



Councillor Bill Bentley
Chairman
Sussex Police & Crime Panel
County Hall
West Street
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 1RQ

22 April 2020

Dear Councillor Bentley

Use of Focus Groups

Thank you for your letter dated 15 April 2020.

As you correctly highlighted, public consultation is a statutory responsibility for me prior to setting the precept and developing the Police & Crime Plan.

I would like to take this opportunity to set out the methodology and transparency used by my office to recruit participants for the focus groups and the different types of public engagement and consultation events attended by my office, as follows:

- In 2019/20, my office ran a series of focus groups to understand better the public's views about policing issues in their area. These groups were held in: Arundel; Battle; Bognor Regis; Burgess Hill; Crawley; East Grinstead; Heathfield; Horsham; Lancing; Midhurst; Rye; Seaford; Storrington; Ticehurst and Uckfield. Unfortunately, the group planned for the Manhood Peninsula had to be cancelled the day before it was due to take place because of the outbreak of COVID-19.
- A focus group is, by its very nature, set up for invitees only; hence the groups listed above were not publicised in the same way as a public meeting would be. Each focus group involved participants who were invited via the local town or parish clerk and, where possible, included representatives of the local business community, together with interested local residents. My website includes a section called 'Get Involved' where members of the public are asked to contact the office if they wish to participate in a focus group in their area. Many individuals have been recruited this way, with others contacting my office following appeals for focus group participants in my newsletter.
- As well as the geographical focus groups, roundtable meetings were held with the National Farmers' Union and other rural representatives to discuss approaches to rural crime.
- Another roundtable meeting comprised a range of businesses from across the county and resulted in the formation of the 'Safer Sussex Business Partnership'.



- A public meeting on the topic of 'Road Safety' was attended by 40 interested residents in Westhampnett, who responded to publicity about the meeting.
- My office also continued to participate in public engagement events through our long-standing #TalkSussex programme, providing residents with the opportunity to indicate their police and crime priorities and to discuss issues directly. A total of 9 events were attended across Sussex during summer 2019, with views sought from more than 3,000 local residents. These events provided a welcome opportunity for me to consult with residents and to proactively gauge their opinions on a range of different issues.
- Over the past year, a number of online surveys and polls - hosted on my website, shared on social media and publicised via my newsletter and press releases - provided further mechanisms for members of the public to have their say about local policing and crime issues in Sussex. More than 11,000 responses were received from residents ranging from across the county.

I am surprised that no panel member took the opportunity of raising this issue with me at the last Panel meeting on 31 January 2020. I trust that the above provides you with reassurance that focus groups form just one part of my overall public consultation and engagement process.

My office continues to use a variety of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to contact the public and interested parties. I am very pleased to confirm that we were able to reach more than 15,000 residents to seek their views, last year alone.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Bourne', written in a cursive style.

Katy Bourne OBE
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner