

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

29 January 2021

Report by the Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel

The table below provides 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 2 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 that relate to operational matters of Sussex Police will be passed to a relevant officer at Sussex Police for a response and a brief summary of the question will be provided below. For the current meeting, four questions have been received for a response by the Commissioner.

Question	Response
<p>1. Given the success of the Community Speedwatch initiative, which has been established as a means of empowering local communities to support the Police in monitoring and enforcing speed restrictions, what steps have been taken to develop other models for community support to address issues like parking enforcement?</p> <p>2. How does the Commissioner monitor whether the policing of parking offences in areas which remain the direct responsibility of Sussex Police is effective and, are the number of enforcement notices issued consistent per head of population with those issued in areas where parking has been decriminalised?</p> <p>Mr Karn of Heathfield/Wealden, East Sussex</p>	<p>Thank you for sharing your concerns with me about parking enforcement within the Wealden district of East Sussex. I enjoyed our telephone conversation on 13 January 2021 and was pleased to hear you felt more reassured following the call.</p> <p>Further to our discussions, I have provided some more information which I hope you find helpful.</p> <p>As you already know, the Road Traffic Act 1991 introduced legislation which led to the decriminalisation of parking in many areas of the United Kingdom. This legislation was superseded by the Traffic Management Act 2004 which heralded the change from decriminalised parking to the civil parking enforcement (CPE) schemes in operation in the vast majority of the country today. In particular, I can confirm that CPE is now in operation in every local authority district in Sussex, with the exception of</p>

Wealden. As at January 2021, Wealden is also one of only 11 districts out of the 325+ in the UK that has resisted making the change to CPE.

Until such time as CPE is introduced in Wealden, the enforcement of parking infringements remains a criminal matter and Sussex Police will continue to enforce any parking offences that meet the threshold for 'dangerous position' or 'unnecessary obstruction'. However, policing has to prioritise its resources accordingly which is why the Chief Constable and I are keen for Wealden District Council to adopt CPE.

I can confirm that discussions between the police and Wealden District Council were re-established around this issue. On 16 December 2020, Detective Chief Inspector Henry, Wealden District Commander, and Inspector Gross, of Wealden Neighbourhood Police Team, met with the Leader of Wealden District Council and the Car Parking and Facilities Manager to discuss options for the way forward. An undertaking was given by Sussex Police to consider and respond to a number of alternative proposals put forward by the District Council – options that the Council have tendered as alternatives to CPE. Assurances were given by both agencies to participate in a working group to enable all relevant stakeholders to work together more effectively. I am supportive of this planned approach.

You may be interested to know that in the last four months, Sussex Police has significantly increased efforts to target speeding and anti-social driving – under the banner of Operation Downsway. This has involved specialist officers from the Road Policing Unit (RPU) delivering education and enforcement activity throughout Sussex with the specific aims of targeting offenders and keeping everyone safe on the roads. RPU officers have, in turn, supported Neighbourhood Policing Teams to deliver enforcement at a local level. The following activity has been 8 recorded through Operation Downsway in Wealden since September 2020:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *125 x Community Speed Watch (CSW) sessions conducted – resulting in 1,836 reports to Operation Crackdown; *29 x CSW sessions conducted by PCSOs – resulting in 47 reports to Operation Crackdown; *11 x police officer speed/anti-social driving check sessions – resulting in 58 x words of advice (WOA) issued to drivers for various matters; *3 x vehicles seized under Section 165 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 – all for offences of no insurance; *2 x Operation Crackdown reports made by PCSOs for anti-social driving; *2 x Traffic Offence Reports (TORs) issued; *2 x arrests made for drink-and-drive offences; and *2 x arrests made for other matters related to road safety.
<p>3. The Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner’s Annual Report 2019/20 includes some aspirational statements concerning projects that you hoped to deliver during 2020/21.</p> <p>Understandably, these may be more challenging amidst the COVID-19 restrictions, therefore can you please update on what progress you have been able to achieve to date with the following projects: <i>{page numbers refer to the relevant statements in the SPCC Annual Report 2019/20}</i>.</p> <p>1. RECRUITMENT (page 9)</p> <p>Extra investment to...provide an even greater policing presence particularly in towns, villages and online.</p> <p>2. PUBLIC CONTACT (page 9)</p> <p>Increase the accessibility of policing services for the public and further reduce call-waiting times.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question about the Annual Report 2019/20 and the 'looking ahead' elements contained within.</p> <p>I am pleased to confirm that despite the additional challenges created as a result of the ongoing global COVID pandemic, the anticipated progress planned across the areas of recruitment, public contact, rural crime and business crime has continued to be delivered during 2020/21, as follows:</p> <p>1. Recruitment</p> <p>The recruitment of 250 more police officers, 100 more Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and 50 more specialist police staff within Sussex Police by March 2023 remains on target, despite the increased challenges presented to the Force by the COVID-19 pandemic, and has continued as planned during 2020/21, with adaptations made to recruitment processes and procedures in line with national restrictions in place.</p>

3. RURAL CRIME (page 10)

To add 10 additional police officers to the six existing PCSOs to form a dedicated Rural Crime Team.

