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Sussex Police and Crime Panel

31 January 2025 – 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 Sluman	Adur District Council	Cllr Birch	Arun District Council
Cllr Hogan	Brighton & Hove City Council	Cllr Bangert	Chichester District Council
Cllr Khan	Crawley 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 Ali	West Sussex County Council
Cllr Mitchell	West Sussex County Council	Cllr Whorlow	Worthing Borough Council
Mr Napthine	Independent Coopted Member	Mrs Scholefield	Independent Coopted Member
Cllr Warne	Hastings Borough Council		

Substitutes:

Cllr Warne, Hastings Borough Council, for Cllr Haffenden, Hastings Borough Council.

Apologies were received from Cllr Ballard (Eastbourne Borough Council), Cllr Williams (Wealden District Council) and Cllr Cooke (Mid-Sussex District Council).

Also in attendance: Mrs Sarah Peacock (Independent Co-opted Member), Mrs Katy Bourne (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 Insight Officer).

Part I

23. Declarations of Interest

23.1 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.
Cllr Gauge	A serving magistrate.
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 Safety 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.

24. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

24.1 The Panel was asked to approve the draft minutes of the previous meeting on 27 September as an accurate record (cream paper).

24.2 Cllr Bayliss requested it be noted that her name was missing from the list of attendees and that she had been present for that meeting.

24.3 Resolved – that the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 27 September 2024 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

25. Public and Panel Questions to the Commissioner

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

25.2 The Chairman invited questions from the Panel to the Commissioner. A summary of the main questions and responses were as follows:

1. Question: Have the accusations of rape involving two East Sussex Police officers impacted the Force's reputation and what more can be done to prevent such patterns of behaviour?

Answer: The Commissioner stated she felt any accusation of misconduct was bound to have an effect on public confidence in Sussex Police and she assured the Panel that the Chief Constable was very robust in her response to any such accusations, such misconduct was not tolerated, and any officers behaving as such were found and rooted out. The Commissioner further stressed that this attitude was echoed by Sussex police officers.

2. A supplementary question was posed around the value of DBS checks and vetting, as the officers in question had been vetted and were employed by Sussex Police. The Commissioner stressed that there was a difference between the DBS checks that a member of the public would undergo and the vetting process for police officers and staff, and further affirmed that this process was extremely thorough and that she had full confidence in the vetting process.

3. Question: The backlog in DBS checks for staff in schools is causing budgetary issues due to the delay, and further, that the long vetting process for police officers is even longer when recruitment is so crucial. Does the Commissioner have any confidence that this is improving?

Answer: The Commissioner reminded the Panel that the Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) is a national organisation that pays police forces to undertake such checks on their behalf, that this was an ongoing issue for a long time, and she regularly revisits the topic with the Chief Constable at their weekly meetings. The Commissioner said that the trajectory of the backlog was improving but she would keep this issue in focus to ensure improvement continues. The Commissioner also reminded the panel, and any members of the public viewing the meeting, that there was a hardship case route for anyone whose application had been delayed more than 60 days and was facing hardship as a result of waiting to start their

employment, which can be done through an online application directly to DBS.

4. Question: Can the Commissioner assure the Panel that work on the risk around the closure of police stations, particularly in Bexhill, be expedited to prevent locals having to travel further afield to access a police station?

Answer: The Commissioner assured the Panel that they had been made aware of the building's issues through the building maintenance team and the issue has been mitigated for the time being.

5. Question: Does the Commissioner have confidence in how speeding is now being monitored on Sussex roads, considering residents' concerns about socially irresponsible driving and attitudes, particularly in potentially dangerous spots such as the A27 junction at Slindon?

Answer: The Commissioner acknowledged the importance of deterrence in combating dangerous driving and the need to get the message out that the police were actively working on this issue. The Commissioner reminded the Panel that the Chief Constable leads on road policing nationally and they regularly conduct speed checks in conjunction with Community Speedwatch, as well as targeting other dangerous driving behaviours such as driving without seatbelts.

