

### **Efforts to tackle rural and business crime scrutinised by panel**

ONGOING efforts to address an increase in reported rural and business crime across Sussex were reviewed by a scrutiny panel today (Friday).

Sussex Police and Crime Panel heard how the number of rural incidents reported to Sussex Police had risen by six per cent from 5,420 in 2018/19 to 5,772 in 2019/20, while business crime had increased by eight per cent in the same period with 20,204 crimes reported in 2019/20

Referring to rural crime, Police and Crime Commissioner Katy Bourne explained how, with the help of the recent increase in the force's share of council tax, a specialist team of 16 officers had been established.

She told the Panel that, with 62 per cent of Sussex considered rural, the public "put a lot of store in tackling rural crime.

"This matters to people in Sussex and I have been able to use some of the precept uplift to invest in a rural crimes team of 16 officers – one of the biggest in the south east."

In her report, the Commissioner also highlighted the increase in business crime and told the Panel how addressing this remained one of her priorities.

"There has been an increase in violence against shop workers which is unacceptable," she said.

"Members of the public should feel safe when they go to the shops and should certainly feel safe going to work in these premises."

Speaking after the meeting, Panel Chairman Cllr Bill Bentley said: "The issue of both rural and business crime is something that Sussex residents and members of the Panel feel very strongly about and want to see addressed.

"We were pleased to hear the efforts being made by the Commissioner and Sussex Police to tackle incidents and the underreporting of these crimes."

The Panel was also presented with a national report into the effectiveness of road policing which, although not specific to Sussex Police, the Commissioner had discussed with the force's Chief Constable looking at the recommendations that had come out of the report.

Welcoming the report, Cllr Bentley said that, given the level of dangerous driving in Sussex reports like these were very important and some of the recommendations coming out of the national report were relevant to issues in Sussex.

Mrs Bourne assured members of the Panel that she would be monitoring the force's response to the recommendations from the national report.

The national report recommended that, in future, the Home Office should use its statutory power to issue guidance on what should be included in police and crime plans, something that Mrs Bourne formally challenged saying that it was for Commissioners, in consultation with the electorate, to set priorities for policing in their area.

The Panel endorsed the Commissioner's views that it was not for the Home Office to determine what should be set as priorities for Sussex.

Tributes were paid by the Panel and Commissioner to the police officer killed at Croydon Custody Centre in the early hours of the morning. Their messages of condolence followed a report into a visit

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to Chichester Custody Centre, in which members highlighted the efforts being made to create a calm and safe space.

The Police and Crime Panel meeting can be viewed at <https://eastsussex.public-i.tv/core/portal/>

The meeting's agenda and reports, and details of the Sussex Police and Crime Panel can be viewed at <https://sussexpcp.gov.uk/>

The next Panel meeting will be held on January 29, 2021. Members of the public can submit questions to the panel in advance of the meeting by emailing [pcp@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:pcp@westsussex.gov.uk) or by post to Room 102, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RQ.

Ends.