

By: Anna Taylor – Panel Officer
To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel, 16 July 2024
Subject: Draft Panel Annual Report – 2023/24
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

Preparation and publication of an Annual Report by the Panel is a legal requirement under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The Panel is asked to consider and approve the below content for the 2023/24 Panel Annual Report.

Draft Annual Report

Introduction

1. This report summarises the work of the Panel between February 2023 and February 2024. It follows annual reports that have been produced every year since the Panel was established in November 2012. The objective of the Panel is to scrutinise and support the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner in his role in helping tackle crime and disorder in Kent and Medway.
2. The Panel provides a 'check and balance' on the performance of the Police and Crime Commissioner regarding his priorities for Kent Police contained within his Making Kent Safer Plan. The Panel plays a vital role in holding the PCC to account and supporting him in the effective exercise of his duties, in particular in the way he holds the Chief Constable to account.
3. The Panel comprises 18 elected members from local authorities across Kent and Medway and two co-opted independent members. Membership of the Panel can be viewed here: [Membership of the Panel](#).

Meetings

4. During this period the Panel met formally 4 times – 1 February, 18 April, 27 June and 17 October 2023 copied of the [agenda and minutes](#) are available to view. The Panel also received a briefing from the Chief Constable in November which addressed the pledge made by Kent Police, workforce numbers, finance, control strategy, the HMICFRS PEEL Inspection results, demand and performance, the neighbourhood policing model and strategic

issues. In addition to this, the Chair communicated regularly with the Commissioner to assist and support the smooth running of Panel business.

5. The Panel also met informally in November 2023 and January 2024 to discuss the development of the precept proposal with the Commissioner's Officers.

Panel business

6. The Panel met its statutory duty in February 2023 to consider and make recommendations on the Commissioner's draft "Making Kent Safer 2022-25" Police and Crime Plan, as well as his proposed budget and precept. The Commissioner attended to present his proposal and answer questions from the Panel. The Panel noted that the Commissioner's priorities within the plan had remained consistent and the Panel supported the Plan and precept proposal.
7. The Panel approved the Commissioner's proposed precept increase of £15 for the year for an average Band D, which equated to a 6.57% precept increase. The Panel noted that under the proposal a Band D property would pay £243.15 a year towards policing. The Panel noted that the Kent PCC remained within the lowest quartile of precepting PCCs across the country and Kent remained in the lower quartile for Government funding for PCCs.
8. As required the Panel reported on the Commissioner's Plan and Precept which is available here: [Panel Report and Commissioner's Response on Plan and Precept](#).
9. The Panel met its statutory duty to consider the Commissioner's Annual Report for 2022/2023, which it considered at its meeting on 17 October 2023.
10. The Panel received reports on the following issues between February 2023 and February 2024:
 - a. Contacting Kent Police – the Panel received a comprehensive summary of how best the public could contact Kent Police; the structure of the Force Control Room; emergency (999), non-emergency (101), digital contact performance and the measures used by the Commissioner to hold the Chief Constable to account on performance. The Panel received a further report on contacting Kent Police at their meeting in October 2023. This detailed progress that had been made to recruit to the Force Control Room (FCR) to answer 999 and 101 calls.
 - b. HMICFRS PEEL Inspection 2021/22 – the Panel received an update on Kent Police's progress in addressing the findings from the PEEL

Inspection 2021/22. The Commissioner continued to hold the Chief Constable to account for performance and the Commissioner's Performance and Delivery Board continued to focus on identified Areas for Improvement.

