



## Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee

Members of the **Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee** of **Gravesham Borough Council** are summoned to attend a meeting to be held at the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Windmill Street, Gravesend DA12 1AU on **Tuesday, 12 March 2024 at 7.30 pm** when the business specified in the following agenda is proposed to be transacted.

S Walsh  
Assistant Director  
(Organisational Development & Democratic Support)

### Agenda

#### Part A

#### Items likely to be considered in Public

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes (Pages 3 - 8)
3. Declarations of Interest
4. To consider whether any items in Part A of the Agenda should be considered in private or any items in Part B in public
5. Proposed Topic Review and Process (Pages 9 - 12)
6. Kent Police Update VERBAL UPDATE
7. Minutes of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel October 2023 (Pages 13 - 22)
8. Any other business which by reason of special circumstances the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

## 9. Exclusion

To move, if required, that pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public be excluded from any items included in Part B of the agenda because it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted that if members of the public are present during those items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act. Part B Items likely to be considered in private.

### **Part B**

#### **Items likely to be considered in private**

10. Strategic Assessment 2023 (Summary of Key Findings) and Priorities for the new Community Safety Strategy 2024-28 (Pages 23 - 50)

### **Members**

Cllr Baljit Hayre (Chair)  
Cllr Lyn Milner (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:           Derek Ashenden  
                              Helen Ashenden  
                              Ejaz Aslam  
                              Deborah Croxton  
                              Aaron Elliott  
                              Gary Harding  
                              Jo Hart  
                              Karina O'Malley  
                              Leslie Pearton  
                              Tony Rana  
                              Christina Rolles  
                              Ektaveen Thandi  
                              Frank Wardle

Substitutes:           To be notified

**Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee****Thursday, 26 October 2023****7.30pm****Present:**

Cllr Baljit Hayre (Chair)  
Cllr Lyn Milner (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:       Derek Ashenden  
                          Helen Ashenden  
                          Ejaz Aslam  
                          Deborah Croxton  
                          Gary Harding  
                          Jo Hart  
                          Alan Metcalf  
                          Karina O'Malley  
                          Leslie Pearton  
                          Tony Rana  
                          Christina Rolles  
                          Ektaveen Thandi  
                          Frank Wardle

**Note:**               Councillor Mochrie-Cox and Councillor Williams were also in attendance

Kath Donald	Strategic Manager
Dorota Trapl	Community Safety Administrator
Sophie Jordan	G-Safe Business Crime Reduction Initiative
Chloe Taylor	Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

**1. Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Aaron Elliot. Cllr Alan Metcalf attended as substitute.

**2. Minutes**

The minutes of the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 14 March 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Pearton declared an interest as his daughter was a prison officer at Warren Wood.

**4. Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference**

Before the item commenced the Chair thanked Simon Hookway (Assistant Director) following his departure from the council after 37 years of service. Many members of the committee worked closely with him during that time and really valued the support and assistance that he provided to them.

Members of the committee joined the Chair in recording their thanks and wishing Simon the very best of luck for the future.

The Strategic Manager introduced this item and stated it was for the new members of the committee to help inform them about its terms of reference. The committee were reminded of their important function in scrutinising the work of the partnership and that it was a statutory requirement for local authorities to have this committee.

The committee noted the report.

## **5. Tackling Nuisance Bikes and Vehicles**

Due to police unavailability, this report was not discussed.

## **6. Safer Streets Project**

The Strategic Manager, Community Safety Administrator, and G-Safe Business Crime Reduction Initiative delivered a presentation to members (included in the agenda pack), and highlighted the following key points:

- A successful application was submitted for just over £61k, matched to a total of £122k by Gravesham Community Safety Unit (CSU) in collaboration with other partnerships.
- The project area covered approximately half of each of the previous Ward areas of Pelham and Riverside.
- The CSU focused on strengthening formal surveillance where the police had proposed it would be worth having additional CCTV. New cameras had been introduced as a part of this work.
- The CSU had also focused on streetlights as part of strengthening surveillance. They had secured external funding to upgrade the current heritage street lighting. This part of the project had been delayed slightly due to a component in the streetlights which prevented the upgrade. The contractors had to create a new part which allowed for the upgrade to proceed. However, it was predicted that it would be completed by January 2024.
- The CSU worked on improving natural surveillance, such as clearing the overgrown vegetation, fly-tipping and improving poor lighting on the pedestrian footpath between Thames Way and the Overcliffe.
- The G-Safe Free Radio Trial and Upgraded Radio Link was introduced.
- The Gravesham Safe Space Scheme had created locations within the town centre where anyone feeling vulnerable could access help.
- Bystander Effect training was delivered by Cultivating Minds.
- Targeted work was delivered to raise awareness of Violence Against Women & Girls (BAME communities) through working with key partners.
- Two evening and nighttime economy town centre audits had been performed – one at the beginning of the Project and the second on 29 September this year. The Strategic Manager emphasised that when they spoke to residents when it was still light and there was more footfall, residents said they felt safe due to it still being visibly light and busy. However, once it got to 11pm there was very little footfall, and it was dark in a lot of areas. Residents expressed that they felt unsafe due to it being

