

PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY MEETING

DATE: 15 March 2019

LOCATION: Office of the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner, Sackville House, Lewes

PRESENT: Police & Crime Commissioner – Katy Bourne (KB)
Chief Executive Officer – Mark Streater (MS)
Deputy Chief Constable – Jo Shiner (JS)
Assistant Chief Constable – Jon Savell (JSav)
Communications Manager – Natalie McFall
Head of Performance – Graham Kane (minutes)

Staff Officer to Deputy Chief Constable – Sergeant – Martyn Waterson (observing)
Executive Support Manager – Ali Robinson (observing)

REASSURANCE TO SUSSEX COMMUNITIES – NEW ZEALAND MOSQUE ATTACKS

At least 50 people have been killed and a further 50 wounded in a hate-filled terror attack targeting two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand.

A. What assurances can you provide to the communities of Sussex?

JS acknowledged the tragic circumstances surrounding the recent terrorist attack in New Zealand. The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that the Force will stand together with the Muslim communities in Sussex and all of those shocked and horrified by this atrocity.

Sussex and Surrey Police have stepped up reassurance patrols around mosques in both police force areas and are increasing engagement with communities of all faiths. The Force is also linked in nationally and internationally with any developments in this area.

Sussex Police is giving out advice through the media about how people and places can protect themselves. Members of the public were encouraged to report anything unusual or suspicious through the counter terrorism policing in confidence on 0800 789 321 or through the website: <https://act.campaign.gov.uk/>. If it is an emergency, always call 999.

REASSURANCE TO SUSSEX COMMUNITIES – LONDON, OXFORD AND MANCHESTER KNIFE ATTACKS

Four young people were killed in separate knife attacks in London, Oxford and Manchester earlier this month.

A. What are the key challenges for Sussex Police in respect of knife crime?

B. At the PAM on 20 July 2018, it was recognised that the Force appeared to be an anomaly in terms of the level of knife crime recorded. What work has been undertaken to understand better the reasons for the apparent lower levels of knife crime recording in Sussex?

C. What initiatives does Sussex Police have planned to tackle knife crime and highlight the risks of carrying a knife in the county?

JS recognised that knife crime continues to remain a national issue and focus. There are two particular types of offences that are included in the figures that are submitted to the Home Office by each police force area in England and Wales as part of their Annual Data Requirement (ADR): knife-enabled crimes (involving either a knife or a sharp instrument) and possession of knives or sharp instruments.

It was emphasised that these offences are often linked to gangs and organised crime groups involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile telephone lines (also known as 'county lines').

It was acknowledged that knife-enabled crime still remains low in Sussex. The Force has undertaken a significant amount of work to understand better the reasons behind Sussex Police appearing to be an anomaly in terms of the level of knife-enabled crime recorded. This work identified that a systems and process issue existed in respect of the marker for this type of crime and its prominence on the crime recording system. This meant that some crimes involving knives and sharp instruments were not included in previous ADR submissions. KB would like to know when the changes to the knife and sharp instrument marker on the Force crime recording system will be implemented.

This work identified an increase in the number of knife-enabled crimes recorded in Sussex across each of the past three calendar years as follows: 665 in 2016; 729 in 2017 and 827 in 2018. The same trend was apparent for possession of knives or sharp instruments too, as follows: 540 in 2016; 519 in 2017 and 594 in 2018. It was emphasised that these revised figures put Sussex Police around mid-table in comparison to their Most Similar Group of police force areas in England and Wales – a position the Force is comfortable with. KB asked what the age profile looks like for those committing knife-enabled crime and possession offences involving knives and other sharp instruments in Sussex.

The Sussex Early Intervention Youth Programme (also known as REBOOT) has developed a five-stage Early Intervention Protocol to support and deliver a consistent approach for identifying and managing children and young people involved in anti-social behaviour and low-level criminality. This links in with the Serious Violence Strategy which sets out the Government's response to serious violence after recent increases in knife-enabled crime, gun crime and homicide.

Sussex Police supported the week-long Operation Sceptre campaign that took place between 11 and 17 March 2019. Operation Sceptre is a nationally coordinated campaign that takes place twice a year to ensure residents are safe from knife-enabled crime in their communities. The campaign comprises a mix of targeted operational and educational activities to remove unwanted knives off the streets of Sussex and to provide proactive reassurance to young people that they are more likely to come to harm carrying a knife than walking away from threats of violence. Further information about this campaign can be viewed [here](#).

