

## Sussex Police and Crime Panel

28 June 2024 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Lewes.

Present:

Cllr Bashar	Mid Sussex District Council	Cllr Mitchell	West Sussex County Council
Cllr Bayliss	Rother District Council	Mrs Peacock	Independent Co-Opted Member
Cllr Baynham	Horsham District Council	Mrs Scholefield	Independent Co-Opted Member
Cllr Birch	Arun District Council	Cllr Sluman	Adur District Council
Cllr Crow	West Sussex County Council	Cllr Standley	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Czolak	Brighton and Hove City Council	Cllr Weller	Chichester District Council
Cllr Khan	Crawley Borough Council	Cllr Whorlow	Worthing Borough Council
Cllr Keene	Lewes District Council	Cllr Williams	Wealden District Council

Substitutes:

Cllr Crow, West Sussex County Council (in place of Cllr Ali), Mrs Peacock, Independent Co-Opted Member (in place of Mr Naphine) and Cllr Weller, Chichester District Council (in place of Cllr Bangert).

Apologies were received from Cllr Bannister (Eastbourne Borough Council) and Cllr Ian Hollidge (East Sussex County Council), Cllr Bennett (Mid Sussex District Council), Cllr Haffenden (Hastings Borough Council), Cllr Hollidge (East Sussex County Council) and Mr Naphine (Independent Co-Opted Member).

Also in attendance: Mrs Katy Bourne (Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner), Mark Streater (OSPCC Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer), Iain McCulloch (OSPCC Chief Finance Officer) and Mervin Dadd (OSPCC Chief Communications and Insight Officer).

### Part I

#### 1. Appointment of Independent Members

1.1 Resolved – that the Panel:

1. Renewed the appointment of Mrs Susan Scholefield as an Independent Co-opted Member of the Panel, for a one-year term.
2. Renewed the appointment of Mr Keith Naphine as an Independent Co-Opted Member of the Panel, for a one-year term.

## **2. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair**

- 2.1 Cllr Whorlow proposed Cllr Czolak as Chair of the Panel for the forthcoming year. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Khan.
- 2.2 Resolved – that Cllr Czolak is elected as Chair of Sussex Police and Crime Panel for the ensuing year.
- 2.3 Cllr Williams proposed Cllr Baynham as Vice Chair of the Panel for the forthcoming year. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Bashar.
- 2.4 Resolved – that Cllr Baynham is elected as Vice Chair of Sussex Police and Crime Panel for the ensuing year.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

- 3.1 In accordance with the Code of Conduct, members of the Panel declared the personal interests in the table below.

<b>Panel members</b>	<b>Personal Interest</b>
Mrs Scholefield	A serving magistrate
Cllr Birch	Chair of Housing and Wellbeing Committee at Arun District Council
Cllr Whorlow	Vice Chair for Adur and Worthing Community Safety Partnership.  Cabinet Member for Safety, Equalities and Inclusion at Worthing Borough Council.
Cllr Sluman	Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing at Adur District Council
Cllr Bashar	Member of the Policy and Finance Committee at Haywards Heath Town Council

## **4. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

- 4.1 Resolved - that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 March 2024 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

## **5. Annual Review of Membership and Proportionality**

- 5.1 Resolved – that the Panel:

1. Agreed that Brighton and Hove City Council be invited to appoint a Conservative second representative to the Panel, for a one-year period of office, to take effect immediately.
2. Agreed that both East and West Sussex County Councils should each be invited to appoint an additional local authority member for a one-year period of office.
3. Agreed to invite appointments of a Conservative second councillor from East Sussex County Council and a Conservative second councillor from West Sussex County Council to take effect immediately.