dark and isolated. Corporate work was being undertaken to boost the evening and nighttime economy.

- The CSU had achieved a full spend, with no overspend.

Following questions and comments from members, the Strategic Manager, Community Safety Administrator, and G-Safe Business Crime Reduction Initiative explained that:

- The Strategic Manager would double check with the Parking & Environmental Enforcement Services Manager regarding the strength of the streetlights.
- G-Safe was a Business Crime Reduction Partnership. They were self-funded from membership subscriptions. It was a very affordable service, but they're not an emergency service nor a response team, but instead a community initiative that works with businesses to provide a radio and intranet system that was accessible online. It was a well-established and well regarded.
- The police have a direct crime reporting link via Disc and G-Safe always encourage businesses to make a police report where necessary.
- G-Safe had one paid employee who deals with the radios, invoicing, the signing of new businesses, the Disc system and the publication of incidents.
- There was a board of management, who were elected from the memberships at the annual meeting. Prior to this, members will nominate who they want to sit on the board.
- The board had refused a membership before, but the grounds for granting memberships were important as there was personal and sensitive data being transmitted over the radio.
- In terms of access, not all Safe Space businesses will have access for wheelchairs. The Strategic Manager advised they could look at all the Safe Spaces and identify the ones with disabled access and encourage those that don't to address this if possible. Where the Safe Spaces were listed on the Gravesham Borough Website, it was suggested that a disability symbol be placed next to the businesses that had disabled access and disabled toilets.
- The CSU had made it clear with businesses that staff should not be getting involved in confrontational/dangerous situations and in any instance where they were concerned for their safety or of that of others or the individual approaching them, the emergency services should be called.
- The type of support offered by Safe Spaces was low level support, such as an individual coming into the shop concerned that they're being followed, and they ask to wait in the shop for their taxi to arrive or ask the shop to call them a taxi. These Safe Spaces were not there to be a police service.
- The safety of shop staff was a primary concern. An occasion arose where staff were not comfortable with providing a Safe Space, and as a result the business withdrew from the service. The CSU were understanding and did not pressure them to participate.
- G-Safe was able to be extended outside of the town centre. However, it would require the cooperation of all businesses in the area for the radios to be beneficial.
- The CSU gave pins to those who had completed the Bystander Effect training, but the look of the pins was not promoted by those who were trained. This was something that they could look into in order for members of the public to recognise who was trained.

- If users of Safe Spaces had concerns about how their situation was dealt with, the GBC website had a disclaimer where individuals were encouraged to contact CSU had the situation gone wrong.
- Depending on the nature of the incident, reporting to the police was discretionary where appropriate. Those accessing the service should be notified of the options and services available to them, but it was important to consider the welfare of the individual. However, where there was a threat to life, the police should always be called, and in incidents where the individual was under 16, calling the police was a requirement.
- There were a lot of residential areas that had a Neighbourhood Watch. The Strategic Manager advised that it would be worth looking into which ones were active.
- Purchasing additional radios for the G-Safe free trail would require additional funding. If there was external funding available, they could look to increase the number of radios available, but this would be subject to other competing areas of work.
- The Bystander Effect training includes advises on how to stay safe when attending confrontational situations or how to safely take stand against unwanted behaviour. It was about de-escalating a situation, and they were not advised to enter any situation in which they didn't feel safe, and they were not encouraged to get involved with serious crimes. This training did not offer a direct approach, they were trained in effective, creative, discrete and non-confrontational approaches.
- By-stander Effect Training and Gravesham Safe Space are two initiatives that are and will be carried on by CSU throughout Gravesham.
- The Safe Spaces and Bystander Effect training were fully endorsed by the police.
- Under-reporting was one of the biggest issues within business crime. Individuals were not reporting incidents to the police. G-Safe encouraged businesses to report these crimes and have prepared reports on behalf of the business to hand over to the police.
- G-Safe was promoted in GBCs Your Borough, to both the public and businesses. Word of mouth was largely how it was promoted, G-Safe had walked through the town speaking to businesses, calling businesses and the use of social media.