6. A supplementary question was posed about the use of satellite navigation devices (Sat Navs) and their ability to identify upcoming so-called 'speed traps' and the effect this has on drivers. The Commissioner stated that she felt that while the fixed site speed cameras were useful, the mobile vans conducting speed checks were more effective, both in catching speeding, and in the deterrence of such due to drivers being aware they could meet one but not knowing for sure where they are on any given day.
7. Question: With regard to the Fatal Five Road Unit, what does this new system offer that the previous system didn't and how can this be monitored in order to provide safer streets for our residents under this new scheme?

Answer: The Commissioner said that the Fatal Five Road Unit was a key manifesto pledge and an ongoing piece of work that she intended to deliver. She added that, after meeting with the families of victims of car-related crimes, she had realised there was no specific service commissioned to support them and has moved to do so, with the charity Brake, commissioning individual caseworkers to work with the families of victims lost to car-related crime, which is done in conjunction with the police. The Commissioner added that she felt the Safer Sussex Roads Partnership had grown stale and that the number of people killed or seriously injured in vehicle-related incidents on the roads had not improved between the years 2021-2024, which has shown that a new approach is needed. The Commissioner stressed that while Sussex Police has withdrawn from the Partnership, they have not withdrawn from their responsibilities to keep Sussex residents safe on the roads.

8. Question: Crawley has been having issues with shoplifters who are now so confident that they will not face any resistance from staff, that they simply walk into shops and take what they want. What is being done to tackle this issue?

Answer: The Commissioner acknowledged the scale of shop theft, both locally and as a national level, and stressed her commitment to tackling this issue. She reminded the Panel that they could pass on the names of any local shops in their areas that were having issues to her office, and she would ensure they would be invited to Sussex Safer Business Partnership meetings where they could represent their businesses alongside police and local authorities to work out solutions to help them. On a national level, the Commissioner stressed the success of Pegasus, the partnership with big retailers, and the recent seven-month review of encouraging results having led to the identification and arrests of criminals involved in organised crime across England and Wales. The Commissioner further shared that due to these results, the government has pledged funding to the partnership for the next three years. Further to this, the Commissioner explained that, locally, Sussex Police has a unit dedicated to triaging reports of shop theft, a real-time data sharing platform used by the police, farmers, local retailers, and the Chambers of Commerce; seven very good Business Crime Reduction Partnerships across Sussex, and the Business Improvement Districts where business can buy in to access data on shop theft, which has contributed to an increase in both reporting and in the solve rate for reported thefts.

9. A supplementary question was posed to the Commissioner around the difficulties of collecting evidence to prosecute shop theft offenders and whether artificial intelligence (AI) solutions, such as facial recognition, are currently being considered by Sussex Police. The Commissioner explained that the police and retailers currently use a form of facial recognition that is retrospective to identify offenders, with capability determined by how much the retailer can afford to invest in such technologies. The Commissioner acknowledged that the use of other AI technologies would be an important tool in the future for police forces. The Commissioner further said that there was an issue with legal backlogs and spaces in prisons for offenders and for that reason, she was calling on the government to invest more in electronic tagging to deter and rehabilitate offenders.

10. Question: With the withdrawal from the Safer Roads Partnership, what has happened to the assets such as the mobile vans and has this affected prosecutions for dangerous driving offences?

Answer: The Commissioner reminded the Panel that all the local authorities involved in the Partnership retain their responsibilities and that, while Sussex Police has withdrawn from the partnership, they haven't withdrawn from their responsibilities to police the roads and will continue to monitor people's use of the roads to ensure that dangerous driving and vehicle-related crime is appropriately prosecuted. The Commissioner added that there is an ongoing conversation about the partnership's assets with the other involved local authorities.

11.Question: How are you formulating policy,public relations, and youth and women’s programmes to address an ever-increasing epidemic of violence against women and girls?

Answer: The Commissioner stated that policy was for the legislators in government and would be done in conjunction with the National Police Chiefs’ Council, but at a local level, the Commissioner said they were working to tackle violence against women and girls, tailored to the area, and in partnership with the police. The Commissioner stated that violence against women and girls was a national priority as well as a local one.

12.Question: What is being done to tackle the hatred of police in children, as highlighted by the De Souza report?

Answer: The Commissioner said she had set up a youth commission several years ago which also looked at this, alongside other issues, and work was ongoing which would be fed back to Sussex Police.

