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Sussex Police and Crime Panel

27 January 2023 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Lewes.

Present:

Cllr Christian Mitchell	West Sussex County Council	Cllr Bob Standley	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Johnny Denis	Lewes District Council	Cllr Pam Doodes	Wealden District Council
Cllr Brian Drayson	Rother District Council	Cllr Sue Mullins	Crawley Borough Council
Mr Keith Naphine	Independent member	Cllr Pendleton	Arun District Council
Cllr Judy Rogers	Hastings Borough Council	Mrs Susan Scholefield	Independent member
Cllr Dee Simson	Brighton & Hove City Council	Cllr Sue Shanks (Substitute)	Brighton & Hove City Council
Cllr James Walsh	West Sussex County Council	Cllr Tricia Youtan	Horsham District Council

Apologies were received from: Cllr Kevin Boram (Adur District Council), Cllr Roy Briscoe (Chichester District Council), Cllr Steve Murphy (East Sussex County Council), Cllr Sally Smith (Worthing Borough Council) and Cllr Norman Webster (Mid Sussex District Council)

Also in attendance: Mrs Sarah Peacock – Observer (Substitute Independent Co-opted Member)

From the Office of the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner: Katy Bourne OBE (Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner), Mark Streater (Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer), Iain McCulloch (Chief Finance Officer) and Mervin Dadd (Chief Communications and Insights Officer)

Part I

24. Declarations of Interest

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

Panel Member	Personal Interest
Cllr Pam Doodes	Member of The Safer Wealden Partnership
Cllr Sue Shanks	Member of the NHS Assembly Chair of The Health and Wellbeing Board at Brighton and Hove City Council Trustee of Brighton Youth Centre Trustee of Sussex Clubs for Young People
Cllr Sue Mullins	Member of The Safer Crawley Partnership Cabinet Member for Public Protection at Crawley Borough Council
Cllr Tricia Youtan	Cabinet Member for Public Protection at Horsham District Council Member of Horsham District Community Safety Partnership
Cllr Judy Rogers	Lead Member for Community Safety at Hastings Borough Council Co-Chair of the Safer Hastings Partnership
Mrs Susan Scholefield	Senior Independent Director of Surrey and Borders NHS Foundation Trust

25. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 25.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 September 2022 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

26. Public and Panel Questions to the Commissioner

- 26.1 No written questions were received from members of the public.
- 26.2 The Chairman invited questions from the Panel to the Commissioner. A summary of the main questions and responses were as follows:
1. Question: Following recent media coverage of the 79 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who were reported missing from a hotel in Hove, has the Commissioner been brief and updated by the Force's response to the current situation?
Answer: Yes. Local tactical groups put measures in place to safeguard children and the Commissioner's Office attend their meetings.

2. Question: Does the Commissioner support ongoing vetting checks and how has this been raised with the Chief Constable? Can you reassure residents that past concerns are followed up?
Answer: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published a report on misogyny and police vetting in November 2022. 43 arising measures were put to the Chief Constable at the Commissioner's Performance and Accountability Meeting (PAM) on 18 November with a view to re-visit at the next PAM on 17 February 2023. The OSPCC has funded a dedicated superintendent to monitor Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The Chief Constable and Commissioner are aligned and pleased with the progress made to date. The Commissioner also explained that she has the power to forfeit part of a police officer's pension where misconduct is committed before prosecution.
3. Question: Can the Commissioner provide an update on Operation Crackdown?
Answer: The Roads and Local Transport Minister, Richard Holden MP, met with the Chief Constable and Commissioner on a visit in December 2022 and received a demonstration of the new Operation Crackdown website, including the public's ability to upload dashcam footage. The Commissioner agreed to provide a future update on the effectiveness of the new website.
4. Question: Regarding the Operation Uplift recruitment campaign, is the Commissioner confident of the Force's current level of resource and does she believe the scheme has worked?
Answer: The Force is currently holding a surplus of 15 to 20 officers and Sussex Police must maintain its total number of officers going forward, but there is uncertainty over future funding.
5. Question: To what extent is the Commissioner involved with raising the issue of police vetting on a national level?
Answer: In her role as a Board Director of The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), the Commissioner and colleagues are working closely with Home Office officials and have made representations around pension forfeiture. The Home Secretary has agreed to a review of the speed at which chief officers are able to dismiss police officers amid delays caused by the current process.
6. Question: Is the Commissioner comfortable that, strategically, the Force has established the right and proper position in regard to managing incidents of hate crime?
Answer: The Force will follow The College of Policing's guidance around issues of this nature and it respects evolving modern language and values associated with the LGBTIQ+ community. A lot of work has been carried out in Brighton and Hove to help make these communities feel safe, of which about 17% of its population is LGBTIQ+. It was acknowledged that there is still work to be done in terms of convincing some residents to come forward and report hate crime. The Chief Constable has recently appointed an Assistance Chief Officer, Anita Grant, to lead on diversity and inclusion both within the Force and externally, including recruitment.

