

Katy Bourne OBE
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**Sussex
Police & Crime
Commissioner**

Councillor Andrei Czolak
Chair of the Sussex Police & Crime Panel
County Hall, West Street
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15 July 2024

Annual Report 2023/24

Thank you for your letter dated 3 July 2024.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Panel for their positive and constructive feedback about my Annual Report 2023/24 and the progress that has been demonstrated against the three Public Priorities set out in my Sussex Police & Crime Plan 2021/24.

Recommendations

Thank you for your helpful recommendations to include hyperlinks throughout the report to allow readers to access further information about different subject areas and for more quantitative data to be included within several of the sections of the report to provide greater evidence of the achievements demonstrated across the performance plan year. Where possible and appropriate, I will ensure that both recommendations are addressed ahead of finalising my Annual Report.

Project Fides

I welcome the positive feedback that was provided by the Panel around Project Fides [named after the Roman goddess of trust] and the ground-breaking unit I have worked with the Chief Constable to form comprising eight dedicated Victim Co-ordinator posts to support victims of rape and sexual assault [in a public place] during police investigations and prosecutions.

As highlighted within the report, the Victim Co-ordinators seek to build rapport with victims of these crimes and to gain a better understanding of the barriers that may have stopped them from supporting a prosecution through the criminal justice system previously. These individuals also aim to ensure that the right support services have been offered to meet the needs of the victims, alongside the provision of regular updates as the investigations progress.

I am pleased to confirm that Sussex Police has already started to make improvements to its solved rates for these types of offences and I look forward to bringing a report back to a future Panel meeting to highlight some of the work and tangible successes delivered through this innovative project.

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Disclosure and Barring Service Checks

As highlighted at the meeting, I have continued to challenge the Chief Constable regarding the performance of Sussex Police in response to progressing the applications received for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. I raised this area most recently at my monthly Performance & Accountability Meeting on 17 May 2024 where I sought assurances from the Chief Constable that the Force has sufficient resources and capacity to meet the continued and sustained increases in demand across this area.

This formal challenge included scrutiny around the plans in place to try and work towards improving the times for processing these applications and the ongoing work to try and reduce the backlog of applications that has accumulated in recent years. If they have not already done so, I would encourage all Panel members to watch this webcast through the following link: <https://www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/about/how-we-work/watch-live/>

I look forward to building on our collective achievements during 2024/25 and beyond to keep us all Safer in Sussex.

With all good wishes,
Katy

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