

Sussex Police and Crime Panel – Public and Panel Questions to the Commissioner

24 June 2022

Report by the Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel

Below is a schedule of the questions received prior to this meeting and where possible responses have been included. Responses will be tabled at the meeting that were not available at the time of despatch. Written questions must be received two weeks before a meeting of the Panel and the Commissioner or Panel Chairman is invited to provide a response by noon of the day before the meeting.

Questions relating to operational matters of Sussex Police are passed to a relevant officer at Sussex Police for a response, with a brief summary of such questions provided below. For the current meeting, two questions have been received for responses from the Commissioner.

1. Written question from Paul Taylor-Burr of Crawley

Question:

How many new officers have been stationed in Crawley, as myself and my store colleagues don't see any evidence of the so-called police officer uplift?

I and my colleagues would like to know just what is going to be done to put faith back into policing. I realise the PCC is not responsible for how officers are deployed, but after several precept increases we would like to understand when we can expect to see some improvement.

My colleagues work in local co-ops and have lost faith in the point of reporting issues to police as they don't get any response. I myself, when in store, have had serious issues (in the past) and this is causing a very big problem with under-reporting of offences.

Answer:

Thank you for your questions. I am happy to provide a summary of police officer recruitment in Sussex since 2018/19 as follows:

Police Officers Increase Table	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total
Op Uplift - Local			129	122	163	414
Op Uplift - Region				6	9	15
Precept	120	30	50	30	20	250
Total	120	30	179	158	192	679

During 2021/22, Sussex Police recruited an additional 122 police officers through Operation Uplift – the Government’s campaign to recruit 20,000 new police officers in England and Wales by 31 March 2023 – and 30 officers as part of the precept increase for the year. A further six officers were recruited to support the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit (SEROUCU) during the year too.

The 2022/23 funding settlement has provided the Commissioner with additional ring-fenced investment to recruit another 163 police officers in Sussex and 9 officers to support the SEROUCU – as part of the national uplift programme – plus a further 20 officers through the precept.

I can confirm that Crawley has received a share of the new police officers – recruited through Operation Uplift – as part of the number of officers allocated to West Sussex Division. Sussex Police do not disclose the exact number of officers that work across each of the police districts for operational reasons; however, these officers are allocated to stations throughout the Division based on current and projected demand, internal movement and vacancies, and are reviewed regularly. This included an intake of new officers in Crawley during April 2022, after completing their initial training, who will take time to imbed locally and require a further period of training before their independent patrol status is granted. A further intake of police officers is planned for Crawley district in August 2022.

I would like to make you aware of the ‘One Touch Reporting’ scheme that my office has been piloting with Sussex Police in partnership with the Co-op. The scheme has initially been working with 22 Co-op stores in Sussex to develop new ways to simplify reporting of crime and anti-social behaviour, collect greater intelligence, identify trends and target repeat offenders. The scheme has already shown early success, with the arrests of prolific offenders and increased reporting and intelligence. The intention is to embed this more widely with local businesses.

There is also the Crawley and Gatwick Business Watch – the Business Crime Reduction Partnership for Crawley District – a fully accredited scheme that enables its members to work together with the police and Crawley Borough Council to reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour impacting on businesses in the town. Part of the scheme involves the use of encrypted radios and a secure web-based computer package – known as DISC – to share information and intelligence amongst the membership, together with circulating warnings about issues that affect businesses. If you are not already a member of this scheme, I would encourage you to consider the benefits of scheme membership. Further information can be viewed on the Crawley and Gatwick Business Watch website through the following link: <https://www.cgbw.org.uk/>

Each ward within Crawley District also has a dedicated Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) to provide a named point of contact for members of the public, communities and businesses to discuss any concerns relating to policing and crime. Further information about the PCSO for your ward can be viewed on the Sussex Police website through the following link: <https://www.police.uk/pu/your-area/?search=1>

2. Written question from Mr Jacklin of Rother

Question:

On 16 May, The Times lead editorial stated "Thoughts are not Crimes: The new HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary (Andy Cooke) rightly insists that the police must focus on catching criminals and not waste resources on non-crime hate reports".

The article cites the often-repeated statistic that charge rates for burglaries and thefts are only 5% and 4% respectively. In reality, they are no doubt even lower as some people do not report such crimes.

The PCC's Annual Report to March 2021 contains little or no data on theft and burglary offences and charges.

Will such data be included in the new report; if not, can it be provided?

Where do burglaries and thefts rank in the priorities of Sussex Police and has this changed in light of the above statement by the new Chief Inspector?