26. Final Report of the Budget and Precept Working Group

26.1 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 26 November 2024, and then again on 10 January 2025.

26.2 Concerns were raised by members around the sustainability of the precept rising every year and how this has become the default for Sussex. Further concerns were raised that, despite the precept increases, police visibility in communities was not improving and that the planned level of transformational change was not sufficiently ambitious in the long-term and expensive to implement.

26.3 Concerns were raised by Group members that their contributions to the group may have been overlooked due to not being able to attend all meetings, however they wished it to be on the record that they did attend and did contribute to the work of the Group. The Chair agreed that the member’s concerns would be noted on the record.

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

27. Proposed Precept 2025/2026

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

28.1 The Panel noted the arrangements set out under Item 5a and agreed they were satisfied with the arrangements.

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

29. Report by the Police and Crime Commissioner

29.1 The Panel considered a report by the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner.

29.2 The Panel noted the supporting reports provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

29.3 Mrs Schofield outlined the Budget and Precept Working Group's recommendations. The primary recommendation was for the Panel to support the Proposed Precept for 2025/2026.

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

1. Question: Has any further work been done in understanding why 51% of respondents to the survey who agreed that they didn't feel safe, further disagreed with raising the precept?

Answer: The Commissioner was conducting further analysis in line with Sussex Police to better understand the survey results.

2. Question: What does the Commissioner believe to be the relationship between respondents' views on raising council tax and their geographical location?

Answer: The Commissioner said that survey results have shown that there is more work to be done and highlighted the areas where more work is needed.

3. What's the percentage of overall crime that is being solved?

Answer: The Commissioner clarified that there was an increase of 52% in the solve rate of reported crimes compared to last year.

4. Has the 10% increase in people who have been victims of crime but do not support any increase in the precept shown a decline in how Sussex Police is viewed by the public, considering that the police are doing the best they can with the resources they have? What learning can be taken from this and how can it be addressed?

Answer: The Commissioner stated that the survey also showed a 2% increase in satisfaction in respondents' interactions with Sussex Police and the survey highlighted the areas where more work was needed and was incredibly useful in doing so. The Commissioner stressed that work was ongoing to highlight and address any issues alongside Sussex Police to improve further.

5. It was highlighted that four areas in the survey showed up to 50% disapproval for any increase in the precept. Considering the

economic impacts of the cost-of-living crisis, what more could be done to bolster the Commissioner's arguments for an increase in the precept and persuade more residents in future?

Answer: The Commissioner reminded the Panel that the survey is not the only tool she used to make her proposal and that she wished to impress upon members that the Chief Constable had made it clear that she needs the resources outlined in the precept in order for Sussex Police to continue in its duties to the public and it would be the behind-the-scenes work, such as serious violence units, that would be most affected if the proposed precept was not set, and that she did not wish to see the work done by Sussex Police in the last year go backwards. The Commissioner concluded by saying that the Chief Constable and her team, and her own team at the OSPCC, had worked incredibly hard to create a balanced budget but they could only do so if the proposed precept was set.

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

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

29.7 Panel members proposed that a letter might be sent to the policing minister outlining the discussions held today and asking for reform of the police funding system.

29.8 The motion to support the proposed precept increase was passed with a majority vote.

29.9 The Panel noted that if the £14 increase to the police precept was not implemented, various police services would be adversely affected and also noted concerns that the allowable maximum increase in the precept appeared to have become the default proposal in Sussex.

30. Update on the Police and Crime Plan 2024/2028

30.1 The Panel considered an update from the Police and Crime Commissioner on the Draft Police and Crime Plan 2024/2028.

30.2 Mr Mark Streater, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, presented the update.

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

1. Question: In regards to the delay in bringing the full draft plan to the Panel, is the Police and Crime Commissioner confident that the upcoming white paper on the policing landscape will be published in time for any note to be taken?

Answer: The Panel were informed that they could not be confident that the white paper would be published in time, and

if so, revisions could be made to the Plan as needed and as has been done before.

