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## Sussex Police and Crime Panel

25 March 2022 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Lewes.

Present:

Cllr Mitchell	West Sussex County Council	Cllr Bob Standley	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Kevin Boram	Adur District Council	Cllr Roy Briscoe	Chichester District Council
Cllr Lizzie Deane	Brighton & Hove City Council	Cllr Johnny Denis	Lewes District Council
Cllr Brian Drayson	Rother District Council	Cllr Philip Lunn	Wealden District Council
Cllr Sean McDonald	Worthing Borough Council	Cllr Steve Murphy	East Sussex County Council
Mr Keith Napthine	Independent member	Cllr Jackie O'Quinn	Brighton & Hove City Council
Cllr Pendleton	Arun District Council	Cllr Judy Rogers	Hastings Borough Council
Mrs Susan Scholefield	Independent member	Cllr James Walsh	West Sussex County Council
Cllr Norman Webster	Mid Sussex District Council	Cllr Tricia Youtan	Horsham District Council

Substitutes:

Apologies were received from Cllr Michael Jones (Crawley Borough Council) and Cllr Rebecca Whippy (Eastbourne Borough Council)

Also in attendance:

### Part I

#### 31. Declarations of Interest

31.1 No interests were declared in addition to the table of standing personal interests, as published in the meeting's papers.

#### 32. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

32.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2022 be approved as a correct record, and that they be signed by the Chairman.

### **33. Correspondence Since the Last Meeting**

- 33.1 The Panel noted items 4a and 4b.
- 33.2 In reference to item 4c, members fed back that the letter was well-received by their local Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and that Chairs of East Sussex and Hastings CSPs agreed for it to be included as a standing agenda item to help raise awareness.
- 33.3 The Commissioner welcomed the letter and acknowledged that a recent survey found that Sussex residents lack an understanding of CSPs' role in society and encouraged any proactive measures to improve their public profile. Commissioner Bourne added that the Government will carry out a review of CSPs and their effectiveness, after the recommendation was agreed at Part 2 of the Police and Crime Commissioner Review.
- 33.4 The Chairman agreed that written responses received from CSP Chairs will be shared with the Panel at its next meeting.
- 33.5 The Chairman confirmed that an item on the Force's Recruitment and Retention Strategy, as arising from the most recent Budget and Precept Working Group, will be added to the Panel's 2022/23 work programme.
- 33.6 Resolved – that the Panel noted the completed actions from the meeting on 28 January 2022.

### **34. Public and Panel Questions to the Commissioner**

- 34.1 No written questions were received from members of the public.
- 34.2 The Chairman invited questions from the Panel to the Commissioner. A summary of questions and responses were as follows:
  - Q1. Has the Contact Centre's improved performance through reduced waiting times been sustained since it was last reported, and has there been a reduction in emergency telephone calls following an uptake in the 101 service?
    - A. The Commissioner recognised the significant £1 million investment, including part-precept funding, made by the Force and expressed her pleasure that performance levels have been maintained. As a result, there has been a considerable decrease in the volume of complaints regarding the Contact Centre, submitted by members of the public. Last year, the number of 999 calls increased by 4%, but it's forecast that 101 calls will slightly outnumber emergency calls in 2022/23. There has been a shift towards online reporting and one third of all police contact in 2021/22 was digital. By 2025, it's predicted that the ratio of telephone to online contact will be 58:42.
  - Q2. Following a recent, rapid rise in public concern, can the Commissioner provide an update on enforcement, seizures and

prosecutions in relation to the dangerous use of e-scooters in Sussex?

