

E-scooters dominate public questions at Panel meeting

AN UNWELCOME surge in the number of E-scooters on roads and pavements across Sussex was raised at the latest Police and Crime Panel meeting.

The issue dominated public questions to the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner at Friday's (September 23) meeting, with residents raising concerns about safety and urging action to be taken.

Having provided responses, the Commissioner Katy Bourne faced questions from the Panel including the effectiveness of Operation Crackdown.

She said she shared some of the concerns, which she had raised Sussex Police's Chief Constable, and explained that the programme was operating on legacy infrastructure having launched more than 20 years ago.

With around 80,000 reports to Operation Crackdown last year alone, she reassured the Panel that Sussex Police were reviewing initiative to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Another issue raised by members was trust in Sussex Police, when people's perception didn't reflect crime rates. Particular concerns were raised about people not reporting crimes because they don't think the police will take action.

Members were told that confidence in the police was measured in a variety of ways, with Sussex Police regularly carrying out surveys and looking at complaints and the Commissioner holding focus groups and carrying out surveys.

Mrs Bourne said visibility played into the confidence of communities and that a lot of work was going on to improve visibility and confidence.

The Panel discussed a recruitment update from the Commissioner which looked at staffing levels, recruitment and retention and the diversity of the workforce.

Members heard how, since the start of the Government's three-year Operation Uplift, Sussex Police had gone above recruitment targets, with additional officers funded by precept increases.

Mrs Bourne pointed to the report that there are now more women and people from diverse backgrounds serving as police officers than ever before, but said that Sussex Police were not resting on their laurels.

Members welcomed the fact that Sussex Police were among the top forces in the country for female representation and were keen to hear whether the recruitment policy was developing better support for women experiencing the menopause.

The Commissioner said she was concerned that a number of women do not reach senior levels because they hit the menopause, but said Sussex Police were doing a lot of work to support women.

Referring to the rate of officers leaving the force, the Panel raised concerns about the significant loss of institutional knowledge and local intelligence.

Mrs Bourne said rules that allowed officers to draw their pension after 30 years' service did present an issue to forces across the country but that Sussex Police worked hard to retain experience and knowledge.

The Commissioner also presented a report to the Panel on her role in ensuring Sussex Police is effective in tackling digital crime.

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With advances in technology and it being more affordable than ever, Mrs Bourne said in her report that the scale and spread of digital crime had presented “unprecedented complexity, instability and risk.

The Panel was updated on Sussex and Surrey Police’s Cyber Crime Unit, Digital Investigation Support Unity and Digital Forensics Teams and the success they were having at disrupting serious organised crimes and preventing offences.

Speaking after the meeting, Panel chair Cllr Christian Mitchell said: “Many of the issues raised in the meeting are ones that have come before the Panel before, but it is very helpful to receive updates to allow members to fully understand the issues and properly scrutinise and support the work of the Commissioner.”

The next meeting of the Sussex Police and Crime Panel will take place on Friday, January 27 at 10.30am.

Ends.

Notes for editors

Reports presented to the Sussex Police and Crime Panel, and details of how members of the public can submit questions for the Commissioner, can be found at www.sussexpcp.gov.uk

The meeting can be viewed at <https://eastsussex.public-i.tv>