Does the PCC regard increasing charge rates for theft and burglary as being a strategic priority?

Answer:

Thank you for your questions. I recognise the importance of responding robustly to reduce the number of thefts, burglaries and other acquisitive crimes in Sussex, provide support to victims of these offences to prevent them from being re-targeted and tackle those responsible.

I would like to start by reassuring you that burglary [including theft and acquisitive crime] is one of the three Public Priorities set out within my Police & Crime Plan 2021/24 under 'Public Priority 1 – Strengthen local policing, tackle crime and prevent harm'. The Plan has been developed in consultation with members of the public and partners in Sussex to ensure that the strategic priorities contained within accurately reflect the policing, crime and community safety issues important to them. It can be viewed through the following link:

<https://www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/media/6521/sussex-police-crime-plan-2021-24.pdf>

My Annual Reports provide progress updates about how I – as the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner – seek to hold the Chief Constable and her team to account for the operational delivery of policing against these priorities, including reductions to acquisitive crime. The performance of Sussex Police in respect of this area is published by the Force, Home Office and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS).

Sussex Police are working hard to deliver the priorities set out within my Plan and remain committed to protecting our communities, catching criminals and delivering an outstanding service. Burglary, theft and acquisitive crime remain a priority for

Sussex Police. The Force have continued to raise awareness of the significant impact that these offences can have on victims, encourage members of the public to protect their homes and valuables from the threat of intruders and theft and to detect more of these crimes by proactively targeting the offenders responsible.

This approach is supported by Operation Magpie – the dedicated police response to burglary crimes – which delivers crime prevention initiatives throughout the year. Further scrutiny around performance in this area is provided at the Daily Divisional Meetings (DDMs) on each of the three policing divisions to identify any spikes, ‘hotspots’ and/or known offenders in order to proactively target local policing

resources. The Rural Crime Team and Specialist Enforcement Unit are used to strengthen the Force’s capacity and capability in this important area too. Further information about protecting your home from crime is available on the Sussex Police website through the following link: <https://www.sussex.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/protect-home-crime/>

Burglary

I am pleased to confirm that there was a 16% reduction in the number of recorded burglaries [both residential and non-residential burglaries, including business premises] in Sussex during 2021/22. This equated to 814 fewer offences recorded [4,180] compared to the 4,994 burglaries recorded in 2020/21, with these reductions apparent across each of the three policing divisions.

The risk of being burgled in Sussex also continues to remain low, with the Force positioned 4th lowest out of 43 police force areas in England and Wales and 1st in their Most Similar Group (MSG) of 8 forces, in terms of the risk of burglary per 1,000 population.

Sussex Police demonstrated a solved rate of 6% for burglary offences across 2021/22, although this represented a 21% reduction in the number of offences solved throughout the year and contributed to a lower solved rate compared to the year before [7%].

Further information about burglary is included within my Annual Report 2021/22 and can be viewed on my website through the following link: <https://www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/about/transparency-complaints/annual-report/>

Theft

I was disappointed to note the 26% increase in the number of theft offences recorded in Sussex during 2021/22. This equated to an additional 4,634 offences recorded [22,401] from the 17,767 theft offences in 2020/21, with these increases apparent across each of the three policing divisions.

This increase in recorded offences is attributed to the removal of the national lockdown restrictions on movement introduced in England [in March 2020] in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the greater opportunities this has presented for offending activity. The Force is positioned 28th lowest out of 43 police

force areas in England and Wales and 7th in their MSG, in terms of the risk of theft in Sussex per 1,000 population.

Sussex Police achieved a solved rate of 5% for theft offences across 2021/22 and, whilst this was lower than the solved rate of 6% recorded the year before, represented an encouraging 25% increase in the number of offences solved, compared to 2020/21.

I have continued to use my monthly webcast Performance & Accountability Meetings (PAMs) to scrutinise and challenge the Chief Constable about the Sussex Police response to burglary, theft and acquisitive crime on behalf of members of the public.

Burglary was raised most recently as a theme at the PAM on 18 December 2021, with further challenges made on 18 October 2019 and 16 November 2018 before then, and acquisitive crime was raised at the PAM on 15 March 2019. Each of these sessions are archived and can be viewed on my website through the following link: www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/webcasting/

I hope the above provides you with some reassurance about the performance of Sussex Police and the ongoing work to tackle thefts, burglaries and other acquisitive crimes in Sussex. I will continue to use my PAMs to provide further scrutiny around the effectiveness of the policing response in this important area and seek to demonstrate improvements in the solved rates for these offences.