

## Sussex Police and Crime Panel

24 March 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 Kevin Boram             | Adur District Council          | Cllr Roy Briscoe                | Chichester District 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     |
| Cllr Steve Murphy            | East Sussex County Council     | Mr Keith Naphine                | Independent member          |
| Mrs Susan Scholefield        | Independent member             | Cllr Sally Smith                | Worthing Borough Council    |
| Cllr James Walsh             | West Sussex County Council     | Cllr Norman Webster             | Mid Sussex District Council |
| Cllr Sue Shanks (Substitute) | Brighton and Hove City Council | Cllr John Blackall (Substitute) | Horsham District Council    |

Apologies were received from Cllr Pendleton (Arun District Council), Cllr Judy Rogers (Hastings Borough Council), Cllr Dee Simson (Brighton & Hove City Council) and Cllr Tricia Youtan (Horsham District Council).

Also in attendance: Mrs Sarah Peacock – Observer (Substitute Independent Co-opted Member), Katy Bourne OBE (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 Insights Officer).

### Part I

#### 32. Declarations of Interest

32.1 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 Norman Webster | An employee of a primary contractor to the NHS |

#### 33. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 33.1 The Panel noted the tabled response to the Chairman's letter to Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (dated 23 March 2023) regarding Sussex Police's capacity to respond to and deal with mental health incidents.
- 33.2 Members also noted a correction to data referred to by the Commissioner at the previous meeting on 27 January 2023. In reference to page 7, question six of the meeting papers, the answer of 17% stated by Mrs Bourne for the LGBT+ population in Brighton and Hove was inaccurate. The latest Census data confirmed that almost 11% of all residents in the city identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or another sexual orientation.
- 33.3 Resolved - that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 January 2023 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

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

- 34.1 The Panel noted a published version of written public and Panel questions with answers from the Commissioner (copy appended to the signed minutes). The Panel had no supplementary questions in respect of the public questions.
- 34.2 The Chairman invited questions from the Panel to the Commissioner. A summary of the main questions and responses were as follows:
1. Question: In reference to the Commissioner's recent statement in response to the publication of Baroness Louise Casey's review into the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service, clarity was sought as to whether the Commissioner believes that there is a wider issue which extends beyond the Met Police and is prevalent in other forces.  
Answer: The Commissioner reiterated her statement and emphasised that the negative media coverage received by the Met has a knock-on effect on other UK forces. She added that public confidence is low and public trust needs to be built back up in order to police by consent. Commissioner Bourne pledged to use the Casey review and its recommendations at future Performance and Accountability Meetings (PAM) held with the Chief Constable to test and challenge the processes within Sussex Police. Mrs Bourne expressed that the Casey review has reassured her that Sussex Police is in a better place, but she could not categorically guarantee that all officers within the Force will meet the required standards. She concluded that success will be measured by an increase in cases brought to misconduct hearings and an improved speed of dismissal from the Force.
  2. Question: In reference to the last paragraph of the Commissioner's statement, she was asked if she believes Sussex Police officers should be re-vetted?  
Answer: The Commissioner confirmed that the re-vetting of the Force's police officers, staff and OSPCC officers is ongoing, as is the

case across all UK police forces currently. The initial phase will be carried out by the end of March 2023.

3. Question: Are there plans to address the culture within Sussex Police, if so, how?

Answer: The Commissioner said that discipline falls under the remit of the Force's Deputy Chief Constable, who has shared ideas and future plans with Commissioner Bourne to tackle misogynistic, homophobic and racist culture in an attempt to deliver organisational change. She referred to the recommendations contained within the recent HMICFRS report and added that the current vetting arrangements were a focus of her Performance and Accountability Meeting (PAM) on 17 February and will be tested and challenged at PAMs going forward. She added that the Force has been proactive and re-visited its vetting processes before publication of the Casey Review. The Commissioner concluded that she believes Sussex Police have been cooperative and reflective in listening to local groups and finding solutions to improve their processes.

