aim of reducing the number as far as it possibly could.
- Referring to examples in the paper, the CC stated it showed continued great work by the Serious Collision Investigation Unit. He added the Force's response to those killed and seriously injured on the roads in terms of prevention activity, target hardening and working with partners was going from strength to strength.
- In terms of speed, mobile phone, seatbelt and driving whilst impaired enforcement activity, he said it continued to be strong with great support from the Special Constabulary Roads Policing Unit.
- Noting Road Safety Week took place from 19-25 November, the PCC asked for some examples of activity undertaken by the Force. In terms of headlines, the CC reported: 40 motorists received Traffic Offence Reports, including one for driving at over 100mph and facing prosecution; several motorists stopped with unrestrained children in the vehicle; 10 uninsured vehicles seized; 5 arrests for driving whilst impaired through drink/drugs; one driver reported for careless driving; a couple of vehicles taken off the road – one for being in a dangerous condition; and a number of reports submitted to the DVLA for untaxed vehicles. Across the board, he said there had been good enforcement activity and it reflected the Force's commitment to Vision Zero. He added it was important to note offences were detected by both marked and unmarked police vehicles which regularly patrolled the county's roads.

Protect young people and provide opportunities

- The CC reported an increase of 5.5% in Child Protection referrals for the period August to October 2023 compared to the previous year. He said whilst there did not appear to be any patterns, the Force was looking at in more detail.
- Noting the NHP model included a Child Centred Policing Team, the CC highlighted the statistics in the paper on the Youth Justice Team outcomes and referred to the Force's plans around continued professional development.
- Advising there was a huge amount of partnership working, in particular the CC highlighted the Force's relationship with schools and support to children in them.
- The CC advised the trauma informed Child Sexual Exploitation training was a joint project with the University of Kent and the Force had spent a lot of time making sure it was right. He said very specialised skills were needed to deal with what was a really impactful area of criminality and he was pleased the training package was now being delivered to relevant officers. He added that he was convinced it would serve to improve the Force's response.
- Noting the PCC supported the Violence Reduction Unit directly, the CC highlighted the information in the paper around the key metrics set by the Government. He said the challenge going forwards would be how to maintain the investment, how to get the benefits and ensuring it reflected changes to the Force's policing model.
- The CC said the Cadets remained strong and vibrant, noting there were programmes now available for all ages, He added positive outcomes included Cadets joining the Force, and some going into other public service roles and jobs in the community. Every time he visited a Cadet unit, he said he was impressed with the impact the programme was having on young people's lives, adding that he wished to extend his thanks to those staff who gave up their own time to run the programmes.
- The PCC also asked that his thanks be placed on record to everyone who was making the Cadet programme such a success. He added the amount of volunteering required was spectacular and it was very much appreciated.

5. Inspections, Audits & Reviews

- Noting the recent publication of HMICFRS' PEEL report of Kent Police, the PCC congratulated the Force on the overall good performance evidenced. Acknowledging there were some areas for improvement (AFIs), he advised the Force had already taken steps to address them and requested his thanks be put on record for the good work and positive momentum that was being maintained.
- The DCC advised HMICFRS published three reports during the period:
 - An inspection of the police contribution to the prevention of homicide – advising Kent was not inspected, but had made a significant contribution to the NPCC Homicide Prevention Framework, the DCC stated work continued with clear governance structures. He said the three recommendations for Chief Constables were all in hand.
 - Two related to race and policing:
 - A review of the police service's leadership and governance arrangements for race related matters – contained no recommendations for Chief Constables.
 - An inspection of race disparity in police criminal justice decision-making – whilst Kent was not inspected, the Force recognised the issues highlighted and there were four recommendations for Chief Constables which were being monitored through the Future Improvement and Development Board (FIDB).

- The DCC advised the Force's most recent PEEL report was published on 17 November - just after the meeting papers were put together.
- In terms of the AFIs from the previous PEEL inspection, the DCC reported that 13 had been signed off as completed at the most recent FIDB, with the rest subject to the most recent PEEL inspection process.
- He said the Force was pleased the most recent PEEL report commented on progress against the previous AFIs and the improved processes, governance and policies, as well as leadership throughout the Force.
- Referring to the workforce survey that accompanied the PEEL inspection, the DCC reported over 2,000 members of staff responded - almost 34% of the workforce. Being significantly above the level HMICFRS usually received, he advised the Force had been asked to share its communications strategy. The DCC stated the Force was encouraged by the level of participation and results, adding it was reflective of efforts to create a positive workplace.
- Noting many areas were graded 'Good', the DCC reported that Preventing crime and Protecting vulnerable people were particularly pleasing as at the time of the inspection the Force was in the early stages of rolling out the NHP model. Even before full implementation, in terms of Preventing crime he said HMICFRS saw a strong commitment to visibility, effective problem solving and good reductions in areas of recurrent demand. In terms of Protecting vulnerable people, he said it was an area many forces were finding challenging and being graded 'Requires Improvement' was a theme; therefore, 'Good' was pleasing. Whilst Management of offenders had also improved from 'Requires Improvement' to 'Adequate', he stated there was no complacency as the Force was graded 'Requires Improvement' for Investigating crime and Responding to the public.
- With regards to Investigating crime, the DCC reported the Force had already made good progress on a number of the AFIs. He said he was confident progress would continue to be made, adding the Force compared well to others subject to PEEL or recently assessed.
- In terms of Responding to the public, the DCC stated it was an area that had proved challenging and taken 12 months hard work to improve. He advised the most recent performance data for 999 call answering showed a mean average of 5 seconds and median average of 13 seconds; for 101 calls, the Force was regularly achieving an attrition rate of less than 10% which was class leading across all forces. He said the Force was not complacent, but had firmly grasped the nettle and was seeing sustained improvements. He was confident the AFIs would be achieved quickly, adding that it would put the Force in a good position for its next PEEL inspection, for which it was already preparing.
- In summary, he said it was a challenging assessment over many months but positive and showed good momentum.
- Thanking the DCC, the PCC said the two AFIs he was going to ask about had been covered. Firstly, the increase in the charged rate over the last year and the improvements in call handling within the FCR.
- Noting changes to the Police National Computer so that ethnicity was better recorded were intended to be introduced in 2023, the PCC asked if there was any update. The DCC advised the action dated back to April 2023, but prioritisation of changes to the PNC system focused on urgent and critical issues, so as yet there was no update on when it would be introduced. He added it was something the Force would continue to monitor.
- The DCO reported 13 internal audits were at various stages of completion and so there was a lot of work still to do. In terms of actions, he advised seven had been discharged and there were 11 recommendations.
- In terms of external Audit, the DCO advised the Force had been notified of delays in publication, adding that it was through no fault of its own, but did mean the statutory deadline would be missed since the External Auditors were unable to sign off the accounts in the usual timeframe. On behalf of the PCC and CC, he noted they would issue a notice detailing the reasons which would be published on the website. Whilst common for other organisations, he said it was disappointing that the Force's efficiency could not be matched by that of the External Auditors. He stated there was nothing the Force could do as it was a capacity issue in the External Audit market.

6. People

- The DCO reported the Force ended 2022/23 with a Strength of 4,148 officers against an Establishment of 4,144. The Headcount stood at 4,261 and over the Police Uplift Programme (PUP) threshold requirement of 4,218 in order to draw down the associated grant.
- In the current year, the Force would recruit up to 4,223 which was five additional officers on top of the 4,218 PUP requirement. He said it would be subject to audit again in March 2024 with the first audit taking place at the end of September 2023 when the Force had 4,225 officers - seven more than was required to draw down the funding.
- The DCO reported April to September 2023 there were 133 joiners, advising based on that number and attrition projections, it was estimated a further 160 would need to be recruited by the end of March 2024. This would consist of two cohorts – in January and March 2024.
- Noting the Police Constable Entry Programme would be introduced towards the end of April 2024, the DCO advised it would be in addition to the three existing routes. Overall, he said the Force had a sufficient number of candidates to fill vacancies across the range of entry routes but that was not the same across the region.
- With regards to diversity, the DCO advised there were 161 (3.86%) ethnic minority officers in the Force and of the 133 new recruits, seven (5.26%) were ethnic minority and 52 (39.1%) female. He added there were currently nine ethnic minority candidates in the recruitment process.
- Noting the recruitment events listed in the paper, the DCO said given the numbers in the pipeline it showed the importance of maintaining that effort to ensure the Force could develop enough strong candidates to join. The DCO advised the Force had introduced 41 Retention Ambassadors that were proving successful.
- The PCSO establishment was 101.5 and a new intake was planned for January 2024 to fill the 30 current vacancies.

- Officer absence was up slightly (3.8 average days to 4.3), staff down (4.3 to 4.1) and PCSOs down (6.3 to 5.9); taking all three together the DCO advised it was a stable position, which in comparison to other forces remained strong.
- Commending those involved in the recruitment process, the PCC said it was good to know Kent continued to lead the way and was the most attractive Force in the region.

7. Finance

- The DCO reported the total Capital Budget was £28.8m and said historically there was an average underspend of 38% - not due to poor management, but the requirement in regulations to pay only for goods and services received to a satisfactory level on time. He added the forecast spend was £23.4m (81%), which was an underspend of £5.4m and represented a reasonable spend against the funds allocated for capital projects.
- The Capital Receipts budget had been set at £10.5m, but the Force was only likely to achieve £4.1m as it was anticipated more land would be sold. The DCO said whilst delayed it would be sold at some point, so the opportunity would not be lost.
- The DCO reported the Revenue Budget was £386.2m with a forecast spend of £384.5m – an underspend of £1.7m which was 0.45% of the total budget.
- He said the Force kept a close eye on levels of attrition and the replacement of officers at the top end of the salary scale with joiners at the bottom which provided a financial benefit but operational difficulties.
- The DCO advised future risks included inflation, transport costs, pension detriment and pension auto-enrolment.
- In terms of one of the major financial threats, the DCO reported that following meetings with the Home Office regarding the former PFI project in North Kent they had agreed verbally there would be no detriment to the Force's finances.
- To demonstrate some of the unfairness in the current Funding Formula, the DCO advised that Merseyside's spend was the second most of all forces in the country at £268 per 1,000 population; Kent's spend was £193 – Merseyside received £74.60 or 28% more than Kent and yet they were required to maintain 106 less police officers under the PUP. In round figures, he said Merseyside received £81.4m per year more than Kent.
- Going forwards the DCO said the Force was making good progress on the savings plan for the current year, but there were some big challenges ahead.
- The PCC said comparing other forces that were in receipt of much stronger financial settlements than Kent was helpful. He added the Funding Formula work was ongoing as it had been for a while, and the fight would continue.
- Looking ahead, the PCC said it would be good to get the Force's perspective on the budget and financial outlook for 2024/25, including the need for precept. Noting the PCC was supportive around lobbying for fairer funding, the CC stated the Funding Formula needed to change as there was currently an inherent unfairness with some forces having significant reserves because they were regularly over funded, whereas Kent did not receive enough to pay even its wage bill. He stated it was one of the most strategic issues affecting the Force. In terms of the Value for Money Profiles, the DCO said Kent was delivering a lot more people and activity than perhaps comparator forces. Noting a further Chief Officer meeting was scheduled, he advised for 2024/25 no assumptions had been made about the PCC's precepting decision nor could an accurate assumption be made around the Government Grant. He said there were a number of pressures and opportunities including inflation and the pay award, and when brought together the Force anticipated a shortfall of about £9.8m in terms of being able to start the year with a balanced budget. He added the Force was looking to devise a savings plan around that figure which could be adjusted, subject to variables the Force did not know and assumptions changing. He said the Grant and precepting decision were two important pieces of information the Force currently lacked, but it anticipated a savings plan of £9.8m in 2024/25.
- The PCC thanked the CC and the DCO for their candour which he said was helpful in making the argument, but also for the Police and Crime Panel in February where the discussion around the precept would take place.

8. Topical issues & Update on Significant Operational Matters

- The CC stated there was nothing, advising that he would keep the PCC updated on any significant events via their weekly meeting.

In closing, the PCC thanked the CC, DCC and DCO for their presentations and for producing the papers. He also thanked his team for their support with the technology and those who had joined the meeting online.

Date of next Performance and Delivery Board: 28 February 2024