- c. Vetting, Counter Corruption & Pension Forfeiture – the Panel sought reassurance from the Commissioner that Kent Police had robust vetting and counter corruption measures in place. The report 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 the Commissioner could consider in certain circumstances following the conviction of an officer for a criminal offence.
- d. The Kent Police Neighbourhood Policing Review – which was a significant initiative aiming to maintain effective community policing whilst addressing budget constraints. The Panel requested further updates the latest of which is due to be considered at the meeting in July 2024.
- e. Fraud – the Panel requested this report following concerns raised about the prevalence of fraud. Partnership working remained very important and it was considered that the National Fraud Strategy and improvements to Action Fraud should improve residents' confidence.
- f. Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Inquiry – update – this following previous reports on the VAWG Inquiry. The Commissioner highlighted some of the recommendations from the inquiry that were being delivered such as officer verification checks; the launch of the StreetSafe tool and more comprehensive safeguards. He explained the Walk and Talk events and the launch of his Victim Voice initiative, as well as school intervention programmes and victim satisfaction surveys.

11. "Questions to the Commissioner" continued as a regular item at each meeting. The Panel welcomed the Commissioner's willingness to answer questions, of which he had been given prior notice. This agenda item continued to provide a greater opportunity for Panel members to raise issues with the Commissioner that do not form part of his formal reports. Question topics included issues such as VAWG, victim and community feedback on investigations, charging, prosecuting and justice, resourcing within Kent Police and recruitment and retention, trust in the police, use of CCTV in investigating crime, safeguarding of domestic abuse victims.

Complaints

12. The Panel, via its Officers, maintained oversight over formal complaints made against the Commissioner under the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2012. No complaints had progressed to a Complaints Sub-Committee hearing during this period. Officer contact with other Panels suggests that the number of complaints (recorded or otherwise) against the Kent Commissioner remained low compared with other Commissioners. The annual report setting out the number of complaints received against the Commissioner will be submitted to the Panel in October 2024 as usual.

Commissioner's decisions

13. The Commissioner published the following decisions during this period, which were considered and noted by the Panel:

a. Decision OPCC.D.032.23

To award the Victim's Advocacy and Support Services contract to Victim Support for 4 years commencing 1 April 2023.

b. Decision OPCC.D.033.23 – Sale of IP Addresses

To sell the IP address at public auction and not through a preferred buyer.

c. Decision OPCC.D.034.23 – PFI North Kent Police Station

To terminate the PFI contract at North Kent Police station.

Panel terms of reference

14. The Panel's terms of reference require them to be reviewed annually. It is considered convenient to do this at the same time as the Panel reviews its work over the past year. Minor wording changes, clarifications or consequential amendments to address changes in law or external arrangements may be made from time to time by Officers, subject to review by the KCC Monitoring Officer. No significant changes to the terms of reference are proposed at this time for the Panel's consideration and approval. The full terms of reference can be found by following this [link](#).

Panel budget

15. The Panel's terms of reference also require the Panel to review its budget on an annual basis. Finance for the Panel's work comes from an annual Home Office grant of £71,700. The expenditure incurred is predominantly on staff

support to the Panel, but also relates to subscriptions to relevant membership bodies and payment of co-optee member allowances and expenses. The outturn for 2023-24 was £35,848 (compared to £37,371 in 2022-23 and £34,900 in 2021-22). The Panel has, while meeting all statutory obligations and undertaking appropriate work as a Panel, kept its costs contained well within the existing Home Office Grant, demonstrating that Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel continues to deliver good value for money.

Conclusions

16. Panel Members remain focused on supporting and scrutinising the PCC in relation to key policing and crime issues in local communities. The Panel reviews and agrees a future work programme at each meeting. This ensures that the Panel can deliver its functions in a timely way and emphasises the transparency of the Panel.
17. Meetings of the Panel have continued to be webcast to promote public engagement and the Panel welcomes the positive approach taken by the Commissioner in responding to questions as well as the standing invitation to all Panel Members to attend the Commissioner's Performance and Delivery Board meetings.
18. The PCC elections took place on 2 May 2024 and the Panel looks forward to continuing its effective working relationship with the Commissioner.

RECOMMENDATION

To consider and approve the draft Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel 2023/24 Annual Report.

Contact: Anna Taylor
anna.taylor@kent.gov.uk 03000 416478