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Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner

Councillor Andrei Czolak
Chair of the Sussex Police & Crime Panel
County Hall
West Street
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 1RQ

27 March 2025

Dear Cllr Czolak

Draft Sussex Police & Crime Plan 2024/28

Thank you for your letter dated 17 March 2025.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Sussex Police & Crime Panel for their positive feedback about my draft Sussex Police & Crime Plan 2024/28 at its meeting earlier this month.

Further to the discussions at the meeting, I can confirm the following in respect of the four areas you have highlighted:

- I am satisfied that the text included within the 'Monitoring and Measuring Progress Against the Priorities' section of the plan sets out how the performance of the Chief Constable, Sussex Police and policing and crime stakeholders will be measured.

  As discussed at the meeting, the performance measures contained within the plan comprise a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures as listed in the individual bullet points contained within the series of supporting police and crime objectives provided under each of the three overarching public priorities.

  I have a weekly meeting with the Chief Constable [or Deputy Chief Constable in her absence] and continue to use publicly webcast monthly Performance & Accountability Meetings (PAMs) to hold the senior leaders within the Force to account for the performance of Sussex Police. My office is also represented on the strategic oversight boards held by Sussex Police at which performance against all crime types is presented and discussed on a monthly and/or quarterly basis.

  The Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Office for National Statistics and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) provide regular assessments and comparative evaluations of police force performance in England and Wales, with the figures and relative position of Sussex Police to other police forces providing me with an additional source of independent data to check and challenge how the Force is delivering on the priorities contained within my Sussex Police & Crime Plan.

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In addition to these assessments, quarterly Community Safety Partnership meetings are held locally across Sussex which further scrutinise crime and policing data across local geographical areas, including the consideration of regional and/or national Neighbourhood Watch reports.

The support services provided to victims and witnesses in Sussex is also rated by users and quality-assured by the Ministry of Justice and Home Office, alongside the unannounced visits made by Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) to independently monitor and observe the care and dignity of people detained in each of the five police custody centres in Sussex.

Lastly, we use public satisfaction surveys – conducted by the Force and my office – which allows us to cross-reference individual experiences of interactions with the police service by location and demographic features.

I will formally report on the progress made and achievements demonstrated against the plan to the Panel through my annual report.

- I am reassured that the wording used within section '1b. Tackle violence against women and girls to make them feel safer in public spaces' of the plan remains appropriate. As highlighted at the meeting, my plan has been developed in consultation with members of the public, victims and partners to ensure that it accurately reflects the policing, crime and community safety issues most important to everyone.

  My fundamental aim is to make Sussex safer for everyone through effective and visible deterrence and prevention activity, alongside the provision of a swift and appropriate police response, investigation and prosecution of offenders, with parallel support provided for all victims and witnesses.

  We know that if individuals ***feel*** safe because of these measures they are more likely to have the trust and confidence to report incidents to the police which, in turn, enables the Force to solve more crimes and, consequently, make people and places ***safer***.

  The terminology used in the plan is also reflective of the discussions I have had with victims, survivors and support service providers in Sussex to better understand their feelings around safety and ensure that this wording remains appropriate. As such, I can confirm that the ***feel safer*** wording used in the draft plan will continue to remain in the final version published on my website and I thank Panel members for their useful discussion around this.

- As highlighted at the meeting, Sussex Police remain dedicated to improving road safety but both the Chief Constable and I recognise that there are better ways of working with local partners in this area to improve the effectiveness of the response provided, outside of the current Sussex Safer Roads Partnership structure.

  I will continue to support the Chief Constable in the creation of more effective partnership working to reduce the number of road traffic collisions and individuals killed or seriously injured on the roads in Sussex. This will include supporting Sussex Police to establish a dedicated and intelligence-led Fatal Five Roads Unit to tackle anti-social driving behaviour and address the 'fatal five' factors behind collisions to save lives – speeding; drink and drug driving; not wearing a seatbelt; driver distractions, and careless driving.

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- I am grateful that the Panel members recognised the exponential increase in digital evidence and the importance of Sussex Police improving their response to this. The heightened volume and demand for the examination of an array of digital devices and the scale of the information and data that now needs to be extracted from these has created additional challenges for the Force to gather this digital evidence in an efficient and effective manner.

  Police officers and staff must continue to have the capacity, capability, systems and equipment required to respond to the volume and complexities of interrogating these devices to extract the digital forensics necessary to investigate these offences effectively.

  The precept uplift in 2025/26 [which was supported by the majority of Panel members in January 2025] will build on the investment made in this area in recent years by preserving the improvements made to the digital support provisions available to support police investigations and the innovative analytical tools required to deliver smarter evidence-based policing in Sussex.

I look forward to sharing a copy of my finalised Sussex Police & Crime Plan 2024/28 with you and the Panel members before the end of the month.

Yours sincerely

Katy Bourne OBE
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner