

Public Document Pack

Sussex Police and Crime Panel

30 January 2026 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Lewes.

Present:

Cllr Czolak	Brighton & Hove City Council	Cllr Baynham	Horsham District Council
Cllr Birch	Arun District Council	Cllr Bangert	Chichester District Council
Cllr Ballard	Eastbourne Borough Council	Cllr Ian Hollidge	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Bob Standley	East Sussex County Council	Cllr Keene	Lewes District Council
Cllr Bayliss	Rother District Council	Cllr Williams	Wealden District Council
Cllr Ali	West Sussex County Council	Cllr Warne	Hastings Borough Council
Mrs Scholefield	Independent Co-opted Member	Cllr Jones	Crawley Borough Council

Substitutes:

Cllr M Jones, Crawley Borough Council

Apologies were received from Cllr Khan (Crawley Borough Council), Cllr Whorlow (Worthing Borough Council) and Mr Napthine (Independent Co-opted Member)

Also in attendance: Mrs Katy Bourne, Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr Mark Streater, OSPCC, Mr Iain McCulloch, OSPCC, and Mr Mervin Dadd, OSPCC.

Part I

67. Declarations of Interest

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

Panel Member	Personal Interest
Cllr Baynham	Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources at Horsham District Council.
Cllr Bangert	Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing at Chichester District Council.
Cllr Birch	Chair of Housing and Wellbeing Committee at Arun

	District Council.
Cllr Cooke	Cabinet Member for Communities at Mid-Sussex District Council.
Mrs Scholefield	A serving magistrate.
Cllr Sluman	Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing at Adur District Council.
Cllr Whorlow	Vice Chair for Adur and Worthing Community Partnership. Cabinet Member for Safety, Equalities, and Inclusion at Worthing Borough Council.
Cllr Williams	Cabinet Lead for Public Health and Asset Management at Wealden District Council.

67.2 There were no further declarations of interests expressed.

68. Urgent Matters

68.1 There were no urgent matters raised.

69. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

69.1 The Panel is asked to approve the draft minutes of the previous meeting on 3 October 2025 as an accurate record.

69.2 Resolved – that the Panel approved the minutes of the previous meeting on 3 October 2025 as an accurate record and have been signed by the Chair.

70. Public and Panel Questions to the Commissioner

70.1 The Panel noted a published version of written public and Panel questions with answers from the Commissioner (copy appended to the signed minutes).

70.2 A summary of questions from the Panel to the Commissioner, with accompanying answers, follows:

1. Question: On the topic of the camp at Crowborough, what funding has Sussex Police incurred in policing both the demonstrations and the camp itself, and whether that money will be recouped from the

Home Office? And if it is not reimbursed, what activities the Police would normally be doing have been lost due to the presence in Crowborough? And has Sussex Police received any requests for additional police presence outside local schools due to concerns raised?

Answer: The Commissioner explained that there was a Home Office grant available for asylum sites and confirmed that a direct application to the Home Office had been made to fund the extra policing costs for twelve months. She confirmed that her office had now heard back from the Home Office, and they were looking to get a meeting with representatives in the week commencing 9th February, in order to move the process forward. Further, the cost was estimated at £5.62 million over the next twelve-month period. She explained that the costs of policing so far have been borne by current policing budgets. Finally, she explained that, to the best of her knowledge, the OSPCC had not been directly approached by local schools about policing concerns related to Crowborough.

2. Question: On the issue of intimidation and far-right demonstration marches around Crowborough, do you think that it is the responsible position for the Police and Crime Commissioner to be getting involved with these demonstrations or do you feel the responsible position would be to be leading on calming the situation down?

Answer: The Commissioner assured members that she could empathise with the intimidation and harassment of local politicians, both in person and on social media and that it was not acceptable or pleasant to go through. Further, she stressed to the Panel that as Commissioner, it was her job to represent the voice of the public in policing and to understand their concerns, citing misinformation around her stance and actions in relation to Crowborough. She explained her actions during the first protest march in November 2025, stressing that her sole motive was to speak to Crowborough residents to understand their concerns and feedback to Sussex Police, and that she had not stood on any platform aligned with left- or right-wing politics. Further, she explained that she had attended a public meeting of Crowborough Town Council, to once again hear residents' concerns and the representations made by delegates from the Home Office as the sum total of her involvement with the demonstrations.

3. Question: The Government has set new targets for police call answering times and officer attendance as part of a comprehensive overhaul in policing. The new targets require police forces to respond to emergency calls within 15 minutes in urban areas and 20 minutes in rural areas. Additionally, the Government has stated that police forces must answer 999 calls within 10 seconds. This is to address issues such as crime going unpunished and to restore neighbourhood policing. Do you feel that this is a step too far or an achievable target for Sussex Police?

Answer: The Commissioner acknowledged the Government's announcement of wide-ranging police reforms. She then explained to the Panel that it was her understanding that the new local policing guarantee would replace the national policing guarantee

and stressed that the referenced targets had not yet been formally set by the government. The Commissioner then emphasised to the Panel that Sussex Police was already in the top three performing forces nationally, for consistency in its response times to emergency calls across the county. She reiterated her satisfaction with Sussex Police's performance in responding to emergency and non-emergency calls.

4. Question: It has been stated in the media that the government is proposing a new national police force and to reduce the number of regional forces. Considering government proposals to address recent issues with the Met Police, what are the Commissioner's views on the Government's change of attitude to larger police forces?

Answer: The Commissioner cautioned that they currently don't know what these proposed mergers will look like but acknowledged the significance of the reforms and that they were currently only proposals to be discussed as a white paper. She then explained that the proposals referenced merges into twelve police forces and cited the quarterly collaborations between local forces and the regional crime unit. She stressed that they did not have any detail about how the mergers would work, or with whom, but estimated that the total population that a merged regional police force would cover would be comparable to the total population of London. She then acknowledged the issues the Met Police had experienced when changing from a 32-borough policing model to a 12-borough model and her concerns around a similar model of policing in Sussex.

5. Question: On the Government's introduction of the Road Safety Strategy, there is an aim to reduce collisions and KSIs (number of people killed or seriously injured) by 65%. However the Sussex Police Data Portal has not made available any data on collisions in Sussex since February 2025. The Portal states that the data will be rectified and included from March 2026. Can the Commissioner give assurances that this data will be made available?

Answer: The Commissioner explained that, after Sussex Police left the Safer Roads Sussex Partnership, management of the portal changed hands to the Sussex Police Road Safety Team and was in the process of being redeveloped last year, however there have been delays as a result of an unfortunate specialist staffing issue, which has now been rectified and the work will hopefully be completed by Spring 2026. She also shared with the Panel that the Fatal Five Unit had been formally launched.

6. Question: What is the Commissioner's opinion on the use of facial recognition technologies and how it is going to be rolled out, moving forward?

Answer: The Commissioner shared that she was pleased that Sussex was chosen as one of the pilot areas, acknowledging the concerns raised around profiling and surveillance. She explained to members that Sussex Police had been very clear about how and why they are using the technology and shared her experiences when accompanying the facial recognition vans and how the technology works. She assured members that all steps were taken

to safeguard the public's personal information and that the police's approach when using the technology was always calm and measured. Finally, she reassured the Panel that she had seen no disproportionality or bias in the technology or its usage.

7. Question: In respect to the proposed national police service, will that involve the physical transfer of any Sussex expertise, whether policing or non-policing, to that service or will any future national police service experts be allocated alongside Sussex Police?
Answer: The Commissioner explained that she didn't have any detail about how the proposals would work beyond the white paper and expressed her surprise and discomfort that she had not been consulted, as the public would need to be consulted over these proposals.
8. Question: On the issue of Midhurst Police Station's front desk closure since 2024, could the Commissioner update on the future of this critical station, considering local support for its reopening?
Answer: The Commissioner said she was aware of the local campaign but had not been directly approached or corresponded with as yet. She explained that Midhurst Police Station hosted the rural crime team and some of the local neighbourhood policing team but was not a front desk counter station.
9. Question: As a supplementary, the Commissioner was quoted as having said that Midhurst residents could use a yellow phone on the outside of the police station if they needed to contact the police and it did have a front counter.
Answer: The Commissioner acknowledged that the station may have had a front counter at some point, but it no longer did. She acknowledged that the yellow phones had been installed under the old police authority before her tenure as Commissioner and added that most traffic came through the phones rather than front desk counters.
10. Question: On the topic of the Sarah Everard Inquiry, with the second report stating that more focus was needed on predatory men rather than better street lighting or safety advice to women, is the Commissioner satisfied with the progress in implementing the recommendations from the first and second report?
Answer: The Commissioner assured members that she had been raising these issues in her monthly performance and accountability meetings with the Chief Constable and would be looking at the second report's recommendations at the coming meeting, and she would be seeking assurances from the Chief Constable that they were making progress against the recommendations outlined in the report.
11. Question: In reference to the questions submitted by members of the public on the Commissioner's decisions in relation to Crowborough, and the rise of far-right rhetoric and racism, what is the Commissioner's position on these marches and rhetoric?
Answer: The Commissioner stated that we live in a democracy where sometimes, opinions are expressed that are not agreed with,

but she would defend their right to be expressed, but acknowledged the distress and alarm caused by the actions of some activists who have engaged in hostile behaviour. She reiterated her previous comments around misinformation about her words and actions while attending the march last year and the importance of looking at facts when debating these issues in a sensible way.

12.Question: What are the Commissioner's views on the protests occurring outside and on considering the petition calling for her resignation?

Answer: The Commissioner reiterated the public's right to express their opinions, whether she likes the opinion or not, and she would defend that right but that shouldn't encroach into intimidation and mob tactics.

71. Final Report of the Budget and Precept Working Group

71.1 The Panel considered a report by the Chair of the Budget and Precept Working Group, Mrs Susan Scholefield. The Group met remotely twice, first on 21 November 2025, and then again on 13 January 2026.

71.2 Working Group members expressed concerns around present dangers that the public are unaware of and needing to fund the police response to those dangers, outweighing the possibility of relieving some of the burden on taxpayers' shoulders in raising precept from £14 to £15.

71.3 Group Members urged the Commissioner to lobby the policing minister to avoid assuming that the maximum increase would be approved every year in their funding decisions.

71.4 Resolved – that the Panel notes the recommendations of the Budget and Precept Working Group.

72. Proposed Precept 2026/27

73. Covering report by the Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel

73.1 The Panel noted the arrangements set out under Item 6a and agreed they were satisfied with the arrangements.

73.2 The Chair outlined the process for this item to the viewing public.

74. Report by the Police and Crime Commissioner

74.1 The Panel considered a report and supporting appendices provided by the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner.

74.2 Mrs Schofield outlined the Budget and Precept Working Group's recommendations. The primary recommendation was for the Panel to support the Proposed Precept for 2026/2027, with a majority of the Working Group supporting the proposed increase but it was not a unanimous result. Further, they noted that the public was showing less acceptance for increases in the precept than in previous years. The minority recommendation was for a 5% increase, rather the maximum allowed.

74.3 The Chair invited the Panel's questions under this item. A summary of the main questions and responses were as follows:

74.4 Members asked if the data gathered from the public was analysed for differences between support in rural and urban areas or across different demographics and expressed interest in seeing a more detailed breakdown.

74.5 Question: On p. 110 of the agenda pack, the vacancy rate for police officers is 1% and for PCSOs, 5%, is this affected by PCSOs transferring to become full police officers? And does it affect the work of the contact centre, with a 10% vacancy rate?

Answer: The Commissioner clarified that the 10% figure for the contact centre is not a flat figure but varies across different teams. She further explained that for PCSOs, there is no career progression and a flat salary range for them, which has led to that vacancy rate however, she stressed that it was one of the lowest they had seen in some time, as well as a waiting list for people waiting to become full police officers.

74.6 Members raised concerns over the clarity of the plans for the precept and how the increase will help facilitate the Police and Crime Plan.

74.7 Question: In reference to the increases in police officer headcounts and the contributions from the taxpayer, how have these contributed to making Sussex safer? And what reassurances can the Commissioner give on continued funding for the community safety partnerships (CSPs)?

Answer: The Commissioner emphasised the positive improvements and outcomes made by Sussex Police across both counties. She also referenced the various schemes that have been set up and supported by the OSPCC, such as the Crawley Business Partnership, to collaborate with Sussex Police in tackling various business crime-related issues. She confirmed that, under local government reform, the community safety partnerships would no longer exist by 2028 and stressed her commitment to engaging with community safety partnerships on funding during a time of economic difficulty for Sussex Police where savings are expected while maintaining frontline services.

74.8 Members stated their disappointment that the Commissioner couldn't give more reassurances about the funding of CSPs as

they would be integral to continuing work to tackle crime in Sussex communities while local government reform was ongoing.

74.9 The Commissioner stated that she was uncomfortable discussing this further while many of the members were, or represented, the chairs of various CSPs as it was a conflict of interest. She reiterated that she was not cutting CSP funding at this time and she was in consultation with them to support the partnerships through the local government reform period.

74.10 The Chair asked the Panel members to propose a motion to either support, oppose, or veto the proposed precept, and to second the motion.

74.11 The Panel proposed a motion to support the proposed precept and the motion was seconded.

74.12 The motion to support the proposed precept increase was passed by a majority vote.

75. The role of the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner in holding Sussex Police to account for the effectiveness of the response provided to county lines and cuckooing

75.1 The Panel considered a report by the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, presented by Mr Mark Streater, Chief Executive Officer, Office of the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner.

75.2 A summary of the Panel's questions and answers is as follows:

1. Question: Could you more clearly define what would amount to "a disruption" with regards to performance information related to county lines?

Answer: Mr Streater explained that the way the force is classified is quite detailed and technical, and they would be happy to provide that detail, and further, that was how the business model of county lines was taken down to disrupt further criminal activity, such as through disrupting the quantity of drugs being sold, arrests made, etc.

2. Question: In 5.4, subsection 4, of the report on the figures presented, since 2023 there has been a decrease in the arrests made and the disruption of county lines. What is the reason for this?

Answer: Mr Streater explained that the impact of an arrest or a seizure can vary across areas according to the threat and harm impact level of the groups involved and cautioned that the figures presented were headlines in comparison with the

more detailed figures presented at the regional meetings attended by the Commissioner.

3. Question: Why have the number of custodial sentences decreased? Clarification was also requested over the issue of children's safeguarding figures and how these may have affected the nature of county lines over time.

Answer: Mr Streater assured members that Sussex Police, with Crown Prosecution Service support, were doing everything they could to achieve custodial sentences for those criminal elements at the top of the food chain, while those involved at a lower level, such as possession or running the county lines, were more likely to be vulnerable and as such, this was taken into account by authorities when determining sentencing.

4. Question: Where incidences of grooming are detected early, how are young people going to be supported moving forward to ensure they are not potentially lured back into involvement with gang violence and county lines?

Answer: Mr Streater acknowledged that, while there was a resourcing issue with pressures on local authority budgets, there are good, strong safeguarding networks in place between partners to highlight those children most at risk and intervene early, with the exchange of good information and intelligence between partners alongside the wider resourcing to support those affected.

5. Question: In reference to the large amounts of money spent by this country on policing and fighting the drugs trade, how does the Commissioner feel about the prospect of legalisation as a means to further combat the drugs trade?

Answer: The Commissioner affirmed that she was comfortable with the law as it currently sits on drugs and their legality and she would argue that the legalisation of drugs elsewhere had not proven particularly effective.

76. Feedback on Panel Visit to Kingstanding

76.1 The Panel received feedback from members who attended a visit to the Sussex Police Training Centre at Kingstanding in October 2025.

76.2 A summary of members' feedback follows:

76.3 Members reported that they were very impressed with their visit and the professionalism of the staff trainers in Sussex Police, both at home and abroad.

76.4 Members found the visit to be very informative and welcomed the chance to engage with individual trainers to talk about the infrastructure and the experience of police

training. Members also expressed their wish that the standards they saw at Kingstanding be visible for the general public to see and engage with, in order to restore public trust in policing.

76.5 The Commissioner expressed her delight that the visit had been so successful. She also cited her pride in the 80th anniversary of the Aspidistra transmitter and its use during World War Two at Kingstanding, where the building was still standing.

77. Feedback on Panel Visit to Victim Services Team, OSPCC, November 2025

77.1 The Panel received feedback from members who attended a presentation by Victim Services, OSPCC at Sackville House in November 2025.

77.2 A summary of members' feedback follows:

77.3 Members said that the visit was really interesting, with welcoming staff, and cited it as a good opportunity to learn more about the various areas covered by the OSPCC and to discuss the various issues encountered by Victim Services in their work.

77.4 Members expressed some concern over the future of victim support under local government reform.

77.5 The Commissioner confirmed that she didn't have any detail on that at the moment and reassured members that she would keep them abreast of developments.

77.6 The Commissioner further expressed her pleasure that the visit had gone so well.

78. Quarterly Report of Complaints

78.1 The Panel reviewed a report by the Clerk to the Panel on complaints against the Commissioner received since the last report to the Panel and considered any action that it might take in respect of these.

78.2 Complaints had been received regarding the PCC's actions in relation to the Home Office decision to house asylum seekers at a former military barracks in Crowborough, East Sussex. These were deemed non-serious and were furthermore not upheld by the Clerk to the Panel.

78.3 Concerns were raised by Panel members regarding this matter. It was suggested that the actions of the

Commissioner in attending a demonstration in Crowborough and her comments on the media had demonstrated a lack of impartiality and objectivity that was inappropriate for the role of a PCC. Some Panel members disagreed and felt that the Commissioner had not acted inappropriately in taking an interest in matters relating to Crowborough.

78.4 Cllr Keene notified the Panel that he wished to bring forward a notice of motion censuring the Commissioner with regard to her actions.

78.5 Mark Streater raised a point of order in his capacity as Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer for the PCC that the Panel does not have the powers to formally discipline in this manner. Under Section 28(6) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act (PRSA), the primary duty of the Panel is to scrutinise, support and make recommendations with respect to the discharge of the PCC's functions,. Any concerns about the PCC's conduct should be raised through the established disciplinary and complaints process, instead of being discussed at the meeting.

78.6 Advice from the Officer of the Clerk to the Panel confirmed that it was within the remit of the Panel to vote on any motions which had been proposed and seconded, although any recommendation made by the Panel would not be binding and that the PCC would have a right to respond.

78.7 The Commissioner was given the opportunity to respond to members' comments. She expressed concern that there was no advance notice of the motion and felt that the Panel was not behaving as a critical friend. She suggested that her interactions with social media on this matter had been in a personal capacity and that some of her comments had been misrepresented; that her motivations had purely been to engage with local residents and hear their concerns, that she had only attended one march, and that it was her role to be the voice of the public in policing and to understand their views. She stated that she herself felt harassed for simply doing her job.

78.8 The Chair called for the motion to be proposed.

78.9 At approximately 13.10pm, the Commissioner and Cllr Hollidge left the meeting.

78.10 The motion was formally proposed by Cllr Keene, and seconded by Cllr Bangert, with the wording as follows:
'This Panel has lost confidence in the Commissioner and in the Commissioner's conduct after her actions in attending a protest march on 8 November 2025 in Crowborough and

her comments on Radio Sussex 30 December calling for asylum seekers to be fitted with electronic tags, and other actions on social media. Her lack of impartiality has brought the office of commissioner and policing into disrepute. We therefore censure her for her actions.'

78.11 A recorded vote was held in accordance with the Panel's constitution and with numbers as follows: Cllrs Ballard, Bangert, Bayliss, Baynham, Cooke, Czolak, Jones, Keene, Warne, Williams (Yes). Cllrs Ali, Mitchell, Standley and Mrs Scholefield (No). Cllr Birch (Abstain). As Cllr Hollidge left before the vote, his vote was not counted. The motion was passed with a majority vote in favour.

78.12 Mr Streater asked for it to be put on record that he did not recognise this motion as a formal duty or response of the Panel and stated that he believed it was contrary to the Act, the duties of the Panel and was ultra vires. Mr Streater stated that he would await a report from the Monitoring Officer and/or Clerk of the Panel to justify the decision to bring about the motion of censure and how this correlated to the provisions in the Act, alongside the proposed actions the Panel plans to take. Mr Streater concluded by asking for the reasons why the Panel did not either pursue the processes in place to deal with formal complaints against the PCC or notify and inform him of this planned approach prior to the meeting.

79. Date of Next Meeting and Future Meeting Dates

79.1 The Chair noted the next meeting of the Panel will take place on Friday 30 January 2026, at 10:30am at County Hall, Lewes.

Future meeting dates have been proposed as:

- 13 March 2026
- 2 July 2026
- 9 October 2026

The meeting ended at 1.30 pm

Chairman