The Committee noted the report.

## **7. Policing Update**

Due to police unavailability, this report was not discussed.

## **8. Suggestions for future Topic Reviews**

The Chair of the committee encouraged members to put forward suggestions for future scrutiny topic reviews. The following were suggested:

- 1) E-Scooters and Dirt Bikes
- 2) Anti-social behaviour, particularly related to groups of school age individuals in the time frame after school. This links to education at school and encouraging children to be a part of the community/and be more socially conscious.
- 3) Rural crime.

The Chair thanked Members for their suggestions and advised they would take them away to discuss with the Strategic Manager, and bring this back to the next committee meeting.

**9. Latest published Minutes of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel**

Members of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee were presented with the minutes for the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel. This was for information only. Cllr Mochrie-Cox, the GBC representative on the panel welcomed questions from members and advised if they had any queries to contact him.

The committee noted the report.

**Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 9.08 pm

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**Classification: Public**

**Key Decision: No**

### Gravesham Borough Council

**Report to:** Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 12 March 2024

**Reporting officer:** Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit)

**Subject:** Proposed Topic Review and Process

**Purpose and summary of the report:**

To provide the Committee with details of a proposed Topic Review following the recommendations made by Members at the last meeting of this Committee in October 2023.

**Recommendations:**

The Committee is asked to:

- i) Consider the proposed Topic Review and subject to Members' approval, agree that the appropriate Members and Officers commence the Review process.

<b>Key Implications:</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Implications</b>
<b>Legal</b>	The Council has a statutory obligation to work with partner agencies to address crime and ASB and Serious Organised Crime (Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Serious Organised Crime Act 2015) and to be subject to scrutiny by a Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee which must meet at least once a year.
<b>Finance and Value for Money</b>	There are no identified or specific financial implications.
<b>Corporate Plan</b>	Work undertaken by the Gravesham CSP makes a direct contribution to the Council's Corporate Plan's priorities: <b>#oneborough - Safer Gravesham:</b> deliver stronger neighbourhoods and a more secure living environment through a portfolio of initiatives, delivered with Kent Police and key partner agencies.
<b>Climate Change</b>	No direct implications.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 At the last meeting of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee in October 2023, Members were invited to put forward proposals of community safety activity/issues that could form the subject of a Topic Review. The Committee agreed that the Chair, Vice-Chair and Strategic

Manager, Community Safety, would meet to discuss the suggested topics and report back with a proposal at the Committee's next (current) meeting. Subject to the Members' approval, it is suggested the next Topic Review focuses on:

*'Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) involving school-age young people and occurring after school finishing time in the afternoon and early evening, particularly in Gravesend town centre'.*

1.2 The selection of this subject for a Topic Review takes into account the following:

- ASB is an issue that affects the Borough as a whole and reports of public space ASB (particularly in Gravesend town centre) frequently refer to large groups of young people gathering after school and in the early evenings.
- This behaviour (which in part may also be a perception issue as large groups gathering can in themselves be intimidating to some) can have a negative impact on local businesses whilst some residents/others wishing to visit to the town centre, report avoiding the area at these times as a consequence.
- The Strategic Assessment 2023 established that Police-recorded ASB in Gravesham had increased by 11.4% in the year ending 30 September 2023 compared to a Kent average increase of 2.0% and the highest rate of ASB incidents per 1,000 population are reported from within the immediate vicinity of the town centre.
- Respondents to the Community Safety Public Consultation completed at the end of 2023, very clearly identified ASB as the main issue locally affecting community safety.
- Tackling ASB is resource-intensive, places demands on all CSP partner agencies but can equally benefit most significantly from multi-agency working.
- From working to prevent and reduce ASB through to taking enforcement action when appropriate, tackling this issue is a CSP strategic priority and will be a key area of focus within the Partnership's new Community Safety Strategy 2024-28.