The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that Sussex Police are currently using all available tools and powers to effectively to tackle knife crime. This includes increasing the use of stop and search powers (where lawful and proportionate grounds exist) conducting weapon sweeps and targeting habitual knife carriers.

It was also emphasised that Sussex Police continue to tackle knife-enabled crime all year round in partnership with local authorities, trading standards, licensing and health partners. Other initiatives the Force has planned to tackle knife crime and highlight the risks of carrying a knife in the county include educational prevention activities with young people in schools and other educational establishments and test purchases of knives from retailers.

In addition, it was recently announced that the police have been promised an extra £100 million by the Government to help them tackle knife crime in England and Wales. The Deputy Chief Constable welcomed the announcement and confirmed that the Force will submit a bid into this additional funding in due course to protect better the communities in Sussex.

ACTION: KB would like to know what the age profile looks like for those committing knife-enabled crime and possession offences involving knives and other sharp instruments in Sussex.

ACTION: KB would like to know when the changes to the knife and sharp instrument marker on the Force crime recording system will be implemented.

SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME

The *Serious and Organised Crime Strategy* defines serious and organised crime as “individuals planning, coordinating and committing serious offences, whether individually, in groups and/or as part of transnational networks.”

A. What are the main categories of serious offences covered by the definition and how is the Force responding to these?

B. Some of these offences are ‘hidden’ and under-reported. What is the Force doing to raise awareness and support victims to report these crimes?

C. I recognise that this area of policing is complex with Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) behind many of the offences, including ‘county line’ activity. How well does the Force understand the OCGs working in Sussex and what is being done to disrupt their activity?

D. What support has been received from local partners in this area?

JSav confirmed that the main categories of serious offences covered by the term in the Strategy are: child sexual exploitation and abuse; illegal drugs; illegal firearms; fraud; money laundering and other economic crime; bribery and corruption; organised immigration crime; modern slavery and human trafficking; and cyber crime. It is acknowledged that these are complex crimes that are often multi-faceted and involve multiple offences being committed simultaneously.

Sussex Police gather information and intelligence about these crimes from a range of different sources, including members of the public and partner agencies. The Force relies on these reports to build a picture of the scale of the problem in Sussex. Information is also shared between neighbouring police force areas in the South East region (Hampshire, Kent, Surrey and Thames Valley), together with the Regional Organised Crime Unit and the National Crime Agency. This information gathering has enabled each of the three policing divisions in Sussex to develop a Serious Organised Crime Profile that sets out how they will Pursue, Prepare, Prevent and Protect local communities from serious and organised crime.

*The Assistant Chief Constable recognised that many of the individuals affected by these crimes are vulnerable. It is, therefore, important that Sussex Police is available to receive any reports and that individuals feel confident to report these under-reported crimes directly to the police or indirectly and anonymously through **Crimestoppers**. It was also emphasised that the Force is raising awareness, empowering and supporting victims to report these crimes through proactive campaigns in both traditional print media and online social media, in terms of what to look for and how to report it.*

It is important that all police officers, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and police staff are sufficiently trained to understand exactly what these crimes are, what support is available to victims and the referral mechanisms in place to reduce any potential risk to victims. The activity to tackle offenders and support victims is scrutinised at Daily Management Meetings to ensure that all of the procedures and processes in place have been followed in an efficient and effective manner.

JSav confirmed that the Force uses a mapping process to capture information about active OCGs in Sussex. A Management of Risk in Law Enforcement (MoRiLE) scoring mechanism is used to ascertain a threat, risk and harm assessment score. A scale of the risk of harm is then applied for each OCG to assist with the prioritisation of police activity in this area.

It was emphasised that there are very healthy, supportive and productive arrangements in place with local partners to share information and intelligence safely and to develop a richer picture of serious and organised crime activity in Sussex. It was highlighted that data sharing arrangements between partner agencies have evolved and improved through a commitment to “dare to share, with care”.

ACQUISITIVE CRIME

I am aware of a number of recent opportunistic acquisitive crimes taking place throughout Sussex involving individuals with large vans taking items from driveways and gardens. These acquisitive crimes have been reported across each of the three policing divisions.

A. What is the Force doing to tackle opportunistic theft in Sussex?

B. How does Sussex Police use the intelligence received through reports of crime to plan, target and deploy resources?

C. What more can Sussex Police do to raise awareness of this particular crime type and to provide crime prevention advice to residents in Sussex?

JSav confirmed that the Force manages opportunistic acquisitive crime locally by gathering information and intelligence from members of the public to build a picture of scale of the criminality taking place within individual policing districts.