These officers can come together to deliver Targeted Days of Action. How many targeted days have been delivered and what was the outcome in reducing rural crime?

4. BUSINESS CRIME: PLEDGE (page 15)

Given the limitations to business and the combined COVID emergency regulation restrictions, what progress has the Safer Sussex Business Partnership been able to make in 2020/21? How will this pledge now be progressed?

Cllr Bill Bentley
Chairman
Sussex Police & Crime Panel

I am also pleased to confirm that Sussex Police has recruited a further 129 police officers through Operation Uplift – the Government campaign to recruit 20,000 new police officers in England and Wales over the next three years – in addition to the 250 more officers the Force is already recruiting. The police grant settlement for 2021/22 confirmed that Operation Uplift would continue as planned, including an additional 121 police officers for Sussex Police and six extra officers for the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit during the year.

The recruitment of extra officers has enabled the Force to expand the delivery of the Tactical Enforcement Units across all three of the policing divisions in Sussex, with a countywide Specialist Enforcement Unit launched this month (26 January 2021) to provide proactive, visible and targeted operational police activity on the road network in Sussex.

Alongside the delivery of these units, the available resources within the Road Policing Unit have been strengthened, including the creation of a Commercial Vehicle Unit (targeting vehicles above 3.5 tonnes in relation to driver hours; insecure loads; licence offences and the carriage of hazardous materials) and the recruitment of two dedicated police motorcyclists within Brighton & Hove (to target road-related incidents). Sussex Police has also appointed a dedicated Chief Inspector to coordinate and enforce police activity around anti-social driving, noise pollution and speeding on the roads in Sussex.

Increases have been made to the number of police dogs and handlers in the Dog Unit too – including the provision of new digital search dogs (able to search for mobile phones and other electronic equipment) and general purpose dogs (to support searches for drugs and cash).

Through the precept investment in 2020/21, Sussex Police introduced a Domestic Abuse Local Resolution Team to respond to

low-risk, non-urgent reports of domestic abuse. The team comprises of 39 specialist officers who have each been trained to provide support, safeguarding and investigative expertise exclusively to domestic abuse crimes and associated incidents in order to improve criminal justice outcomes.

Sussex Police has also recruited additional individuals into the Sexual Offences Investigation Team (SOIT) within the Public Protection Team to increase the capacity, capability and consistency of these teams to support better victims of sexual offences. Frontline investigative capabilities have been strengthened too through enhancements to the administrative support in place, including increases in the number of trained investigators and the recruitment of 30 x Administrative Support Assistants.

A dedicated Superintendent post has also been introduced to specifically identify and tackle all elements of serious and organised crime and criminal exploitation, including child exploitation; modern slavery and county lines drugs gangs. This approach represents a more efficient, effective and targeted approach to identify and address these types of criminality. The implementation of this post and work that has already been delivered is recognised to be good practice by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The Force has recruited 40 social media trained contact handlers and five supervisors within the Force Contact, Command and Control Department (FCCCD) who are all trained in the use of the social media management platform.

I used my latest Performance & Accountability Meeting (PAM) on 22 January 2021 to raise the policing precept investment in 2020/21 with the Chief Constable. Whilst not webcast as a result of the pandemic, the minutes from the PAM, including further information

and detail about the above, can be viewed on my website through the following link: www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/webcasting/

2. Public Contact

Sussex Police has continued to make it easier for members of the public to contact the Force through both the emergency (999) and non-emergency (101) telephone numbers and online reporting functions. The investment from local taxpayers into the Force Communication, Command and Control Department (FCCCD), together with a greater promotion of the 'make the right call' campaign to encourage individuals to use the most appropriate way of contacting the police, has transformed both the call handling and waiting times.

Sussex Police took an average of 2 minutes and 13 seconds to answer the 24,225 calls offered to 101 in December 2020. This represents a substantial improvement from the average of 12 minutes and 34 seconds taken to answer the 27,734 calls received in December 2018. Of particular note was the significant reduction in the number of abandoned calls, reducing from 37% in December 2018 to only 7% in December 2020. Across the same month, the Force answered 97% of all 999 calls received within 10 seconds, in comparison to only 82% of calls in December 2018. Sussex Police also experienced a 24% increase in digital contact (including emails, webforms and online reports) across the rolling year period to December 2020, in comparison to the year before.