## 2. Process for the Topic Review

2.1 The process for completing the Topic Review requires that:

- i) Subject to the Committee's agreement, the subject of the Topic Review as described in 1. Above is approved by Members.
- ii) The Committee agrees which Member will chair the Topic Review Group and determines the membership of the Group (there should be four Members in total and the Group must be politically balanced).
- iii) Draft Terms of Reference are prepared for the Topic Review Group, incorporating the membership of the Group, the format of the review and these are agreed by the Committee.
- iv) The Committee agrees the length of time during which the Review should be completed (6 months is recommended).
- v) A **draft** report of the findings of the review and setting out its recommendations is considered by the Committee prior to the report being presented to Management Team.

- vi) Following Management Team's approval, a **final** report is taken to the C & D Scrutiny Committee by the Lead Officer/Group Chair. After this Committee, the report is amended as necessary and then presented by the Lead Officer/Group Chair at Chief Executive's Briefing and Cabinet for approval.
- vii) At the next C & D Scrutiny Committee following the completion of the review, the Committee shall be informed of the response to any recommendations made in the final report.
- viii) Six months after the Topic Review report, recommendations and response have been considered, an Agenda item shall be listed for the next available C & D Scrutiny Committee, to receive a report on actions completed, their outcome and the status of any actions still in progress.

<b>Secondary Implications</b>	
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Failure to work in partnership with other statutory agencies as required would be to the detriment of addressing crime, ASB and Serious Organised Crime.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of <a href="#">personal data</a> or <a href="#">special category data</a> or <a href="#">criminal offence data</a>? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links. No</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at <a href="mailto:gdpr@medway.gov.uk">gdpr@medway.gov.uk</a>.</p>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. N/A</p> <p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. N/A</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The Council has a statutory obligation to work with partner agencies to address crime and ASB (Crime and Disorder Act 1998).
<b>Digital and website implications</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults</b>	The safeguarding of vulnerable young people and adults is corporately a high priority for the Council, and it is also a strategic priority for the CSP. Personal characteristics which may make some people more vulnerable may also mean that ASB can have a greater negative impact on their quality of life.

**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, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 17 October 2023.

PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE (Chairman), Mr G Sandher (Vice-Chairman), Cllr M Blakemore, Mrs E Bolton, Mr I S Chittenden, Cllr P Cole, Cllr L Edwards, Cllr P Feacey, Cllr Mrs J Hollingsbee, Cllr D Keers, Makinson, Mr J Meade, Cllr S Mochrie-Cox, Cllr R Palmer and Cllr L Parfitt-Reid

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M Scott (Kent Police and Crime Commissioner), Mr A Harper (PCC's Chief Executive), Mr R Phillips (PCC's Chief Finance Officer) and Mr N Wickens (OPCC - Head of Policy & Research)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Ms L Tricker (Democratic Services Officer)

**UNRESTRICTED ITEMS****100. Declarations of Interests by Members in Items on the Agenda for this Meeting**  
*(Item 3)*

Mr Meade declared that he was the Chairman of Gravesham Pastors Charity.

**101. Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel held on 27 June 2023**  
*(Item 4)*

The Chair raised some typographical errors in the minutes, and it was confirmed these amendments would be made.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2023 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

**102. Complaints Against the Commissioner - Annual Report 2022/23**  
*(Item B1)*

1. Mrs Taylor introduced the report and highlighted that the number of complaints received was low compared to other local authorities, and although the number had increased in 2022/23 this was largely due to repeated complaints that represented no overall concern.
2. Members did not have any comments or questions on the report.

RESOLVED to note the report.

