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Sussex Police and Crime Panel

14 March 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 Bangert	Chichester District Council	Cllr Khan	Crawley Borough Council
Cllr Ballard	Eastbourne Borough Council	Cllr Ian Hollidge	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Bob Standley	East Sussex County Council	Cllr Williams	Wealden District Council
Cllr Mitchell	West Sussex County Council	Mrs Scholefield	Independent Co-opted Member
Cllr Warne	Hastings Borough Council	Cllr Byrne	Rother District Council
Cllr Clews	Lewes District Council	Mrs Sarah Peacock	Independent Co-opted Member
Cllr Crow	West Sussex County Council		

Substitutes:

Cllr Warne, Hastings Borough Council
Cllr Byrne, Rother District Council
Cllr Clews, Lewes District Council
Mrs Sarah Peacock, Independent Co-opted Member
Cllr Crow, West Sussex County Council

Apologies were received from Cllr Hogan (Brighton & Hove City Council), Cllr Haffenden (Hastings Borough Council), Cllr Keene (Lewes District Council), Cllr Bayliss (Rother District Council), Cllr Ali (West Sussex County Council), Cllr Whorlow (Worthing Borough Council) and Mr Naphine (Independent Co-opted Member)

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

Part I

36. Declarations of Interest

36.1 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.

37. Urgent Matters

37.1 No urgent matters were raised by the Panel.

38. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

38.1 The Panel was asked to approve the draft minutes of the previous meeting on 31 January 2025 as an accurate record (cream paper).

38.2 Resolved – that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 31 January 2025 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the chair.

39. Panel Correspondence since the last Meeting

39.1 The Chair asked the Panel to note the correspondence sent and received since matters raised at the meeting on 31 January.

39.2 Resolved – that the Panel noted the correspondence received since 31 January 2025.

40. Public and Panel Questions to the Commissioner

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

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

1. Question: With some 999 calls in rural areas of Sussex being redirected to Kent or adjoining authorities for action, what improvements might be considered by Sussex Police in order to improve communication between the police and rural residents when reporting crime.

Answer: The Commissioner affirmed that Sussex Police have consistently been placed first nationally for answering 999 calls within the allotted time limit, and that cross-border work only resulted when a Sussex patrol vehicle wasn't available to take the job. The Commissioner added that new technology had just been launched that would improve feedback to members of the public who report to the police and they would look to see how that progressed over the coming weeks.

2. Question: Where residents live close to the Kent border in the north of Sussex, can clarification be offered that information reported to Kent Police due to being redirected to Kent, is then sent on to Sussex Police?

Answer: The Commissioner confirmed that there was a protocol for information reported to another police force being sent on to the appropriate force, and that she would seek clarification from Sussex Police around 999 calls from certain area trunk codes being automatically directed to Kent instead of Sussex Police.

3. Question: If ANPR cameras were placed on private land in order to combat rural crime, could the evidence be used by the police due to the location of the cameras?

Answer: The Commissioner said that the question was operational in nature and out of her remit. It was confirmed that the police could consider any evidence when investigating a crime, regardless of the

location it was taken from, however whether it would be permissible for use in prosecution, would be another matter.

4. Question: On the issue of County Lines and cuckooing, what is planned strategically across Sussex, currently and over the next four years, to address these issues?

Answer: The Commissioner stated that police work to address County Lines and its associated crimes was ongoing and operationally sensitive. In reference to cuckooing, the Commissioner said that the new Policing and Crime Bill was explicitly focused on combating cuckooing, with the aim to make it a specific offence to protect the public as it is not currently an offence and requires the use of other laws in order to convict criminals who have engaged in cuckooing.

5. Question: It was requested that a future report spotlight County Lines and cuckooing, with focus on the police response and future plans to continue addressing these issues.

