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04 Jul 2025

[Police performance and vetting of officers and staff top of Panel's agenda](#)

THE performance of Sussex Police in priority areas, the vetting of officers and staff, and concerns over road safety were the focus of the latest Sussex Police and Crime Panel meeting.

Panel members were asked to scrutinize the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner's annual report for 2024/25 which looks at the performance of the force against her public priorities.

At the meeting on Thursday, July 3, Katy Bourne highlighted some of the success over the past year including the recruitment of new officers taking the head count at Sussex Police up to 3,297 and the introduction of a new telephone platform which has greatly improved call handling times.

She said that investment in priority areas has resulted in the continuation of the rural crime team giving confidence to rural communities, a reduction in crime and antisocial behaviour in hotspot areas, the disruption of 12 county drug lines with nearly 1,000 arrests in just one year, and 30,000 motorists in Sussex being offered driver training courses due to excessive speed.

Whilst Panel members were pleased to see the successes laid out in the report, there was concern about the number of arrests and convictions particularly around shoplifting and members urged the Commissioner to ensure that the initiatives in place were resulting in a reduction in offences and the arrest of those responsible.

Concerns around road safety was raised by Panel members, with calls for action across the county.

Acknowledging that roads are only as dangerous as the motorists using them, the Commissioner said Sussex Police were stepping up their use of speed cameras to make sure drivers are travelling within the speed limit.

Mrs Bourne said a 'Fatal Five Unit' focussing on road safety was in the scoping phase, but Panel members questioned how much longer it would be before the unit was up and running.

Confirming that she had identified money in the police budget to fund the unit, Mrs Bourne added: "These things take time to pull together. It is an operational policing unit."

A report on how the Commissioner holds the force to account when it comes to vetting officers and staff was also presented to the Panel.

Panel members challenged the Commissioner over the HMICFRS's recently published inspection report on the effectiveness of integrity arrangements in Sussex Police.

Asked what the force was getting wrong, the Commissioner said the "requires improvement" rating given to Sussex Police did not mean there had been failures but that there were lessons to be learned and improvements to be made.

The Panel challenged the Commissioner's view, pointing out that "room for improvement" and "requires improvement" were not the same thing.

The Commissioner was also reminded that she had expressed confidence in Sussex Police's vetting arrangements as recently as the January and March meetings; when quizzed on this issue Mrs Bourne said she would be discussing the content of the inspection report at her next accountability meeting with the Chief Constable.

Speaking after the Panel meeting, Cllr Andrei Czolak, who was re-elected chair, said: "There were some significant issues discussed at today's meeting which we know are very important to the residents we represent.

"While celebrating Sussex Police's achievement against the Police and Crime Plan, it is appropriate that the Panel raises concerns about the Commissioner's oversight role when problems are flagged by the Inspectorate.

"I'd like to thank the Commissioner for her detailed reports and for answering the many questions posed."

Cllr Mark Baynham was re-elected vice chair for a one-year term at Friday's meeting, and the appointments of independent co-opted members Susan Scholefield and Keith Naphthine were renewed for a further year.

The next meeting of the Sussex Police and Crime Panel will take place on Friday, October 3 at 10.30am.