**103. Police and Crime Commissioner Annual Report**  
*(Item B2)*

1. The Commissioner introduced the report and explained that it was a statutory function to produce an annual paper. This report covered the period between April 2022 and March 2023 and covered a year of substantial activity, for which he thanked officers within his office and the Panel. He highlighted the changes which had occurred during this period, which included the appointment of a new Chief Constable, who he felt had improved overall performance within the police force and was continuing to work on issues such as within the Force Control Room (FCR). There had also been several national projects undertaken such as the Police Uplift Programme which had seen Kent successfully recruit the 487 new police officers it had been allocated, bringing the total number of police officers to 4203, including 460 that were recruited prior to the national programme. This meant Kent now had an extra 1000 officers compared to six years ago, although retention remained an issue. He outlined that the next step was to increase the number of police staff.
2. The Commissioner highlighted the main areas within the report which were:
  - a. The commissioning element, which included commissioning programmes for victims. For example:
    1. Funding for victims had increased by 93% (from £2million to almost £4million) which included sexual abuse and domestic abuse advisers who were now in post supporting both men and women.
    2. The Victim Voice campaign which had launched in February 2023 and worked to ensure victims understood their rights and right to review. Thousands of victims had used this service and feedback was positive overall.
    3. The Victim Support Contract had formalised the Stalking Advocate and Hate Crime Advocate roles.
    4. The PCC had recommissioned the Restorative Justice programme.
    5. The Collaborate Digital programme had been launched which went into schools to teach children about online behaviour and healthy relationships.
  - b. The ongoing partnerships between the PCC and other organisations. These partnerships helped launch the Safer Streets programme, which had run until September 2023, and expanded CCTV across the county, engaged an active bystander's programme and improved street lighting. The Commissioner was also the Chairman of the Criminal Justice Board and worked closely with the Violence Reduction Unit.
  - c. Holding the Chief Constable to account and ensuring a good relationship. The Commissioner had focussed on holding the Chief Constable to account on the following issues:
    1. Public contact, including the call attrition rate for 101, which had dropped from 55% in 2022 to 5% in 2023.
    2. Mental health support, including the Right Care, Right Person scheme and response policing.
    3. The Neighbourhood Policing Review; whilst he regretted the loss of a number of PCSO's, he said the outcome was



7. A Member thanked the Commissioner for his ongoing work regarding anti-social behaviour relating to off-road motorbikes but felt the categories of anti-social behaviour remained broad, and asked what was being done to ensure all anti-social behaviour was recorded and dealt with. The Commissioner explained that the categorisation and recording of anti-social behaviour had recently changed due to a Home Office counting rules amendment, which meant that the number of anti-social behaviour categories had decreased, with many now listed as crimes. The PCC would continue to monitor these figures closely and would speak to residents to discuss anti-social behaviour in their areas.
8. A Member asked what work was being undertaken to continue to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), as some successes had been achieved but this remained a big issue. The Commissioner stated that VAWG remained a local and national priority and needed to include violence against men and boys. There were four upcoming events including White Ribbon Day and International Men's Day to raise awareness of this issue.
9. A Member questioned the mass coordination approach of the Serious Violence Duty and felt that this needed to be tailored to a more local approach, as had previously been discussed by the Panel. The Commissioner agreed to amend the Serious Violence Duty wording in his Annual Report to reflect discussions around a more local and networked approach.
10. A concern was raised regarding question 4 of the report on page 3, which showed a 4.3/10 satisfaction score and asked what could improve this score. The Commissioner explained that satisfaction surveys were most often influenced by how quickly cases were closed with no further action; and the number of updates provided to victims.
11. Members asked if the Commissioner could provide the numbers of domestic abuse victims satisfied with the service they received, rather than percentages, and the Commissioner agreed to circulate these figures after the meeting.
12. A question was asked regarding increasing the low level of resourcing for police officers, and how call wait times could be reduced. The Commissioner explained that a detailed piece of work had been undertaken to understand and reduce call waiting times and attrition, which had been 33% and 15-minute wait times in 2022. These figures had improved in 2023 as there were now more staff working at peak times. The Commissioner added that the Neighbourhood Policing Review was currently 50% resourced, but this would increase to 95% by March 2024 and 100% by September 2024. It had been felt that a slower implementation would work better to ensure it was fully embedded and there was appropriate capacity in other teams.
13. The Vice-Chair asked what steps the PCC would be undertaking in 2023/24 to tackle personal robbery, theft, vehicle crime, and drug crime. The Commissioner explained that he was working with the Chief Constable



on these issues and was receiving monthly, ward level crime data to monitor hotspots and hold the Chief Constable to account. This included closely monitoring the levels of shoplifting and engaging with Community Liaison Officers. In terms of drug offences, these figures fluctuated based on police activity, but was again being considered by the PCC on a monthly, ward level basis.

