

Public and Panel Questions to the Commissioner

28 June 2024

Report by the Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel

Below is a schedule of the questions received prior to this meeting and where possible responses have been included. Responses will be tabled at the meeting that were not available at the time of despatch. Written questions must be received two weeks before a meeting of the Panel and the Commissioner or Panel Chairman is invited to provide a response by noon of the day before the meeting.

Questions relating to operational matters of Sussex Police are passed to a relevant officer at Sussex Police for a response, with a brief summary of such questions provided below. For the current meeting, ONE question was received which required a written response from the Commissioner.

1. Written question from John Cole of Brighton, East Sussex.

Sussex police is reported to be the worst police force for solving bicycle thefts in the country. To the year ending in December 2023, Government figures say there were 1463 reported and only 10 charges.

It should be also taken into account that many people don't even bother reporting thefts because they believe it's a waste of time.

Brighton and Hove is in the top ten cities nationwide for bicycle theft.

At the March 2023 Crime Panel , in response to a question about lack of prosecutions , PCC Katy Bourne said that Brighton and Hove police had tactical plans to deal with bike thefts at a local level.

Sussex Police have failed to respond to any FOI requests about these tactical plans.

Please could the PCC tell me if she has any information whatsoever on these plans and whether they're in progress.

Thank you for your question.

I have shared your email with Sussex Police because the content specifically relates to operational policing activity. I am pleased to be able to provide you with the following information about the tactical plans in place to tackle bicycle thefts in Brighton & Hove.

Sussex Police recorded 1,725 bicycle theft offences throughout the county between 1 June 2023 and 31 May 2024. This represented 549 fewer offences compared to the 2,274 offences recorded in the same period 12-months earlier and equated to a reduction of 24%.

In Brighton & Hove, 739 bicycle theft offences were recorded across the same period which represented a reduction of 158 offences from the 897 offences recorded in the previous year [and -18%].

The proportion of successful outcomes for these offences demonstrated an improving trend across the same period compared with 2022/23, although it was recognised that further improvements are required in this area.

In response to this, Brighton & Hove Division has created a tactical plan to prevent and tackle bicycle thefts across the city through Operation Ensnare which is being led and delivered by the Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) within. Some recent updates from this operation, include:

- ✓ Two offenders summonsed to attend court;
- ✓ One offender charged with bicycle theft;
- ✓ Two further charges of bicycle thefts approved and pending court;
- ✓ 11 offenders are under investigation following CCTV and facial recognition;
- ✓ More than 25 stolen bicycles have been seized;
- ✓ Five of these bikes have, subsequently, been returned to their owners;
- ✓ Five further positive identifications of suspects have been made.

Further plans are in place to deliver the following initiatives through Operation Ensnare across 2024/25 and beyond:

Deployment of 'bait' bicycles and trackers – These bait bicycles have been purchased and are now ready for deployment, with police officers currently being provided with training in the use of this tactic. Once deployed, this policing activity will be targeted at and directed to problem 'hotspot' areas, utilising wider policing resources to support the NPTs in this process.

Bicycle markings – The safe storage and security of bicycles is recognised to be fundamentally important in terms of deterring offenders and preventing bicycle thefts from taking place. The Force has secured bicycle security marking kits and will shortly be publishing the different locations where members of the public can visit to have their bicycles marked, free of charge.

Proactive use of social media – The District Engagement Officers on each of the policing districts throughout Sussex will continue to proactively use social media channels and posters to provide crime prevention advice around bicycle safety, alongside further information about how to report any suspicious behaviour or activity.

Reviewing closed cases – Sussex Police are also currently reviewing all reports of bicycle thefts that were previously closed at the initial point of contact to ensure that all reasonable lines of enquiries were followed at the time. Where this was not apparent, these cases are being reopened and sent back to the investigating officers for review and progression.

I hope the above information is useful to you and provides you with some reassurance about the ongoing work of Sussex Police [and Brighton & Hove Division, in particular] to tackle bicycle thefts throughout the county.

I will continue to work closely with the Chief Constable to provide further scrutiny around performance in this area to ensure that the policing response remains appropriate, proportionate and fit-for-purpose.