

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### 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 on Wednesday, 6 February 2019.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Mr Gurvinder Sandher (Vice-Chairman), Mrs E Bolton, Cllr J Burden, Cllr M Conolly (Substitute for Cllr MJ Holloway, OBE), Cllr M Dearden, Mrs L Game, Cllr F Gooch, Ms S Hamilton, Cllr A Horton, Cllr J Knight, Cllr K Maskell (Substitute for Cllr P Fleming), Cllr H Tejan, Cllr P Todd and Cllr R Wells

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Cook (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **304. Declarations of Interests by Members in Items on the Agenda for this Meeting**

*(Item 3)*

Cllrs Horton and Todd declared an interest as they were both in receipt of a Police pension.

#### **305. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 14 November 2018**

*(Item 4)*

1. The Commissioner updated Members on the follow up items raised at the last meeting.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2018 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

#### **306. Draft refreshed 'Safer in Kent: The Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan' and Precept proposal for 2019/20**

*(Item B1)*

1. The Commissioner introduced the refreshed 'Safer in Kent Plan' and set out the minor changes to the Plan.

2. The Plan covered the period 2017-21, there had been minor wording changes but the principles contained within the plan remained valid with strong ethics, integrity and honesty.

3. Members discussed the findings of the Annual Policing Survey, one member raised concerns that the plan and its minor amendments did not reflect the results of the public consultation. The Member asked the commissioner whether he intended a

major rewrite of the plan on its next review. The Commissioner considered that the plan reflected what residents wanted to see action on, there was still a lot of misunderstanding about Police funding and it was hoped that the plan would improve future consultation responses and that people would feel like they were getting better value for money.

4. Referring to the question within the survey 'Tell us one thing you think Kent Police could do better' a Member suggested that the response 'Recruit more police officers and/or deploy more visible patrols' should be split into two responses, the Commissioner confirmed that he would consider this for future surveys.

5. In response to a question about what visible policing looked like in the modern world the Commissioner explained that the aim of the recruitment drive was to go back to police officers and PCSOs on the streets.

6. In response to a comment about the types of crimes Kent Police were dealing with the Commissioner explained that demands to policing had changed, there was an Investigation Management Unit dealing with low level investigations along with teams looking at areas such as Domestic Violence to try to improve levels of service. Where Members were aware of areas of poor service the Commissioner encouraged them to tell him to that he could ensure this was being looked at and if there were wider issues, he could hold the Chief Constable to account.

7. A Member raised the point of crime prevention and diversion and what was available locally in terms of diversionary activities, the commissioner explained that there was a commissioning strategy and he had given money to local councils to enable them to make decisions about what was needed locally. The Safer in Kent Fund funded local projects focusing on prevention and diversion. Nationally, the Commissioner explained that during 2018 the Home Office had run an early intervention youth fund and the Commissioner hoped to be able to make an announcement next week about partnership work with the Home Office.

8. In response to a comment the Commissioner confirmed that burglary remained as one of his, and the Chief Constable's, priorities. A Member congratulated the Commissioner on how policing was progressing in the county.

9. The Commissioner referred to the precept and thanked his team who had done an exceptional job in ensuring that the precept proposal was as accurate as possible. He also thanked the Panel for their engagement at both formal and informal meetings and other engagements. The Commissioner considered the Panel meetings to be important and he felt supported whilst being challenged appropriately.

10. The Commissioner had taken all feedback into consideration, and he thanked all staff (including volunteers) working with Kent Police for the tremendous work carried out to keep Kent safe, they were to be commended.

11. Referring to the challenges to Kent Police there was continued increase in pressure and demand, the Commissioner hoped that staff felt supported by his office. It was evident that crime was changing, there was more focus on online crime with more risks relating to vulnerable people, grooming, human trafficking, sexual violence, stalking and domestic abuse which counted for 1 in 6 crimes recorded by

Kent Police. HMIC's latest State of Policing report stated that policing was becoming more complex.

12. Demands on policing had also changed, there had been a huge increase in calls relating to mental health issues and other vulnerabilities and missing persons. There were greater requirements around safeguarding and crime recording. Police staff were under pressure with police numbers falling every year from 2009 to 2016, there were currently fewer police staff working in Kent Police than there were in 2009 and fewer PCSOs. This also had an impact on the welfare of Police staff with officers taking time off for their own mental health and wellbeing.