Answer: The Commissioner explained that county lines was largely handled by the National Crime Agency and the regional crime units, with intelligence being dispersed to individual forces as appropriate, and that this was a national, ongoing priority for all forces. She confirmed she would be happy to provide a report with relevant statistics for the Panel to consider.

6. Question: In reference to the measures in the Police and Crime Bill to combat violence against women and girls, does the Commissioner welcome these and are there adequate resources to implement them in Sussex?

Answer: The Commissioner stated that she welcomed the Bill and that it had not been lost as a priority due to the changes in central government. She further added that she particularly welcomed the measures tackling stalking, child criminal exploitation, and child sexual abuse.

7. Question: Were there any additional areas not covered by the Bill that the Commissioner would have liked to have seen addressed? And how much input did the Commissioner have into the contents of the Bill?

Answer: The Commissioner said that she had been given a lot of input under the previous government and this input was carried over by the current government and is reflected in several areas of the Bill. The Commissioner confirmed that the opposition were consulting on the contents of the Bill with the Conservative PCC group and would present their response in due course.

8. Question: Does the Commissioner consider that the local resilience forum would gain more autonomy and resources from LGR and is it expected that the PCC will be delegated authority from the government?

Answer: The Commissioner said that, while considering the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the government's announced increase in defence spending, there may be opportunities for the local resilience forums as well as with the implementation of mayors under the devolution proposals.

9. Question: The Commissioner was asked her thoughts on why Sussex Police had withdrawn from various working partnerships, such as the abandoned vehicles partnership with Wealden Council, with local authorities without prior consultation?

Answer: The Commissioner confirmed that this was all part of the Sussex Police Notice of Withdrawal from the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership, the notice of which was given in September 2024. The Commissioner stressed that this did not mean that Sussex Police would no longer be working on the roads or with local partners. The Commissioner also stated that the abandoned vehicles partnership was a national outlier and went against national police policy, and that this was a statutory duty for the local authority to administer.

10. Question: as a supplemental question to the above, would Sussex Police's withdrawal from the partnership cause long-term delays and a reduction in the level of service for removing abandoned vehicles?

Answer: The Commissioner advised that where representations about Sussex Police's withdrawal needed to be made, these should be made to the ABP working group and through senior operational managers.

11. Question: With reference to the recent cases in the London Metropolitan Police service around police vetting, could the Commissioner supply equivalent statistics for Sussex Police, for officers on vetting leave and for officers whose vetting status was being reviewed, for a future meeting?

Answer: The Commissioner reassured the Panel that the issue of vetting police officers had been reviewed by Sussex Police and remained on their radar. It was confirmed to the Panel that in light of the High Court ruling, all forces were reviewing their vetting processes and outstanding cases, with the impact on Sussex being risk assessed as extremely low. The Commissioner confirmed she would be happy to provide those statistics if possible.

12. Question: In light of the precept increase approved at the last meeting of the Panel, how much of the precept is funded by Brighton and Hove residents, as there was a perception by residents in these areas that they paid more than they received in return?

Answer: The Commissioner stressed that Sussex Police is a force that covers two geographical counties and is pro-rata-ed against that. The Commissioner further stressed that the residents of Brighton and Hove receive a large portion of those resources due to its size, population, and their high crime rate.

41. Sussex Police and Crime Plan 2024/2028 - Report from the OSPCC

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

41.2 The Commissioner introduced the report and apologised for the delay in publishing the report due to waiting for the government's policing and crime reforms to be announced. The Commissioner further advised that the report would be updated in due course as more announcements on reform were made.

41.3 A summary of questions from the Panel and answers is as follows:

1. Question: How will the intelligence-led Fatal Five Roads Unit make a difference to residents, and how this will differ from previous approaches?

Answer: The Commissioner explained that they were currently in discussions with Sussex Police around a business plan for the unit, but that proposals for how the unit would operate would be for it to comprise of mobile officers who could move according to local need to carry out enforcement work, in order to tackle the Fatal Five, namely speeding, driving while under the influence of drugs or alcohol, driving while using a mobile phone, and not wearing a seatbelt.