These improvements in performance are attributed to the dedication and commitment of the officers, staff and call handlers in the FCCCD, together with the leadership, focus and determination of the Chief Officer team within Sussex Police.

3. Rural Crime

On 1 June 2020, Sussex Police launched a dedicated Rural Crime

Team (RCT) to tackle crime, incidents and unlawful behaviour that affect the rural and isolated communities most. The team consists of 19 individuals, comprising: one inspector; two sergeants; eight police constables; six PCSOs and two Special Constables operating out of bases at Heathfield (East Sussex) and Midhurst (West Sussex). Sussex Police now has the biggest RCT in the South East region.

The RCT focuses on the four types of rural crime: agricultural; environmental; heritage and wildlife and provides specialist knowledge, engagement, intelligence gathering and enforcement activity across the county, acting as a Single Point of Contact (SPoC). The support and reassurance that is provided to individuals, rural communities and businesses is demonstrated through an increased visible policing presence, including a combination of police officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), targeting the crimes and offences that are either prevalent or a concern in these areas and generating community intelligence through proactive policing patrols.

As a result of the pandemic, the RCT has not been delivering targeted 'days of action' in the manner previously anticipated. Instead, the team has focused on establishing, building and developing links with rural communities and businesses to generate a collaborative approach towards sharing information, improving communication networks and working together to reduce rural crime.

The RCT works towards a victim-focused model. When crimes are committed, the team consult with victims as to how they would like these to be resolved, including financial recovery and/or individuals prohibited from returning to certain areas. The Force has facilitated this approach through the issuing of community resolutions and community protection notices which, if breached, can result in further action being taken – including arrests and court proceedings.

The team is now preparing to move into the pursue phase which will

include more proactive, targeted and intelligence-led policing seeking a greater number of enforcement opportunities, including the execution of warrants and reducing the number of dog thefts and attacks on sheep.

Since its inception in June 2020, the RCT has already carried out significant operational activity, including: more than 255 intelligence reports generated following visible policing patrols; numerous livestock worrying and hare coursing patrols; stop and search activity and arrests made; enforcement of four warrants to recover stolen property, heavy machinery and animals; proactive stops, checks and recovery of vehicles and trailers on false number plates and investigations into illicit metal detecting and the recovery of stolen coins on private land. All of the operational activity in respect of rural crimes, incidents and offences is recorded and collated by Sussex Police through a marker – Operation Tracker.

The improvements demonstrated in this particular area are indicative of the investment that was made following my decision to increase the police precept last year. The Chief Constable is looking at developing and expanding the RCT further still in 2021/22 through the greater use of volunteers and special constables.

4. Business Crime

Following consultations with its members, the Safer Sussex Business Partnership (SSBP) is focusing on the following initiatives: improving mechanisms to report incidents; more effective investigations and deterring abuse and assault of shopworkers. Alongside better intelligence-sharing, enforcement and prosecutions, the SSBP aims to explore rehabilitation programmes that target substance-dependant persistent offenders.

A Sussex Police Business Crime Working Group has been set up to implement and deliver the projects established by the SSBP, which includes representation from my office. Despite the impact of

	<p>COVID-19, work by the SSBP has continued at pace, including renewed commitment to tackle and address business crime in Sussex more robustly at a time when businesses throughout the county face a variety of different challenges and pressures.</p> <p>At a national level, I sit on the Minister of State for Crime and Policing's Retail Crime Steering Group and I am the Association of Police & Crime Commissioners (APCC) lead for business and retail crime, where I convened the first APCC Business Crime Working Group during 2020/21. I have also contributed to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on retail crime.</p> <p>I hope that the above provides you with assurances regarding some of the progress that has been made against the policing and crime objectives set out in my Police & Crime Plan, despite the ongoing impact of the pandemic. A complete summary of the progress made during 2020/21 will be presented to the Sussex Police & Crime Panel in my Annual Report at the meeting on 25 June 2021.</p>
<p>4. I don't think that the surveys that the SPCC does to justify increases in the council tax precept are properly representative. (Note that council tax for policing has gone up every single year since 2013/14).</p> <p>A few examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups are made up predominantly of members of community safety and neighbourhood watch organisations. People who are members of these groups are highly likely to be people who are concerned about safety and crime. They are thus likely to be in favour of increasing spending. • The Police & Crime Panel is made up mainly of people like chairs of a Safer Communities Board. People like this are also 	<p><u>From the Commissioner:</u></p> <p>Thank you for sharing your concerns with me about the police precept consultations.</p> <p>Please note for clarification that the council tax for policing in 2013/14 was frozen and not increased as stated in your question.</p> <p>I have a responsibility under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 to consult with members of the public regarding any potential increase to the police precept in Sussex. I am also responsible for ensuring that the policing in Sussex is efficient, effective and responsive to the needs of the public. The police service is currently operating within a global pandemic to maintain a level of service that members of the public have come to expect, whilst simultaneously managing the impact of COVID-19,</p>

likely to approve higher spending.