13. Kent was in receipt of the 7<sup>th</sup> lowest amount of funding per head of population and in spite of all the challenges it was the only force in the country deemed outstanding in legitimacy and was the best police force in the country for accuracy of crime data with all other areas good or outstanding.

14. The Commissioner explained that the Government had allowed PCCs the flexibility to increase the police precept by up to £2 a month (Band D property). Based on the demands outlined and with the support of residents the Commissioner proposed to increase council tax by this maximum of £2 per month for a Band D property. Kent Police would continue to make efficiencies with £9.7million savings during the course of the next year. These combined would result in 180 additional police officers in addition to those who left or retired.

15. In response to a question about deployment the Commissioner confirmed that this was a decision for the Chief Constable, however this had been discussed and half of the new roles would be in local policing.

16. Referring to the longer term the next Comprehensive Spending Review needed to look at police funding, it was considered that the balance between central and local police funding could not continue as it was currently.

17. The Commissioner offered to facilitate any visits with Panel Members and local policing teams who were doing a fantastic job.

18. A Member asked whether the Commissioner was satisfied that the additional funding should be spent on increasing police numbers and not for funding pension liabilities for example, the Member also asked how sustainable the Commissioner's proposals were. The Commissioner explained that the strategic assessment of Kent Police stated that capacity would need to be strengthened because of increasing demand and an increase in areas of criminality. Referring to long term sustainability the Commissioner had built a 2% increase into the budget for next year.

19. Referring to preventative services a Member asked whether the Commissioner had considered reducing the number of additional officers and using some of the funding for Safer in Kent (SinK) Funding and putting money into local communities. The Commissioner explained that although the SinK fund would not continue there would be funding for preventative mechanisms in addition to money given to the Kent Community Safety Partnership. The Violence Reduction Challenge would be holding its final meeting on 13 February and the Commissioner would outline, in March, what would be a significant investment in preventative work from within existing resources.

20. A Member asked for more information on what the Commissioner meant by visible policing, and the Commissioner explained that the Chief Constable's intention with the additional 180 officers was: 86 into town centre beat policing and proactive community policing teams, 4 officers into the citizens and policing programme working alongside the special constabulary and the volunteers. The remaining 90 would be going into the vulnerability investigation teams and the crime squad.

21. In response to a query about running a publicity campaign alongside the precept increase launch, there was a element of mistrust amongst the public, the Commissioner was keen, if the Panel supported the increase, to communicate this alongside the Council Tax bills if possible and timely and run an awareness campaign on social media in the most cost effective and efficient way. The Commissioner was reminded that many district councils were due to have elections on 2 May and he should be mindful of the rules around Purdah.

22. A Member referred to the 7% 'other income' referred to in the report, the Commissioner explained that this referred to Kent Police re-charging from certain areas such as firearms licencing.

23. In response to a question the Commissioner confirmed that the precept would fund 180 additional officers and 15 police staff. Regarding the welfare and mental health of Police Officers the Commissioner explained that he hoped that increasing the numbers of staff sent a strong message and reduced pressure on existing officers meaning that victims still got a good service and freed up some officers to undertake more proactive work. The Commissioner outlined some of the ways in which staff were supported and given guidance.

24. In response to a question the Commissioner explained that he had taken on board all feedback and comments made through a poll on the Commissioner's website as well as a poll made on the Kent online website. The Commissioner would continue to hold regular meetings to challenge the Chief Constable on the effect of the additional officers.

25. Members congratulated the Commissioner on the cadets scheme, young people were being drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds and this was very successful.

26. The Chairman confirmed that he was happy to support the Commissioner's plan and precept and he congratulated the Commissioner on behalf of the Panel on the high quality of work from Kent Police.

27. The Clerk confirmed that the Panel would submit a formal report to the Commissioner confirming their support of the plan and precept, the Panel delegated the drafting and approval of this report to the officers and Chairman/Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED that the Panel support the Commissioner's refreshed Safer in Kent Plan and approve the accompanying precept.