2. Question: How will the Commissioner measure the success of this unit once it is operational?

Answer: The Commissioner said that the ultimate measure of success will lie in the reduction of incidents resulting in people 'killed or seriously injured' (KSIs), and stressed that in 12 years of the Safer Roads Partnership, this has not reduced so it was time to change strategy and this new unit proposal would work to achieve that.

3. Question: Page 39 of the report references performance measures for each of the priorities and policing objectives listed in the plan but there were not included in the plan. How does the Commissioner plan to make these publicly available, and to the Panel?

Answer: The Commissioner explained that she had access to a wide range of tools to hold the Chief Constable to account, all of which provided robust, detailed information with which to measure success or failure of objectives, which were publicly available via the monthly performance meetings held with the Chief Constable which were also webcast and archived to encourage scrutiny and accountability. The Commissioner concluded by stressing that this document was a strategic document, not an operational one.

4. Question: as a supplementary question to the above, for the benefit of scrutiny, might it not be useful to have a summary of measures with performance to measure against?

Answer: The Commissioner reminded the Panel that she published an annual report which would highlight these measurements and how these are achieved.

5. Question: In light of the local government reforms announced by the government, what is the legal status of the plan going forward?

Answer: The Commissioner explained that the document was a live document and was a statutory requirement for a police and crime commissioner to produce such plans for their four-year term. The Commissioner further added that it was her understanding that the powers and responsibilities of the PCC would be assumed by the mayor once elected.

6. Question: In reference to the violence against women and girls (VAWG) agenda, would the Commissioner be working alongside partners to introduce initiatives such as SPOs and the Richmond open spaces protocol?

Answer: The Commissioner confirmed there were several public space protection orders in force across Sussex, implemented by Sussex Police in partnership with local authorities. She added that she would continue to work with local authorities to keep all members of the public safe in public spaces, as set out in the plan.

7. Question: Has the Commissioner seen that increased visibility of police has improved public confidence in the police, leading to reductions in crime rates, as referenced in the plan?

Answer: The Commissioner stressed that feelings of safety are subjective and can differ from person to person, which is why general language was used, and added that they had seen tangible improvements in public confidence as a result of increased police visibility, measured by the reductions of crimes seen in areas where hotspot policing has been implemented.

8. Question: as a supplementary question to the above, on pages 38 and 40 of the plan, where the term 'to make women and girls feel safer' is used, what more could be done to monitor and calculate success on this measure? And what could be done to make women and girls 'be' safer as opposed to merely feeling safer?

Answer: The Commissioner said that safety for individual people was largely subjective and varied from person to person and so they used a general wording to reflect this. The Commissioner explained that she used that wording, after consulting with voluntary partners in the VAWG sphere, because she wanted women and girls to not just be safe as an objective measurement of reduced crime but also to feel safe so they would be able to report a crime if and when it happens to them, which is why that wording was used.

9. Question: To encourage residents to feel safe, not just when walking in their local areas, but also when cycling, could police officers on bicycles be made more visible and available to residents?

Answer: The Commissioner said that there are police bicycles in some of the cities and added that the Chief Constable had recently changed the

training methods for probationary police officers to ensure they spend more time 'on the beat' and in their local communities to encourage public confidence and to learn beat craft rather than spending all their time in response vehicles.

10. Question: What assurances can the Commissioner give to the Panel that she and the police will work constructively as equal partners to make Sussex's roads safer?

Answer: The Commissioner said that improving road safety is a key priority in the plan and that the Chief Constable would be required to give due regard to that priority in her operational planning. She further reiterated her commitment to working together with the police and local authorities to reduce the mortality rates on Sussex roads.

11. Question: With reference to the Commissioner's words on ensuring police capacity to tackle the volume and complexity of fraud and cybercrime, is it a true assessment that they currently do not have that capacity? And if so, how could that change?

