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23 May 2022

Ch. Insp. Matthew Burbeck  
Kent Police Headquarters  
Thames Way  
Northfleet  
Kent DA

Dear Ch. Insp. Burbeck,

### **Kent Neighbourhood Policing Review – Consultation Response**

On behalf of the Gravesham Community Safety Partnership, I would like to thank you for attending our meeting on 21 April 2022 and for your presentation on the New Neighbourhood Policing Model that is being developed. I am grateful for the opportunity for this consultation and to be able to offer our views and comments.

Clearly policing, just as all other public services, is facing considerable challenges and demands on resources and it is right to review the way in which the service is being delivered to ensure that it is as effective and efficient as possible. However, it is our view that Neighbourhood Policing is at the heart of everything the service aims to achieve; it is fundamental in keeping our communities and local people safe. Therefore, the impact of any changes to the existing policing model should be very carefully considered. There are several key points that I would like to make and that I hope can be borne in mind:

- The importance of PCSOs within our local neighbourhoods  
Throughout the Borough, the value and appreciation of the visible presence of PCSOs cannot be underestimated. Many PCSOs remain the key point of contact between local people and the police. They are well-known within their local areas, understand the issues specific to their area and have built public confidence and trust with both residents and local Ward Councillors. Their presence in itself helps to prevent crime and ASB but it also provides an opportunity for interaction with residents and intelligence-gathering. For some of the more vulnerable members of our communities, the PCSOs foot patrols provide considerable reassurance. We would not wish to see a policing model that weakens or removes the role of PCSOs. Even if they were replaced by police officers, if the latter were to be primarily patrolling areas in vehicles rather than on foot (as most PCSOs still do), a very valuable relationship between local people and police will have been lost.
- The focus on prevention  
As a CSP one of our key priorities is preventative work and I would request that in determining the new neighbourhood policing model, there is a balanced approach to ensure that there is

adequate resourcing of prevention. Whilst, of course, crime and ASB requires a full response and thorough investigation, work to prevent offences occurring at all not only spares potential victims from coming to harm but also reduces the strain on resources post incident. Preventative work, particularly to safeguard vulnerable adults and young people from harm needs to remain a priority and therefore, I would ask that specialist roles currently carrying out this work are not removed but remain embedded in the new policing model.

- Community focus

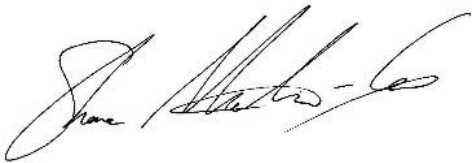
The needs of and issues facing local neighbourhoods across the county will vary and the new policing model needs to take account of that i.e., a 'one size fits all' approach to the model will not necessarily meet local needs. Gravesham has the most diverse population in Kent with some pockets of much higher-than-average levels of deprivation. Other Districts and Medway will have their own particular features. There should be some flexibility built within the new model that allows the service to adapt to meet the specific and varied needs of different communities and areas.

- Consultation about the new policing model

As mentioned, we are grateful as a CSP to have the opportunity to offer our views. I believe it is also imperative that as much encouragement as possible is given to local people to provide their comments directly. Equally, I am sure that there will have been thorough consultation throughout the ranks within the service itself as the new model will affect officers and other staff personally. Within any large organisation any significant and successful changes to working practices always need the full input of foot soldiers – the people working at ground level are generally the ones who will fully understand the implications for the communities they serve. I hope that that internal consultation has also taken place so that the knowledge and experience of those is able to feed into the process.

The above are the key points that we feel are the most important to highlight and I hope that they are constructive and helpful to you. Please be assured that you have our full support and commitment to working with you in ensuring that that the new policing model is a positive development for improving community safety in Kent. We look forward to hearing from you again once the consultation period has come to an end and learning how plans are progressing.

Kind regards,



**Councillor Shane Mochrie-Cox**  
**Chair, Gravesham Community Safety Partnership**  
**Cabinet Member (Community and Leisure), Gravesham Borough Council**