4. Question: What are your views on whistleblowing within the Force?

Answer: The Commissioner said that in an ideal world all officers and staff should feel sufficiently supported to call out and challenge instances of poor behaviour in-person as and when it occurs. She revealed that the Force manages an internal whistleblowing channel, 'Break the Silence', which enables officers and staff to report poor behaviour anonymously. The channel is advertised regularly on the Force's intranet to officers and staff and there is evidence that there is a good level of awareness by the amount it's used. Commissioner Bourne took encouragement from a noticeable reduction in anonymous reports and an increase in reports submitted by a person in their own name over the last two years.

5. Question: Which specific resources will you re-direct to deliver cultural change in Sussex and what measures of success will you set the Chief Constable?

Answer: The Commissioner said that one measure of success will be the number of officers and staff from now on who are accelerated through hearings and dismissed from the Force. She stressed her belief that the majority of the Force's five and a half thousand employees are hardworking and do not want to work alongside colleagues who fall short of the Force's behavioural expectations. The Commissioner added that the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) appointed Deputy Chief Constable Maggie Blythe as the National Police Lead for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) to develop a VAWG action plan for all forces. Surrey and Sussex forces have a joint plan in place to reflect their collaborative work and this is tested by the Commissioner at her PAMs to ensure it's delivering as expected. The NPCC's overarching Police Race Action Plan is adopted by all England and Wales police forces and the Commissioner utilises the Surrey and Sussex plan as another performance measure at her PAMs.

34.3 Members took encouragement following publication of the Force's recent misconduct proceedings which reported that nine out of 10 gross misconduct hearings were upheld and that this should serve to encourage whistleblowing going forward.

6. Question: Does the Commissioner feel that the Casey Review's description of the Met Police having a toxic working culture and as a demoralised frontline police force overwhelmed by the number of complex cases is also reflected in Sussex?

Answer: The Commissioner said that she could not promise there would not be any further misconduct or accelerated hearings going forward. However, she viewed these instances in a positive light in terms of it reflecting senior officers' proactive approach to rooting out poorly behaved officers. Commissioner Bourne added that she felt some of the report's reflections on the Met Police's culture across the board are not apparent within Sussex Police. Also in contrast to the report's findings, the Commissioner claimed that her strategic priorities and the Chief Constable's operational priorities are clearly defined and well-recognised by officers and staff. The Commissioner believed that Sussex Police's officers and staff are demoralised to an extent by the negative media reports surrounding the Met Police and the adverse knock-on public perception of all UK forces in general.

7. Question: Can the Commissioner give an indication of the types of training required by police officers to complete during their careers in respect of diversity, equality and neurodiversity?

Answer: Mandatory and optional training is an ongoing process throughout all stages of an officer's career and something that is regularly reviewed and updated by the Force. The Commissioner said that the Force has developed a toolkit to support supervisors' discussions with their teams around gender equality, sexual orientation and disabilities in a safe environment.

8. Question: What is the gender balance of Sussex Police's leadership team?

Answer: The Commissioner said that there is a fairly even split but promised to provide an accurate answer following the meeting.

Response post-meeting: The Chief Officer team within Sussex Police comprises seven individuals – three females (43%) and four males (57%).

9. Question: Will there be any changes made to the eight or nine stages of police officer recruitment to aid the re-vetting process?

Answer: The College of Policing is responsible for setting the standards of policing practice. The Commissioner added that Sussex Police is one of a few forces which offers a final interview to prospective recruits.

10. Question: Will the Commissioner ensure that the Force's training budget is not cut?

Answer: The Commissioner agreed that this is particularly important at management and sergeant level.

11. Question: Have there been any cases of the Force's female employees reporting having been personally harassed by male employees, and if so, in what numbers?