Answer: The Commissioner expressed her view that expecting police forces to tackle fraud and cybercrime alone would be a bad idea, which was why the previous government set up the National Cybercrime Centre, with work being led by the National Crime Agency, the Cybercrime Intelligence Centre, and the City of London Police to support police forces, and that the wording in the plan was to assess how Sussex Police contributes to that while acknowledging that they cannot tackle this issue alone.

12. Question: Is the Commissioner confident in the current partnership approach to tackling fraud and cybercrime?

Answer: While stressing that she did not have the level of oversight that central government ministers do, the Commissioner stated that Sussex Police was functioning well at the local level in working with partners and looking for ways to improve their approaches and capacity to tackle fraud and cybercrime.

13. Question: Would someone who caused a KSI due to drug driving be stripped of their licence, especially if the incident resulted in a fatality and the driver had been previously found to be under the influence of drugs?

Answer: The Commissioner acknowledged there was a loophole in regards to drug driving prior to being charged in court, which she had raised with the Chief Constable, and iterated that the Chief Constable was keen to see that loophole closed.

14. Question: Considering the growing prevalence of digital forensics in the investigation of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) cases, is Sussex Police currently utilising digital forensics or intending to do so? And what future does the Commissioner see Sussex Police pursuing if they do not currently use or intend to use digital forensics in investigating RASSO cases?

Answer: The Commissioner acknowledged the increasing prevalence of digital forensics in RASSO cases and assured the Panel that Sussex Police pursues all avenues of investigation, including all methods and technologies in digital forensics to investigate RASSO cases. Further, she affirmed that Sussex Police remains linked in with Op Soteria and the national ongoing work in this area, with an ongoing commitment to invest in new technologies to improve capacity in this area.

41.4 Members observed that the plan acknowledged the work of the voluntary sector in supporting the police, both behind the scenes and on frontline duties, and how invaluable this support has been for Sussex Police in improving their approach to tackling various crimes.

42. The role of the Sussex PCC in holding Sussex Police to account for improving the response provided to business crime

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

42.2 The Commissioner introduced the report.

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

1. Question: What learning has been sought from Crawley and how can they be replicated to improve in other areas of Sussex?

Answer: The Commissioner assured the Panel that the improvement was also being replicated across Sussex, citing the fact that of all South East police forces, Sussex had the highest reporting rate for business crime, which indicated that the ongoing work was going well. The Commissioner also said she wanted to commend the Chief Constable's courage in encouraging businesses to report crime, knowing it might draw criticism due to the rates of crime, but reporting is a key part of addressing the issue and reducing the crime rate in future.

2. Question: In reference to the district of Rother, which has seen an increase of 79% from 2023-2024, would the Commissioner engage more with other town councils and town management systems outside the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), in Rother, and across Sussex?

Answer: The Commissioner assured the Panel that she works across all areas of Sussex, whether they have a BID or not, and emphasised the importance of the Business Crime Reduction Partnerships (BCRPs). She further stated that the increase in reporting in Rother was ultimately a good sign of local businesses feeling confident to report and engage with the police.

3. Question: With the perception among some communities that business crime, and in particular shoplifting, is a victimless crime, what more can be done to explain the impact that business crime has on communities as a potential deterrent?

Answer: The Commissioner explained her disappointment that shoplifting has become so unchallenged and her view that the only way to prevent criminality to ensure that the public know that there is a working deterrent to prevent such acts and ensure prosecution when they do occur, including electronic tagging for prolific shoplifters.

4. Question: Will the BCRPs be funded and for how long?

Answer: The Commissioner explained that they were currently in discussions about how to fund the BCRPs and the duration of said funding.