14. A concern was raised as no data was being collected about the satisfaction of people regarding the outcomes of cybercrime. The Commissioner agreed to take this proposal forward as part of the changes to Action Fraud.
15. A Member questioned how the PCC was holding the Chief Constable to account on the issue of speed enforcement, and how community safety policing was being utilised and linked to speeding. The Commissioner explained that Kent Police ensured speed enforcement using fixed cameras, mobile speed vans, and as part of the daily business for local police officers. Officers also received information from community speed watch groups to monitor hotspots and worked in partnership with these groups.
16. A Member highlighted that the number of 999 calls had increased, and the number of 101 had decreased, and asked if the public were aware of the differences between 999/101 and how they should be utilised. The Commissioner stated that these figures were indicative of a larger national trend and were partly due to 101 call attrition. Several makes of mobile phone also automatically called 999 when certain buttons were pushed or put in emergency mode, which meant an increased number of dropped calls.
17. A Member raised a concern with the number of shoplifters active in Kent, and asked how the PCC was holding the Chief Constable to account on this issue. The Commissioner explained that he was closely tracking this issue and one of the priorities in the Police and Crime Plan was that Kent Police must work with residents, communities and businesses to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. He said the last two Performance and Delivery Board meetings had both included scrutiny of Kent Police's work on shoplifting and also the Shop Kind campaign. He said he had recently met with shop keepers and retailers across the county to understand the challenges they were experiencing. He reported that Kent Police had been more proactive around shoplifting and retail crime, with Neighbourhood officers currently supporting the Safer Business Week of Action by going out and meeting business owners face-to-face to understand their needs. They are using the fuller range of powers, including Criminal Behaviour Orders to ban repeat offenders from certain retailers and town centres and also charging more offenders. The Commissioner explained that shoplifting was also linked to organised crime and drug crime, so Kent Police continued to invest in drug rehabilitation services, mapping organised crime, and considering best practice when targeting prolific offenders.

18. A Member thanked the Commissioner and Kent Police for their work on tackling county lines, particularly in North Kent, and asked what work was being undertaken to stop children being exploited by county lines gangs. The Commissioner explained that 85 gangs associated with county lines had been mapped in Kent in July 2020, but this figure had reduced to below 40 in 2023 thanks to the work of Kent Police. County lines gangs had been known to groom, exploit and use sexual violence on children and this was being tackled in the following ways:
- a. Child centred policing to ensure a proportionate response when a child was found to be working in a county lines gang.
  - b. The Voice of the Child programme to ensure children were treated properly when victims or witnesses to a crime.
  - c. The work of Catch 22 and the St Giles Trust to promote a proactive anti-gang message in schools.
  - d. The Schools Team within the Neighbourhood Policing Review which would focus on crime and anti-social behaviour as part of county lines activity.

RESOLVED to review and comment on the Annual Report.

#### **104. Contacting Kent Police**

*(Item B3)*

1. The Commissioner introduced the report and stated that it had previously been requested by the Panel due to the issues that had been faced by Kent Police over the past year. The report detailed the progress that had been made to recruit to the Force Control Room to answer 999 and 101 calls, and detailed the task given to the Chief Constable in 2022 to provide an explanation on the high rates of call attrition. The Commissioner explained that the demand on the Force Control Room (FCR) and the high vacancy rate had meant that 999 calls were prioritised over 101, leading to a call attrition rate of 55% in October 2022. In February and March 2023, the force had begun an over-recruitment process and redeployed police officers to the FCR. This had led to a reduction in call attrition in 2023/24 compared to 2022/23, although this would continue to be monitored. The Commissioner highlighted that digital contact with the public remained important, including the live chat function and contact us forms.
2. The Commissioner highlighted that front counters would remain an important point of contact, and four vacancies had already been filled to ensure front counters were re-opened.
3. The Chair felt that a 2% national benchmark for call attrition rates was high, and asked if Kent Police could do better than this benchmark. The Commissioner confirmed that Kent Police would target a lower benchmark figure.
4. A Member questioned if the automated 101 response would be updated. A concern was raised that the automated message was longer than 90 seconds, which was the target response time, which meant people were often waiting 180 seconds. The Commissioner confirmed that the Chief Superintendent had reviewed the automated response and felt that encouraging people to use digital services was an important message. He confirmed that the call waiting time

began when the automated response was finished and the phone started ringing.

5. A question was asked regarding implementing a system for residents to be able to track police officers, similar to how delivery drivers and food delivery drivers were tracked. The Commissioner stated that Kent Police were beginning to engage with a national solution to implement a new technology to track the location of police officers, similar to delivery drivers.
6. The Vice-Chair questioned how the police followed up with victims after a crime, and how this was measured. The Commissioner explained that the Home Office set expectations on the timeliness and quality of follow up for victims, and this was monitored independently. The PCC could access the performance dashboard to hold the Chief Constable to account over follow-ups with victims and to promote victims' rights and the right of review, for example Victim Voice which would be distributed to the Panel after the meeting.
7. A Member raised a concern with the live-chat function and sought assurance that this did not overwhelm officers within the Force Control Room. The Commissioner confirmed that the live chat function was additionality and would not be available during peak times when 999 and 101 call numbers were high. Digital contact methods could also be useful when needing to report a crime discreetly, for example domestic abuse crimes or crimes occurring in public areas.