Answer: The Commissioner confirmed that they are aware of complaints being lodged and that she has regular integrity meetings with the Force's professional standards team so that she and Mark Streater can review different areas. Commissioner Bourne did not have figures to hand, but said she felt encouraged that female employees feel supported enough to come forward and report incidents of this nature. She hoped that more employees will feel comfortable to report in their own name rather than anonymously in future.

12. Question: The Casey Review documents shocking ineptitudes such as evidence from a rape case being binned after a storage fridge broke - can the Commissioner reassure the public that practical strategic measures are in place to prevent this type of occurrence in Sussex?

Answer: The Commissioner gave assurance that she will be using the findings and recommendations which came out of the Review at her future PAMs to check and challenge the Chief Constable and senior officers that those processes are where they should be.

34.4 After it was raised by members, the Commissioner expressed disappointment in the response from Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to a letter sent by the Panel Chairman on behalf of the Panel regarding the Force's capacity to deal with those suffering mental health issues. Commissioner Bourne offered to arrange a meeting with Sussex Police's mental health lead in follow-up to this.

34.4 Following a suggestion by members, the Chairman agreed to write, on behalf of the Panel, to the Chairs of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (West Sussex County Council), Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (East Sussex County Council) and Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Brighton and Hove City Council) to suggest the three improvement areas addressed by Dr Padmore (CEO of Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust) are monitored.

34.5 The Commissioner suggested that the Chairman also shares the paper presented to the Panel on 27 January for context - 'The role of the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner in Ensuring Sussex Police Provides an Effective Response to Mental Health'.

### **35. The Role of the Commissioner in Ensuring Sussex Police Demonstrate an Efficient and Effective Approach to Police Custody**

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

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

1. Question: In respect of Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs), what type of training do they receive in order to understand the situation and needs of a person being held in custody so that they can understand whether the appropriate measures are being taken regarding their safeguarding?

Answer: Comprehensive training is ongoing and overseen by The Independent Custody Visitors Association (ICVA). ICVs are required to ask set questions of custody detainees under the Human Rights Act. The Commissioner referred the questioner to the ICVA website for full details of ICV's training.

2. Question: Why is the Force's Independent Custody Visiting Scheme a voluntary service and is there a danger that it is reliant on volunteers?

Answer: The Commissioner confirmed that the reason ICVs are voluntary is so that they can provide impartial feedback by being independent from the police service and the criminal justice system.

3. Question: In reference to para 2.2, why were the 56 suicides following police custody in 2020/21 described as "apparent"?

Answer: Mark Streater commented that this was quoted from The Independent Office for Police Conduct's (IOPC) website and speculated that reflects the coroner's determination of the cases.

4. Question: In reference to para 2.6, how is the welfare of detainees released from custody measured and what are the metrics for success?

Answer: Mark Streater said there is no follow-up to assess detainees wellbeing, but ICVs do record their observations and interactions with detainees which is used to improve the custody journey.

5. Question: How is the safety of staff working within the Force's custody centres monitored and measured?

Answer: The operational practice, training and equipment provided to custody centre staff is overseen by the Chief Constable and Head of Police Custody. The ICV's focus is on the welfare and wellbeing of detainees. He said there is some crossover and Claire Taylor who leads the ICVS scheme has oversight of the policies and processes which make the environment a safe place for the staff working at custody centres and the detainees.

6. Question: Is there provision for providing all detainees with appropriate clothing, given that individuals can be taken into and released from custody during anti-social hours?

Answer: The Commissioner confirmed this is the case and that custody sergeants also take into account the temperature control of cells.

7. Question: How do you make sure you attract a diverse range of people to become ICVs?

Answer: The Commissioner said that the role is regularly advertised but it can be difficult to retain younger people. She added there is currently a pool of 50 volunteers.

**36. Quarterly Report of Complaints**

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

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

37.1 The next meeting of the Panel would take place on 30 June 2023 at 10.30am, at County Hall, Lewes.

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm

Chairman