

Scrutiny panel given report on efforts to tackle knife crime

SUSSEX remains a safe place to live and work, the Police and Crime Commissioner told a scrutiny panel this week.

In light of growing concerns about the increase in incidents of knife crime nationally, Katy Bourne presented a report to the Sussex Police and Crime Panel about her role in ensuring the effective response to the possession and use of weapons by Sussex Police.

At a meeting on Friday (April 26) members of the Panel were told that, while the number of offences involving knives or sharp objects had risen, they accounted for 5.2 per cent of all recorded crimes and remained below the national average.

Mark Streeter, the Commissioner's chief executive officer, said Sussex sat below the national average of just over 6 per cent and "way below what we would be experiencing if we were sitting in one of the Metropolitan areas".

Issues with the underreporting of knife crime by Sussex Police were identified by the Commissioner in 2018, but Mrs Bourne assured the Panel that this has been addressed and that she would continue to scrutinise the way in which crimes are recorded.

Sussex Police had been awarded £1million of Government funding to tackle a surge in violent crime, the Panel was told, and a plan on how this will be used in the coming year would be drawn up by the Chief Constable.

The Commissioner also spoke about funding of £890,000, which was being used to roll out an early intervention programme called Reboot.

Mrs Bourne said: "We ran a very successful pilot in Hastings and were able to work with 60 young people who were particularly vulnerable and at risk of being involved in violent crime, and we will be working with YMCA DownsLink to deliver this across Sussex."

While acknowledging the police's role in tackling violent crime and, in particular knife crime, the Commissioner emphasised the importance of all agencies and education establishments to work together to address the issue.

"I don't want the public to hear that it is all down to the police," she said. "They are only part of the solution. Education establishments have a big role to play as well."

The Panel asked the Commissioner to provide an updated report on the investment and work being carried out to tackle violent crime at their meeting in September, along with a more detailed breakdown of knife crime statistics.

Speaking after the meeting, Panel chairman Cllr Bentley said: "We are extremely grateful to the Commissioner for her report on what is a growing issue both nationally and here in

Sussex, and we look forward to hearing how the additional investment she outlined is helping to address the surge in violent crime.

Cllr Bentley also paid tribute to councillors who were stepping down from the Panel, thanking them for their contribution.

The Sussex Police and Crime Panel's annual meeting will take place on June 28, 2019.

Ends