7. Question: Is there a strategy for improving the 96% rate of unsolved bike thefts in Brighton and Hove?
Answer: The Commissioner acknowledged that unfortunately there are often difficulties in solving these crimes because CCTV camera footage can be grainy and this makes it hard to identify the offending individuals. The Divisional Commander for Brighton and Hove, Chief Superintendent Justin Burtenshaw, has tactical plans to tackle this at a local level, while Brighton and Hove Community Safety Partnership often receive reports on the ground and can deploy resource to an area where there has been a series of repeated thefts.
8. Question: Does the Commissioner know if the Force's enforcement efforts have been effective regarding drug-related offences?
Answer: The Force works closely with the National Crime Agency and Strategic Enforcement Unit by monitoring the roads network and 70 county lines have been disrupted.
Supplementary: How do we know that high-level action is having a positive impact at local level?
Answer: Local intelligence is held by Community Safety Partnerships and they are the appropriate forum to discuss, tackle and deal with local issues with support from safeguarding partners.

27. Final Report of the Budget and Precept Working Group

- 27.1 The Panel considered a report by the Chairman of the Budget and Precept Working Group, Mrs Susan Scholefield. The Group met remotely twice, once in November 2022 and once in January 2023.
- 27.2 The Panel Chairman thanked members of the Group and the Commissioner's Office for their collaborative work.
- 27.3 Resolved – that the Panel notes the recommendations of the Budget and Precept Working Group.

28. Proposed Precept 2023/2024

- 28.1 The Panel considered a report by the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner.
- 28.2 The Commissioner invited Mr Dadd, OSPCC Chief Communications and Insight Officer, to present and process and findings of the policing precept consultation. The followings points, activities and outcomes were highlighted:
- A total of 3,366 responses were received during the consultation period running from 2 December 2022 to 10 January 2023.
 - 70% of respondents were in support of a precept increase on some level (44% supported an increase of £10 a year, 26% supported an increase of more than £10 a year).
 - 31% did not support an increase in the precept

- Anti-Social Behaviour, Serious & Organised Crime and Knife Crime and Serious Violence were the public's top three issues requiring more investment/enforcement.

28.3 The Chairman invited the Panel to ask any questions under this item. A summary of the main questions and responses were as follows:

1. Comment: One member was not in support of the proposed precept on the basis that the Government's £15 ceiling assumption is unfair amid the current cost-of-living crisis and a lack of improved visible policing in Eastern Arun.
Response: The OSPCC were not aware of the maximum precept ceiling until informed by Government. The Commissioner explained that 70% of residents were prepared to pay more than £10 and that the increase is fair and in proportion to Sussex's population of 1.7 million.
2. Comment: Concern was expressed in terms of the added financial burden being placed on local communities to fund the policing budget in recognition of Government grants covering around 57% of the cost.
Response: The Commissioner and colleagues continue to lobby the Government hard over its future funding formula to make it more favourable for Sussex residents. The formula is currently under review.
3. Comment: Arun District Council's majority view was in favour of the proposed precept in principle, however there were concerns about the delivery of the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan priorities. The priorities do not contain a local emphasis and Violence Against Women and Girls excludes men from being victims of domestic abuse and discourages them to report incidents.
Response: Feedback from focus groups held across Sussex showed that residents were most concerned with anti-social behaviour at ground level but also appreciated that the Force is tasked with tackling serious violence and organised crime on a greater scale. The Commissioner explained that the Police and Crime Plan is an overarching strategy into which the Chief Constable's Operational Delivery Plan feeds into. District Commanders are responsible for overseeing Local Action Plans which will feature priorities specific to the needs and demand of each local community.

28.4 Resolved - The Panel supported, by a majority of votes, that the proposed precept of £239.91 (on a Band D property), an increase of £15 (equivalent to 6.67%).

29. The Role of the Commissioner in Ensuring Sussex Police Provides an Effective Response to Mental Health

29.1 The Panel considered a report by the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, which was introduced by Mr Streater, OSPCC Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer.

29.2 The Chairman invited the Panel to ask questions. A summary of the main questions and responses were as follows:

1. Comment: The Panel collectively viewed it unacceptable that a large number of police hours were taken up by supporting individuals with mental health issues. Cllr Walsh proposed that the Panel Chairman writes a letter to the Chief Executive of the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and requests that the Trust considers taking the following strategic actions;

i) Urgently review the mental health practitioner support available to Sussex Police.

ii) Reduce the unavailability of police officers carrying out regular duties due to the time spent accompanying individuals in Accident and Emergency departments.

iii) Reduce the growth and use of Accident and Emergency departments as a police-staffed place of safety.

Answer: Discussions are ongoing with NHS Sussex to find a solution and some of those are subject to commissioning arrangements.

2. Question: Is there any way the Commissioner can help the Chief Constable by escalating the urgency of the issue?

Answer: The Commissioner and colleagues have lobbied the matter at a national level and it was discussed with the policing minister on a recent visit who pledged to look into what can be done to improve the situation, along with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

29.3 The Panel welcomed and noted the report.

29.4 Resolved – The Panel supported the recommendation that the Panel Chairman writes to the Chief Executive of Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust following the meeting.

30. Quarterly Report of Complaints

30.1 In reference to section 3.1.3, the Commissioner queried the categorisation of the serious complaint (allegations of criminal conduct) in relation to her interests.

30.2 Mr Edwards, Senior Advisor to the Panel, agreed to refer the matter to the Clerk to the Panel and seek their advice in respect of the wording of 3.1.3 in the published report.

30.3 Resolved – The Panel noted the correspondence received both within and outside of the Panel's remit.

31. Date of Next Meeting and Future Meeting Dates

31.1 The next meeting of the Panel would take place on 24 March 2023 at 10.30am, at County Hall, Lewes.

The meeting ended at 1.27 pm

Chairman