**307. Crime Data Integrity**  
*(Item C1)*

1. The Commissioner introduced the Crime Data Integrity report which updated Members on Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) most recent re-inspection of Crime Data Integrity.
2. The Commissioner explained that there were minor areas which needed to be addressed and he received weekly 1:1 briefings from the Chief Constable.
3. The Chairman congratulated the Commissioner and the Force on the good news and their swift and effective action.

RESOLVED that the Commissioner and Kent Police be congratulated on the excellent inspection report received from HMICFRS.

### **308. Mental Health - verbal update** *(Item C2)*

1. The Commissioner gave the Panel an update regarding Police involvement in mental health issues. He was grateful to the Panel for their continued interest in the mental health agenda.
2. The Commissioner had commissioned Victim Support to better understand how people with mental health issues were supported through the criminal justice system and the findings and recommendations of this work were scheduled to be available in March with a report in May.
3. In December the Commissioner had attended the launch of the independent review of the Mental Health Act. The recommendations that the Commissioner made to the review had been incorporated, one pertinent recommendation was that police cells should no longer be used as a place of safety for anyone, by 2023/24. The preferred place of safety was defined as a health-based place of safety or a S136 suite.
4. Following a review of the Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat Governance Arrangements it was agreed that the current Mental Health and Policing Oversight Board would be refreshed to become the strategic decision-making body for Kent and Medway.
5. The Commissioner offered congratulations to Sevenoaks District Council on the opening of their Mental Health Crisis drop in centre. The Commissioner had also chaired a new group with the national police chiefs and national fire chiefs council amongst other bodies to improve performance across country.
6. A Member commented that mental health was not mentioned anywhere in the public survey. Was there a variance between the effect of mental health issues and public perception? The Commissioner explained that there was not enough public awareness of how much police time was spent tackling mental health. In raising awareness, the Commissioner aimed to inform people to phone the crisis team or 101 rather than come to the police.
7. Members discussed the use of the Armed Services Covenant Champion, and the mental health of veterans. The Commissioner explained that when veterans came to the attention of the police it was sometimes through police custody. Kent

Police had an agreement with SSAFA, a charity which supported members of the armed forces. If someone was identified as a veteran, they would have the support of the charity and a dedicated case worker. There was further collaboration which could be looked at with the network of armed forces champions and the OPCC role in policing and the Mental Health Oversight Board.

8. A Member asked whether Police Officers were reporting increased mental health problems as a result of the pressure they were under. The Commissioner confirmed that PTSD, stress, depression, anxiety were all issues, in the last 5 years 4 out of 5 officers out of work took time off because of mental health rather than physical health.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the Commissioners Mental Health verbal update.

### **309. Brexit - verbal update**

*(Item C3)*

1. The Commissioner provided the Panel will an update on preparations for leaving the EU. The Commissioner received regular updates from the Assistant Chief Constable and the Chief Constable about local progression, particularly around roads and the OPCC was also represented at some of the local meetings. The OPCC engaged with KCC and DDC regarding the Brexit Task Force and the Commissioner had visited the Calais border. Some additional funding had been secured, £850k had been received to pay for costs incurred for contingency planning. The key principle was that the Government was willing to ensure that Kent Police and Kent Council Tax payers were not left out of pocket over the decision to leave the EU.

2. The Commissioner was working nationally, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners established a cross party Brexit working group which had met with the Home Secretary.

3. A Member asked about plans for coping with the number of domestic cars travelling through the channel tunnel and on the M20. The Commissioner explained that there had been work done to determine issues around heavy goods vehicles coming into the county. He was not aware that there was a substantial issue regarding domestic vehicles, but he would look into this, particularly with reference to the Channel Tunnel link.

4. Members referred to the huge resource required if vehicles had to be moved around the county, the Commissioner explained that those considerations had been put into plans and the mutual aid would sit with the national police coordinator.

5. The Chairman summarised and stressed the importance of partners working together post Brexit.

RESOLVED that the Panel note the Commissioner's Brexit verbal update.

### **310. Panel Annual Report**

*(Item D1)*

1. A Member commented that the informal meeting to review the effectiveness of the Panel held in 2018 was useful and it was hoped that this would be repeated.

RESOLVED that the Panel's Annual Report be approved.

**311. Future work programme**  
*(Item D2)*

RESOLVED that the Panel note the future work programme.