- Surveys on the SPCC website don't offer the option for people to say 'I don't fear crime' and 'I want to pay LESS for policing'.
- Surveys in particular really concern me. You can't suggest they are representative because a certain number of people responded - which is what tends to happen. If the main channels for getting people to respond involve emailing the existing SPCC database, tweeting etc to SPCC social channels. Again there's a huge risk that these respondents are already concerned about crime and safety and will thus vote for increases.

I would suggest that to conduct surveys properly, you need to define a genuinely representative group first and then ask the questions - most probably via email or outbound telemarketing. You need to make sure some of the questions suggest the opposite of what you want to achieve too. I would use a third-party agency to do this - that way no one can make suggestions of bias.

I welcome comments. I'd particularly like Katy to explain how she ensures that surveys are genuinely representative - like I say merely quoting numbers of people surveyed doesn't answer the question.

Mr Head of Lewes, East Sussex

including the enforcement of restrictions for movement, travel and gatherings and responding to increases in reported cyber-enabled crime and domestic abuse.

I have now completed an annual precept consultation survey in each of the past six years. In addition to gathering feedback from the public and local representatives, I undertook an online precept consultation between 9 December 2020 and 10 January 2021.

This consultation, like the others carried out previously, was open to all residents to respond to throughout Sussex and consisted of two different formats: a traditional survey and a gamified version - 'The Policing Challenge'. The consultation and game were promoted using a range of public engagement channels, including broadcast; print; social media and direct email. The surveys were featured in 49 news items, with an estimated reach of 644,804 viewers. Younger residents were also targeted through greater use of social media.

A combined total of 4,465 responses were received to both consultations. Of the responses received, 2,266 (50.8%) supported an increase of £15 for the year; 858 (19.2%) supported an increase of £10 for the year; 1,130 (25.3%) were not supportive of an increase and 211 (4.7%) individuals backed any amount of increase or were unsure as to what amount. This demonstrated 70.0% to 74.7% in favour of an increase in the police precept.

These surveys form only part of the information considered when determining the precept. Sussex Police provide me with an investment case each year showing the resources required to address different crimes types and to provide an efficient and effective police service.

In addition to the survey and despite the COVID restrictions in place, I carried out a comprehensive series of 64 online focus groups. These comprised local business representatives and town and parish councillors who collectively represent a population total of 350,000

residents. I also held virtual roundtable discussions on rural crime, business crime, community policing and road safety during 2020/21 to gain a better understanding of public opinion. In April last year, we also introduced a local public sentiment meter to our website so that residents could tell us how safe they felt where they live. A total of 4,179 people responded. The focus groups and roundtable meetings demonstrated further support from attendees to pay higher levels of precept in order to deliver a more visible and accessible police service in Sussex.

It is reasonable to assume that individuals with concerns for policing, crime and community safety will make their views and preferences known through a combination of voting for a PCC candidate, voting for local Member of Parliament and/or through participation in surveys, consultations and focus groups. Any individuals with genuine concerns and/or any predisposition to support the police may or may not support any proposed increases to the precept.

The taxation system used in England and Wales comprises of a range of national and local contributions obtained from all eligible persons to fund public services for all citizens, including the police. The system is consistent for all and does not enable individuals to opt out or pay less for certain services because of any perceived lack of need or requirement for these services. The policing that is delivered locally in Sussex is only one element of the wider police service provided throughout the rest of England and Wales. This includes the provision of a number of other facets to the service that are either hidden, unseen or covert, including protection from serious and organised crime and terrorism.

I am satisfied that the processes in place for the public consultations are transparent, robust and representative of the views of the population of Sussex. Further details about the consultation processes can be viewed within the papers presented to the Police & Crime Panel at the meeting on 29 January 2021.

From the Chairman, on behalf of the Panel:

It is true that many of the councillors serving on the Panel have roles in their authority's community safety board, and as such are well briefed and involved in the local work to tackle crime, and its effectiveness. However, they are also answerable to their electorate, at the ballot box. Members will therefore want to weigh the competing arguments and numerous pressures around the level of the policing precept and frame their view on the PCC's proposal accordingly.

The Panel also has two independent "co-opted" members, neither of whom can be a councillor, and both of whom are members of the Precept and Plan Working Group.