RESOLVED to note the report.

#### **105. Decision OPCC.D.034.23 - PFI North Kent Police Station**

*(Item C1)*

1. The Chair felt concerned regarding the legality and legal processes surrounding the decision. The Commissioner confirmed that independent legal advice and counsel had been sought before undertaking the decision. A report would be brought before the Panel once the matter had been concluded, for the Panel to scrutinise.

RESOLVED to note the decision.

#### **106. Decision OPCC.D.033.23 - Sale of IP Addresses**

*(Item C2)*

1. The Commissioner thanked the OPCC for their work on this project, as proper process had been followed and money had been generated from the sale for capital funding.

RESOLVED to note the decision.

#### **107. Questions to the Commissioner**

*(Item D1)*

##### Question 1

*An officer in Folkestone told me recently that while the force locally is carrying out more recruitment than it has in years, the real issue is retention. Does the Commissioner recognise this as a particular challenge and, if so, what plans or*

*measures are in place to address the problem of losing officers and the experience they take with them.*

(Cllr Mike Blakemore, Folkestone and Hythe District Council)

1. The Commissioner stated that retention of police officers was important locally and nationally, as forces did not want to lose skills and experience. The Performance and Delivery Board had recently discussed this issue, the minutes of which were available online. Kent Police worked to retain police officers by increasing the South East Allowance to the maximum £3000; providing them with new equipment; and lobbying the government on their behalf on changes to legislation to make the job less difficult, such as response driving and firearms policing. The force also supported officers on their decisions, such as using stop and search powers proportionately. Policies were also in place to help retain staff such as mutual exchange postings, a financial wellbeing hub, the Develop You programme, retention ambassadors, and occupational health facilities.

### Question 2

*In his role in holding the Chief Constable to account and following statements by the Home Secretary recently which said police should 'follow every reasonable line of inquiry' can the Commissioner reassure the Panel that where in areas where CCTV services are provided by local authorities (or indeed by private holders) where crime or suspected crime is committed, the information, images and data captured are fully and 100% utilised as part of the investigative process by Kent Police for each and every report of a crime or incident as part of the commitment and requirement to investigate each and every crime and indeed there is proactive engagement between Kent Police and CCTV systems provided by local authorities to ensure that crimes are proactively investigated and action taken by Kent Police.*

(Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox, Gravesham Borough Council)

2. In response to the question, the Commissioner explained that authorised professional practice guidelines had recently been updated by the Home Office but depended on the circumstances of the case. It advised that police officers should identify CCTV near the location of a crime, including local authority or on private property. Police officers would then try to make links between CCTV through a digital ambassador programme, which would remove issues of collecting DVD or video CCTV evidence.

### Question 3

*Can the Commissioner explain how he is holding the Chief Constable to account for the priority 'protecting people from exploitation and abuse' and the safeguarding of domestic abuse victims in particular?*

(Cllr Richard Palmer, Swale Borough Council)

3. In response to the question, the Commissioner explained that protecting people from abuse was one of Kent Police's priorities. It remained a standing item on the Performance and Delivery Board agenda and the Chief Constable reported regularly on the priority. The PCC regularly visited with teams such as the Vulnerability Investigative Team who tackled abuse and the Chief Finance Officer

represented the PCC on the Strategic Board and received bespoke briefings.

4. Cllr Palmer queried how domestic abuse victims could contact the PCC, as they could be intimidated reporting to police officers. The Commissioner confirmed that victims could report direct to the PCC, and to charities and third parties such as Crimestoppers.

RESOLVED to note the responses to the questions.

**108. Future work programme**

*(Item E1)*

It was confirmed that the commissioning report would not be presented in February 2024, but the PCC would provide a verbal update at the Chief Constable briefing in November.

RESOLVED to note the report.

**109. Minutes of the Commissioner's Performance and Delivery Board meeting held on 7 June 2023**

*(Item F1)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Performance and Delivery Board held on 7 June 2023 be noted.

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