5. Question: When someone underage steals from a shop, what happens to them?

Answer: The Commissioner explained that, in her view, there are three types of perpetrators who engage in shop theft: firstly, those involved with organised crime, those stealing due to some form of necessity, and those who were opportunists who do tend to be younger. The Commissioner emphasised that they don't necessarily want opportunist shop thefts to be immediately criminalised on the first offence, instead ensuring they are educated as to the impact of their actions and consequences if they should reoffend.

6. Question: What can be done to tackle the reseller market after shop theft has occurred?

Answer: The Commissioner explained that the retailers had made it clear that they wanted to go after the reseller markets to further deter the theft of goods for resale. The Commissioner said that issue was going to be addressed at the next Retail Crime Forum but that she was not sure yet what that would look like.

7. Question: Considering recent press reports that Worthing has one of the worst shoplifting rates in the county and the conflicting date that there has been a 22% reduction in business crime in the report for that area, what is the reason for this conflict in the statistics?

Answer: The Commissioner explained that the press tend to get their information through Freedom of Information (FOIs) requests and thus, the information is usually out of date by the time they receive it, whereas the data included in the report is the most up-to-date data available and recorded through Sussex Police.

8. Question: Does the Commissioner think that the reduction shown in the statistics for Worthing is because of crime reduction or businesses not engaging with reporting business crime?

Answer: The Commissioner stated that she felt there was a lot of good work going on in Worthing, including several pilot schemes to encourage business crime reporting, and this was having a deterring effect. The Commissioner further explained one of these pilot schemes, a One-Touch reporting scheme for the local Co-Op with a protocol for reporting agreed with Sussex Police which continued to be successful.

9. Question: Page 67 of the report shows an increase of only 2% in crime reporting in the Wealden area. Does the Commissioner think this is due to a lack of reporting and retailers not engaging with the police when business crime occurs?

Answer: The Commissioner said that Wealden has shown an increase in reporting, which to be encouraged, and that Wealden has only just rolled out the Disc platform for businesses to report crime which may be why there has not been as large an increase in reporting as seen in other areas of Sussex.

10. Question: The Panel asked for clarification on the pilot scheme being run with the Co-Op in Worthing and the crimes that are or are not being reported, and if these are included in the datasets within the report.

Answer: The Commissioner explained that the police had provided Co-Op staff with a protocol for recording information about crimes that is then sent on to police for them to determine if the intelligence is actionable and that all crimes, whether recorded or formally reported, are included within the report's datasets.

11. Question: Has any analysis been conducted to determine if there's a correlation between areas of deprivation and increase in shop theft?

Answer: The Commissioner said that the retailers have been clear that these shop thefts have been driven by organised crime gangs, with an estimated £2 billion in losses in the last year, and operate across multiple areas and counties. She further explained that on a local level, prolific offenders are more likely to be driven by drugs or alcohol dependencies as their motive for stealing. The Commissioner stressed that in the uncommon case where someone is stealing to live, the police would look to help them by signposting them to organisations that can aid them rather than criminalise them.

12. Question: As a supplementary to the previous question, are the organised crime gangs recruiting shop thieves in the same manner as the drug gangs recruit?

Answer: The Commissioner agreed there were similarities, explaining that the gangs are run like business and are unfortunately highly effective.

42.4 The Chair summarised the discussions, stating that the Panel had been interested to look at the data from the perspective of local areas and the importance of BCRPs in maintaining this increase in business crime reporting. The Chair further said that there were no actions for this agenda but asked the Panel to agree to note the report.

42.5 The Panel agreed to note the report.

43. Quarterly Report of Complaints

43.1 The Panel noted that there have been no complaints received as of 10 March 2025.

44. Date of Next Meeting and Future Meeting Dates

44.1 The Chair noted the next meeting of the Panel will take place on Thursday 3 July 2025, at 10:30am at County Hall, Lewes.

Future meeting dates have been proposed as:

- 3 October 2025
- 30 January 2026
- 16 February (Provisional)
- 13 March 2026

The meeting ended at 12.55 pm

Chairman