- A. The Commissioner clarified that the Force has the authority to prosecute the illegal use of e-scooters in public spaces, but not on private land. In February, the Force's Roads Policing Unit ran a 3-week action campaign across the county, this resulted in 109 returns from police officers and 90 seizures. The number of seizures has increased from 19 in 2020, 98 in 2021 and 126 in 2022 (up to 16 March). Members of the public were encouraged to report recurring sightings of illegal use in public spaces to aid Force intelligence.
- Q3. Does the Force have the resource to develop a countywide communications strategy to educate and deter illegal e-scooter use?
- A. The Commissioner reminded members that she cannot influence the direction of the Force's operational matters. She added that the Force is fully aware of the issue and that the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP), within their remit, could be more proactive to improve their educational offering. Commissioner Bourne appealed directly to Panel members to raise this with SSRP.
- Q4. Is there anything that can be done to forewarn e-scooter manufacturers about their usage in society?
- A. The Commissioner re-affirmed that the actual production and sale of the product itself is not illegal and that users must take full ownership and responsibility for their usage.
- Q5. Can the Commissioner offer an update or reassurance regarding the unanticipated negative impact of national inflation, as a result of the Russian-Ukraine war?
- A. The Commissioner informed the Panel that the impact on Sussex Police is shared by other public sector organisations. The Force has carried out a recent review of its contracts to determine where supply chains have been affected. BlueLight (a commercial company) has delivered a similar service on behalf of national policing to highlight current pinch points. The main cost pressure felt by the Force at present is the increasing price of liquid fuels, an unforeseen extra expense in terms of running its fleet vehicles.
- Q6. Can the Commissioner offer an update on the Force's training programme for new recruits, amid reported high drop-out rates at national level?
- A. The Commissioner said that the attrition rate is not causing concern at present and is relative to the large-scale Operation Uplift recruitment drive, launched in April 2021. The Force's Head of HR Services at Sussex Police, Mr Adrian Rutherford, is alert to the matter and it is being closely monitored in liaison with the Chief Constable. The ratio of staff leaving the Force is split 50:50 between student officers and those serving or having completed their probationary period. Commissioner Bourne added that every year the Force accounts for expected reasons for leaving such as retirement, transfers and career re-evaluation. The pandemic was highlighted as an example which has prompted these factors.

- Q7. Reports of rape increased by a third in 2019/20, of these only 2,747 reports were referred to the Crown Prosecution Service, (40% reduction) - can the Commissioner confirm if she is holding the Chief Constable to account and what role she has in preventing a "decriminalisation of rape"?
- A. The Commissioner gave firm assurance that police officers continue to work tirelessly to ensure victims are emotionally supported in the aftermath of rape, and through their decision whether or not to appear and give evidence in court. She revealed that the Force has been working with local Crown Prosecution Service partners in running a local pilot programme called the Early Advice Protocol. The newly developed initiative is designed to create an end-to-end collaborative prosecution team to speed up the process in a certain amount of time, from when a case comes forward to when it is charged. In the current year to date, this has led to a 300% increase in pre-charge submission decisions and reduced the length of rape investigation time from 148 to 109 days. The average investigation time to solve rape cases has also reduced, from 284 to 114 days. The Force has also reported a near 25% increase in rape being reported across the county which is indicative of growing public confidence.
- Q8. A large loading unit recently travelled from Shoreham to Ninfield via Polegate high street during a public event - how much did it cost and do Sussex Police have to fund the cost of policing?
- A. The Commissioner offered to provide the answer as an action.
- Q9. Are there any plans to re-introduce a police station in Hove, given that John Street Police Station in Brighton is not local for residents?
- A. The Commissioner highlighted that the Force does provide a front counter walk-in service within shared premises at Hove Town Hall. She added that this arrangement with Brighton and Hove City Council is currently under review and will be addressed as part of the Commissioner's new Estates Strategy, due to be published in summer 2022.
- Q10. How confident is the Commissioner in relation to the Force's proper handling of evidence, following media reports of internal fraud and corruption at the Metropolitan Police?
- A. The Commissioner gave reassurance that the Force uses a smart system to track evidence and that all evidence is held securely within newly refurbished stores. She gave further reassurance that Sussex Police does not share the same issue as documented within the Metropolitan Police. A regular internal audit is due to be carried out on the smart system in the next few months.
- Q11. What are the Commissioner's views on reducing or merging select forces within England and Wales, based on learnings from collaborative policing during the Covid pandemic?
- A. The Commissioner acknowledged that the reasons for any large-scale merger must be fully understood and be outcome driven, in order to deliver significant improvement. She then expressed her satisfaction with Sussex and Surrey Police's long-term collaborative

partnership. It was explained that the joint working personnel split between both forces is 55:45 in favour of Sussex Police. The collaboration accounts for nearly 30% of the Force's services, including frontline duties such as Major Crime, Joint Roads Policing and Firearms Units, in addition to back-office functions such as finance and transport. The Commissioner explained that the considerable variance between each of the Force's precept levels, set by Government, would prove a difficult obstacle to overcome when debating a future merger.