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

- 6.1 The Panel noted a published version of written public and Panel questions with answers from the Commissioner (copy appended to the signed minutes).
- 6.2 The Chairman invited questions from the Panel to the Commissioner. A summary of the main questions and responses were as follows:
  1. Question: Is the Commissioner aware of a delay caused to the processing of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks?  
Answer: The Commissioner referred to her Performance and Accountability Meeting (PAM) on 17 May where she questioned the Chief Constable on this matter and confirmed that the Force has received funding for a further four staff posts to meet the demand. She acknowledged that there is a backlog and that DBS checks remain a challenge for all national forces. She clarified that it's the Force's role to provide local support for specific elements of the process.
  2. Question: As a member of the local Town Boards, what is the Commissioner's overall strategic objective?  
Answer: The Commissioner said that it's her statutory requirement to be a member of the three Sussex Town Boards in Eastbourne, Hastings and Bexhill. She explained that each of the Town Boards will receive £20 million in government funding over the next 10 years and said that the 'safety and security' pillar is her priority and focus in her role as Commissioner.  
Supplementary: What are the Commissioner's views around the priority for bid submissions?  
Answer: The Commissioner said it isn't appropriate for her to comment early on in the process and as only one member of the on the Boards' members.
  3. Question: What is being done to address the understaffing/underfunding of digital policing and backlog of evidence being investigated? Are safeguarding protocols in place to protect privacy and accidental data deletion?  
Answer: The Commissioner commented that investigations have become far more complex given the growing use of digital

devices carrying evidence in criminal cases over the last few decades. She added that the significant storage capacity of modern devices has considerably extended the length of time taken to review vast amounts of evidence. She said that this is an issue for all national forces and it is hoped that Artificial Intelligence will be in a position to help resource in the near future.

4. Question: Has the Commissioner received any assurances from the Chief Constable around the welfare of children strip-searched by Sussex Police and the Force's use of powers, including whether or not the gender of the officer was different to the gender of the child?

Answer: The Commissioner said she is aware of various reports around this and that it's an area which is constantly monitored. She added that she has questioned the Chief Constable around remands of children and their welfare at her PAMs this year. She offered to provide information relating to a specific issue in the after the meeting.

Supplementary: In recognition that 6% of strip searches were carried out by officers of the opposite gender in 2023/24, the Chair welcomed any future assurances, following discussions with the relevant officers, that the Commissioner can provide regarding the welfare of children in the aftermath of being subjected to strip searches.

Answer: The Commissioner mentioned that, Claire Taylor, manager of the Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) scheme has responsibility for ensuring that the volunteer independent visitors carry out regular unannounced, day and night custody checks on detainees, including children. She added that if any concerns were raised, she would follow this up at a PAM with the Chief Constable.

5. Question: Regarding the Sussex Police officer pay and morale survey 2023 which showed that 90% of respondents felt that morale in the Force was either low or very low and 17% of this figure said that this impacted their intentions to leave the Force, have any efforts subsequently been made to explore the root causes of that low morale and how to challenge it to ensure that police officers do feel valued?

Answer: The Commissioner highlighted the positive outcomes from the survey and said that following publication of the report, she asked the Chief Constable how the Force had reflected on the results at her PAM on 17 May. She added that the Force's Senior Leadership Team will prioritise the following two areas of concern for improvement; a large number of respondents felt discriminated against at work and 20% of the workforce didn't feel that they were provided with the necessary uniform and protective equipment to carry out their roles. The Chief Constable has communicated progress made so far by the Force with staff and published the survey results to the wider workforce and senior leaders for full awareness. High workloads and demands on staff was a re-occurring theme of discontent

raised and this matter is currently being reviewed across the Force.

Supplementary: Survey results showing that nearly one in five officers have considered early retirement due to low morale and 60% would not recommend their job to another person, as a result of this do you envisage any further challenges in the coming years?

Answer: The Commissioner emphasised that the negative, national media attention received police forces has an adverse impact on recruitment. She said that the prevalence of physical assaults committed on officers is a contributing factor to low morale. She added that all members of public have a duty to support the work of the police as much as possible.

6. Question: Regarding police time spent responding to mental health-related callouts, do you believe the 'Right Care, Right Person' (RCRP) model will help to relieve policing pressures in this area? And were there any reported serious injuries or deaths in Sussex Police custody in 2023/24.

Answer: The Commissioner confirmed that there were no deaths in the Force's custody within the reporting year. The PCC gave background to the formation of the RCRP model and its national adoption between forces and the NHS. The PCC explained that the model hasn't fully landed in Sussex and that partners are struggling from a resourcing perspective. The PCC added that the Chief Constable was questioned about this at the PAM on 16 February and planned to re-visit this topic in the near future.

Supplementary: How is Sussex and Surrey Police's working partnership performing in terms of delivering efficiencies and enabling greater purchasing power?

Answer: The PCC summarised how the partnership operates, which areas of policing the two Forces collaborate on and listed the shared senior officer roles. The PCC explained that BlueLight Commercial was formed by the Home Office to help drive improved efficiencies for regional forces in relation to procurement, purchasing and contracting services. The PCC commented that BlueLight has saved the Forces hundreds of thousands of pounds.

7. Question: Is the current trajectory of conviction rates for Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) rising or falling?

Answer: The Commissioner said that a national blueprint adopted by all UK forces has helped to improve the trajectory of RASSO conviction rates, but not at the rate she had expected. The PCC said that in January she introduced a new unit made up of eight retired detectives and individuals with investigative experience to work with victims who have reported RASSO incidents to the police but who don't want to pursue legal action. The PCC explained that the aim of the new unit is to share the caseload and relieve detectives of those which take the longest to investigate, so that the unit can progress those cases to court. The Commissioner offered to prepare a report for the Panel around the ongoing work of the Force to improve the conviction rates for RASSO.

8. Question: Has sufficient attention been afforded to crime prevention and diversion, how might that be done?  
Answer: The Commissioner said that crime prevention will continue to be one of her main priorities and be a focal point of the next four-year Police & Crime Plan. The PCC also gave examples of current initiatives ran by the Force, including Immediate Justice.
9. Question: Could local police forces working collaboratively be served by a South East regional force instead?  
Answer: The Commissioner described the national approach to modern policing, the responsibilities of local forces, benefits of mutual aid and at what stage they would collaborate with another force, such as if a crime took place across two neighbouring force areas. The PCC went on to explain that a case would be escalated to the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) if an organised gang had a presence across multiple force areas, for example. The PCC concluded that a case with a regional and national footprint would be referred to the National Crime Agency (NCA).

## **7. The Commissioner's Annual Report and Financial Outturn Report 2023/24**

- 7.1 The Panel considered a report by the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, introduced by Commissioner Bourne.
- 7.2 The Commissioner highlighted some of the progress made against the Police and Crime Plan's (2021/24) policing and crime objectives.
- 7.3 The Chair invited the Panel to ask questions. A summary of questions and responses were as follows:
1. Question: Are you content with the Force's approach and performance in tackling the issue of dangerous driving, specifically in relation to motorcycles?  
Answer: The Commissioner said she believed that it is a minority of motorcyclists who demonstrate anti-social behaviour and cause distress to other road users and residents. The PCC praised the majority of driver and motorcyclists' conduct across the county. The PCC offered to add data to evidence the achievement of Operation Downsway and Operation Ride in monitoring anti-social behaviour by motorists. The PCC commented that this section of the report does not include the wider work or achievements of the Force's collaboration with partners such as the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership.
  2. Question: In reference to page 34, can the Commissioner share the results of the new South East Partnership Against Rural Crime and offer reassurance that you will support its continued operation on a regular basis?  
Answer: The Commissioner offered to add a hyperlink to the Rural Crime Team's website and monthly bulletins for readers to access

their latest updates. The PCC gave her reassurance that there remains a strategic focus on rural crime prevention and said that operational resourcing for effective cross-border working is the responsibility of the Chief Constables for the four partner forces.

3. Question: In reference to page 67, the report shows an underspend in some areas, but it is difficult to understand what it relates to. Has it affected the delivery of the transformational changes required to balance the budget going forwards?

Answer: Iain McCulloch, Chief Finance Officer, gave reassurance that the Commissioner's officers scrutinise the Force's use of the budget. Mr McCulloch confirmed that the Force did underspend in particular relation to staffing, as they held a higher number of vacancies than expected. Mr McCulloch explained that the £0.9million underspend has been carried forwards into reserves and part of it will be used to contribute towards delivering transformational changes.