2. Considering the previous emphasis on improving road safety in the September draft of the plan and the survey responses under Item 5 highlighting road safety and vehicle-related crime as a concern, why have the Commissioner's priorities changed to no longer include road safety as a key priority?

Answer: The Commissioner reassured the Panel that just because the priority was not listed in the draft, that she had not taken it out of the plan completely and there were still plans for a Fatal Five dedicated unit in place.

3. Question: On priority two of the draft plan outlined in the update, would the Commissioner commit to attending a meeting with small, local businesses in the Rother area to hear their experiences?

Answer: The Commissioner said she would be happy for her office to work with Rother District Council to help them wherever possible. The Commissioner added that she regularly extended an invitation to Safer Sussex Business Partnership meetings to a business owner in the area and was happy to extend that invitation to other business owners to build relationships with the police.

4. Question: In reference to priority three, what local policies are being developed as part of the upcoming plan for public campaigns around the Highway Code H2 rule to help ensure that pedestrian vehicle interactions are being enforced to improve pedestrian safety when crossing junctions? And would this possibly be an issue for a mayor or a deputy mayor to take on, in light of the recent proposals on devolution?

Answer: The Commissioner agreed that this would be a perfect issue for a mayor to tackle and they would have to wait and see on the devolution issue.

5. Can the Commissioner shed any light on any operational frameworks in place about the interaction between the police and private security companies, specifically when utilised to shore up police work in the various areas of concern discussed today?

Answer: The Commissioner explained that the private and public links between police and private security were something she was keen to explore and had leveraged in her work on Pegasus, through getting retailers to fund operational police units and data sharing with the police and each other. The Commissioner said that her office currently funds a night warden scheme, Op Marbled, to deal with the night-time economy, working with police and private organisations, and she was keen to explore further opportunities in future.

31. Informal Resolution Procedure

31.1 The Panel considered a proposal outlining an informal resolution procedure for complaints made against the Police and Crime Commissioner.

31.2 The Panel noted the previous lack of an informal complaints procedure when dealing with non-serious complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner in the past and highlighted the importance of having one agreed and established.

31.3 The Panel unanimously agreed to the adoption of the proposed informal resolution procedure for resolving non-serious complaints made against the Police and Crime Commissioner.

32. Proposed Amendments to the Constitution

32.1 The Panel considered a report on proposed amendments to the Constitution.

32.2 The Panel unanimously agreed to adopt the proposed amendments to the Constitution.

33. Feedback on Panel visit to the FCCCD October 2024

33.1 The Panel received feedback from members who attended a visit to the Force Contact, Command and Control Department (FCCCD) at Sussex Police HQ on 4 October 2024.

33.2 A summary of the feedback is as follows:

- Members stated it was a useful and eye-opening day to attend. Members said they listened in to incoming calls to the FCCCD and officers' responses.
- Members commented on the hard work and patience of the officers and staff dealing with the incoming calls from the public despite overwhelming demand for police services.
- Members commented on the professionalism and preparedness of staff dealing with incoming calls that could potentially escalate to serious incidents.
- In response to a question, it was confirmed to the Panel that Sussex Police participate in the 'Right Care, Right Person' initiative, collaborating with other agencies to ensure the most appropriate care is found for those in distress, however it still remained challenging to do so.
- Members expressed how useful it was to experience the work of the FCCCD firsthand, and this will help them in their duties as elected councillors.
- It was suggested that more visits to the FCCCD could be arranged for members who were unable to attend in October 2024.

- Members stated how staff had informed them that the changes in shift patterns and new equipment had improved their ability to handle calls at volume.
- Members said that staff had told them they were looked after and supported well when dealing with difficult, potentially distressing, calls.

33.3 The Chair requested that the Police and Crime Commissioner pass on the Panel's thanks to the officers and staff of Sussex Police for the visit.

34. Quarterly Reports of Complaints

34.1 The Panel noted that there have been no complaints received as of 17 January 2025.

35. Date of Next Meeting and Future Meeting Dates

35.1 The Chair noted the next meeting of the Panel will take place on Friday 14 March 2025, at 10:30am at County Hall, Lewes.

Future meeting dates have been proposed as:

3 July 2025

3 October 2025

The meeting ended at 12.45 pm

Chairman

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