- Q12. Does the Commissioner believe that the Russia-Ukraine war will have a strategic impact on Sussex Police going forwards?
- A. The OSPCC Chief Executive, Mark Streater, commented that the structure of the British policing model enables forces to operate at local, regional and national level under the Civil Contingencies Act and to flex resources as required to provide mutual aid. Mr Streater and the Commissioner expressed confidence in forces' ability to fulfil local responsibilities and contribute to wider-reaching humanitarian efforts when called upon. The Commissioner added that Local Resilience Forums around the country will have gained significant experience while operating during the pandemic and providing Covid-19 relief.

### **35. Police and Crime Plan Public Priority 2 - Relentless Disruption of Serious and Organised Crime**

- 35.1 The Panel considered a report from the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner. The report was introduced by Mark Streater, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer of the Office of the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, who outlined the content and specific areas which were covered within Public Priority 2 of the Police and Crime Plan – relentless disruption of serious and organised crime.
- 35.2 The Chairman invited questions from Panel members. A summary of those questions and their responses were as follows:
- Is there a link between school exclusions leading to involvement with County Lines and vice versa? Is there a strategy in place to deal with it?

A. Vulnerability is a common theme among excluded school pupils and therefore means they are more susceptible to being intimidated and exploited. Organised crime groups are known to target young people, importing and exporting them from nearby big cities, and use them as drug traffickers. The Force's CSE officers (Child Sexual Exploitation) work closely with local authorities and alternative provision colleges to monitor signs of CSE.
  - Can the Commissioner give examples of the reported immediate impact had by precept-funded Digital Investigation Support Unit, in collaboration with Surrey Police?

A. The Unit utilises its specialist training and capabilities to support police officers with recovering electronic devices and aid

investigations into cases involving a large volume of 'digital crime scenes.'

- To what extent do victims of modern slavery and its ring leaders escape prosecution for offences due to the difficulty faced by the Force in tracing their whereabouts?
  - A. Modern Slavery is a complex crime and the Force has a duty of protecting vulnerable people. Once identified, victims are added to the National Referral Mechanism framework in order to receive the support they need. As an action, the Commissioner offered to provide contact details for the UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Dame Sara Thornton DBE QPM.
- Does the Commissioner believe that the diversity and variance in modern-day policing is a factor contributing to the exit rate of trainee police officers?
  - A. Exit interviews are carried out with probationary police officers to understand their reasons for leaving the Force and these are many and varied, depending on personal circumstances. The physical nature and physical demands of the role was given as one example that did not meet expectations. Sussex Police is one of a few remaining forces who conduct a final interview process following the training programme as a further opportunity for new recruits to discuss whether or not they still wish to join the Force.
- Can the Commissioner clarify whether catapult ammunition is classed as a serious weapon by the Force? And what weapons comprise the 135 surrendered, described as 'other weapons?'
  - A. The Commissioner offered to provide the answer as an action.
- Are you satisfied with the Force's ability to keep pace with modern-day policing through growing types of crime?
  - A. Policing is a matter of prioritisation, and our police officers are trained to assess the threat, harm and risk of all reports at an early stage before passing judgement and deciding which aspects to prioritise. CSE is high on the agenda as an area of concern for local authorities with vulnerable children in their care. The Force is in constant contact with Border Force and other agencies to build intelligence.
- Is the Force's approach to fraud and cyber-crime to disrupt illegal activity, in some cases influenced from abroad, or is the Commissioner confident of making prosecutions?
  - A. Romance Fraud has led to some successful prosecutions in recent times in Sussex. Broadly speaking, it is a difficult area to police when crimes cross boundaries and jurisdictions vary among authorities. Government investment was welcomed in developing the National Cyber Resilience Centre Group (NCRCG) in recognition of this serious form of crime and the sophisticated methods employed by criminals. Online fraud is the fastest-growing type of crime and accounts for one third of reported crime nationally.

- How confident is the Commissioner that the Force's communications with Sussex residents is doing enough to encourage them to report mobile phone scams received via text and email?
  - A. There is confidence in Sussex and Surrey's joint Cyber Crime Unit's performance at local level, since it was established soon after the Commissioner first took office in 2012. Originally published by the Metropolitan Police, the Unit has reproduced localised digital resources containing updated advice and reporting methods made available on the Force's website, such as 'The Little Booklet of Phone Scams' and 'The Little Book of Cyber Scams'. The Force has introduced a Banking Protocol as part of their work with high-risk victims of scams, since adopted by other forces. It involves the bank reporting a vulnerable individual's account withdrawals to the Force for safety measures to be put in place. Operation Signature is an awareness campaign ran by the Force, targeted at vulnerable and elderly residents, to highlight the warning signs of fraud and scams and other further advice. Residents are encouraged to access the Government's National Cyber Security Centre website as a central hub for all cyber-crime reporting advice and guidance.
  
- What impact did the various enforced lockdowns and restrictions brought about by the pandemic have on the 4% reduction in serious violence recorded in Sussex? (1 April 2021 to 31 January 2022).
  - A. Post-pandemic the Force has witnessed an increase in volume of this type of crime and is something the Chief Constable is regularly challenged on at the Commissioner's Performance and Accountability Meetings. During the height of the pandemic, cyber stalking increased by 72% and reports of domestic abuse rose. There is confidence that extra recruitment in officers will make a positive difference and frontline officers and senior staff were praised for their continued hard work for policing during unprecedented times. Recognition was given to the difficult situation and confidence expressed in the Chief Constable's leadership.

35.3 Resolved – that the Panel noted the report and did not identify any elements for further scrutiny.

### **36. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services' Inspection Report - Police response to Violence Against Women and Girls**

- 36.1 The Panel considered a report by HMICFRS, of which the Commissioner gave an overview. It was highlighted to Panel members that the Commissioner was part of the expert reference group which wrote the report and fully endorses the recommendations.
  
- 36.2 The Panel was presented with publicity materials from Safe Space Sussex's 'Do the right thing' campaign, in partnership with the

Force, which challenges men to call out misogyny, violence and abuse.

36.3 The Chairman invited questions from Panel members. A summary of those questions and their responses were as follows:

- To what extent has bystander training been embedded within the Force's culture so far?
  - A. A lot of the work delivered to date has been made possible through the award of just under £1million, by the Government's Safer Street Fund. The Chief Constable is in the process of agreeing a training package, covering standards and behaviour, to be delivered to all police officers and members of staff across the Force. The OSPCC has recently funded a superintendent to solely lead on the internal delivery of bystander training within the Force.
- Does graffiti vandalism containing derogatory language in a public place constitute sexual abuse or hate crime, and does the Force take reports of this seriously?
  - A. This example is likely to be regarded as conduct lending itself to harassment due to the naming of the individual targeted and could be linked to other offences involving the same victim. All incidents are taken seriously when reported and consideration is given to potentially vulnerable victims.
- If an applicant withdraws from the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law), does the Force keep a record of it should the individual or their family/friend re-apply at a later date?
  - A. The Force holds information on all disclosure applications, including those which are withdrawn, and has the ability to track the location of its highest-harm perpetrators using technology.
- Are the Force's officers trained to deal with false claims of rape and the negative psychological impact had on both alleged offenders those claiming to be victims?
  - A. The Force can refer both parties to support services if required. The Sexual Offence Investigation Trained team (SOIT) is specially trained to initially work with individuals in the aftermath of an incident. The Survivor's Network work with rape victims across the county, while Mankind exclusively support men - both organisations are funded by the OSPCC.
- In reference to Appendix 1, page 51, is the high use of outcomes 15 and 16 for VAWG offences prevalent in Sussex Police?
  - A. The Commissioner offered to provide the answer as an action.
- How does information and data fed back from longstanding individual cases of VAWG get fed back into designing prevention programmes?
  - A. SOIT officers are trained to put safeguarding measures in place around an individual's home and the Force partners with support



services to educate vulnerable people and victims about how they can protect themselves, including provision of online cyber training.

- Can you explain the purpose of the different reporting processes in place for both current and historic cases of rape and child abuse?  
A. The call handler initially judges the threat and risk of the report before progressing it as an emergency call or referring it to 101. The service provided to both current and historic cases is treated equally, but the Force cannot guarantee the length of time to investigate a historic case given the complexity involved and the large workload managed by its dedicated team.

### **37. Quarterly Report of Complaints**

37.1 The Panel noted that no complaints had been made against the Commissioner which fell within the Panel's statutory remit.

37.2 Resolved – that the Panel noted the report.

### **38. Date of Next Meeting and Future Meeting Dates**

38.1 The next meeting of the Panel would take place on 24 June 2022 at 10.30am, at County Hall, Lewes.

The meeting ended at 1.08 pm

Chairman

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