Supplementary: Is it possible to include some more information about the transformation changes into your report, given their importance?

Answer: The Commissioner informed that there are plans for this to be detailed within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2024/28. The PCC offered to include a hyperlink to the MTFS and Statement of Accounts to reference for further information.

4. Question: How can the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership be additionally supported to improve road safety and further reduce the gradual reduction in the number of collisions and deaths?

Answer: The Commissioner said there's always more that partners can do around road safety and it's an area that she continues to press partners around how the Force can provide further support. The PCC added that the Force has specialist officers trained to offer support to the victim's families of road fatalities. She said that the 6% reduction marked some progress and called for it to continue.

5. Question: What was the decision-making behind Rother and Lewes' omission from the initial DISC rollout?

Answer: The Commissioner updated that there are plans to expand the use of the reporting platform to Lewes and Rother in the coming year. The PCC could not confirm how it will be funded at this stage but said it would make a good case for a capital funding bid to the local Town Board.

6. Question: Which types of crimes have Sussex children been victims of in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation? (CSE)

Answer: The Commissioner did not want to raise alarm by listing the different crime types but explained her links with organisations who provide specialist support to victims of CSE. The PCC offered to add a hyperlink in her report to these organisations' websites to signpost readers to further information.

7. Question: In reference to page 54, can you explain about the work undertaken and progress made in respect of modern slavery since the previous reporting year?

Answer: The Commissioner listed the developments at national level, including the updated standards and guidance released by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. The PCC added that integrated training has been given to police officers and investigators to bring their knowledge of the area up to date.

8. Question: What is the strategy in relation to PCSO recruitment and retention, could they be deployed as an extra resource to deter and respond to retail crime?

Answer: The Commissioner explained the value of PCSOs within the Force in terms of their visible presence on patrol and the added confidence they provide members of the public. The PCC clarified PCSOs already form a part of Neighbourhood Policing Teams which police retail crime. The PCC said that PCSO recruitment is a national issue due to the lack of career progression and there is generally greater appetite among individuals to apply directly to become a police officer instead.

9. Question: Going forward could we receive further statistics about the performance of the Digital Investigation Support Unit (DISU)?

Answer: The Commissioner offered to bring a report to a future meeting of the Panel regarding a strategic overview of the complexities relating to RASSO and some of the initiatives her officers are leading on to improve solve rates.

#### 7.4 Resolved – that the Panel:

1. Recommended that the Commissioner considers adding hyperlinks to allow readers to access further information throughout the report.
2. Recommended that the Commissioner adds data throughout the report to provide evidence of achievement, strengthening the qualitative messaging.
3. Noted the annual report and budget outturn for 2023/24.

## **8. Annual Report from the Host Authority**

- 8.1 The Panel considered a report by the Clerk to the Sussex Police and Crime Panel.
- 8.2 In reference to paragraph 2.1.1, it was noted that the funding is split between administrative costs and expenses. It was questioned whether it was perceived as a risk if the Home Office decides to ringfence this funding in future in order to make savings.
- 8.3 Ninesh Edwards, Senior Advisor, clarified that the funding used to be ringfenced but doesn't believe it will revert back to that going forwards.
- 8.4 In reference to paragraph 2.10, Mr Edwards drew the Panel's attention to the fact that traffic to the Panel's website had halved in 2023/24 for an unknown reason.



8.5 The Chair responded by calling on Panel member to help promote the Panel website through their channels of communication with residents.

8. Resolved – that the Panel noted its annual report and budget outturn for 2023/24.

**9. Correspondence Since the Previous Meeting**

9.1 Resolved - that the Panel noted the correspondence.

**10. Quarterly Report of Complaints**

10.1 The Panel considered a report by the Clerk to the Sussex Police and Crime Panel.

10.2 Resolved – that the Panel noted the report.

**11. Date of Next Meeting and Future Meeting Dates**

11.1 The next meeting of the Panel would take place on 27 September 2024 at 10.30am, at County Hall, Lewes.

The meeting ended at 12.47 pm

Chairman