Reporting information about acquisitive crime enables Sussex Police to develop intelligence regarding repeat offenders, vehicles, times and locations which can then be used to plan, target and deploy police resources. This, again, highlights the importance of individuals having trust and confidence to report these crimes and incidents to the police.

The information received is discussed and shared at Weekly Intelligence Meetings and is used to target patrols, intelligence gathering and police activity on a daily basis. This is followed up at Daily Management Meetings to ensure that police officers and PCSOs are proactively tasked with targeting offenders, vehicles and locations of interests.

The Assistant Chief Constable recognised the importance of having a dynamic and fast-time response in place to tackle this type of criminality. Officers and staff are able to receive 'live' and up-to-date briefings through Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) and social media platforms that enable local policing teams to coordinate activity and resources.

It was highlighted that Local Engagement Officers communicate successes in this area through a number of different print, radio and social media channels to reassure members of the public regarding activity in this area.

Sussex Police uses Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology to target, detect, deter and disrupt criminality at a local, regional and national level by denying criminals the use of the roads. The Assistant Chief Constable is confident that there is sufficient ANPR coverage throughout Sussex. This comprises of a combination of static and mobile sites, together with equipment that is available within police vehicles. JSav confirmed that this is an "enormously useful" tool to target the road network and identify individuals of interest. Further information about ANPR is available [here](#).

HMICFRS – POLICE RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC ABUSE

Last month, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) published an updated report that considered the response the police service provides to victims of domestic abuse.

A. How have you reflected on the findings of the report?

B. HMICFRS highlighted that the arrest and charge rates for domestic abuse crimes in England and Wales is "falling". Sussex Police demonstrated low rates (per 100 domestic abuse-related offences) for both in the rolling year period to 30 June 2017, in comparison to the same period a year earlier. What do you attribute this to in Sussex?

C. The report also raised concerns about the quality of police officer statements in cases of domestic abuse with comprehensive statements providing details of the scene, injuries and demeanour of the victim and suspect in only 55% of the cases reviewed. What is the Force doing to improve statement taking and the quality of initial investigations?

D. HMICFRS recognised the "extremely varied use" of Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) throughout England and Wales and expressed concerns that some forces are not monitoring their data effectively. Sussex Police were highlighted in the report for not providing use of DVPO data for 2016 and 2017, or DVPO breach data for 2017. What assurances can you provide me in respect of the monitoring arrangements in place within Sussex Police? And, how do you respond to breaches?

E. It was recognised that the police need to continue to improve their understanding of coercive and controlling behaviour. What training is provided to officers and staff in this area?

F. How effective are the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASHs) and Multi-Agency Risk-Assessment Conferences (MARACs) at protecting vulnerable individuals in Sussex?

JS recognised the importance of understanding the findings from the HMICFRS report and acknowledged that the feedback was overwhelmingly positive in terms of how far most police force areas in England and Wales have improved in terms of the response that is provided to victims of domestic abuse.

The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that the report has been carefully considered and that much of the content already forms part of the Sussex Police Domestic Abuse Action Plan and builds on the work that has been carried out to improve the Force's response.

Domestic abuse remains a key focus and priority for Sussex Police. The Force has clear and established meeting structures through the Vulnerability Board, Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) Board and multi-agency strategic partnership boards to recognise, understand and tackle domestic abuse.

JS explained that a huge amount of effort has been invested to understand the arrest and charge rate figures for domestic abuse crimes, particularly in respect of risk (standard, medium and high-risk). It was highlighted that the Force has demonstrated an increase in the arrest rate for high-risk domestic abuse offences – this arrest rate is currently more than 70%. This demonstrates a continued commitment to safeguard and protect the most vulnerable victims as well as targeting the highest-risk offenders that pose the greatest risk.

Sussex Police is working really hard to arrest when they should be arresting in respect of domestic abuse offences, ensuring that a proportionate response exists based on the individual circumstances of each incident. The reduction in the charge rate is attributed to an increase in the total number of offences that have been recorded.

The Force has undertaken work to understand better the reasons behind some victims not wanting to support prosecutions. It was, however, emphasised that a formal charge is only one of range of outcomes available to Sussex Police, in addition to police bail and DVPOs. A charge might also not always be the most appropriate outcome for the victim. The importance of ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are in place for all victims and any children and young people affected by domestic abuse was emphasised.

Sussex Police has worked closely with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to make them aware of instances where evidence has been secured through the use of Body Worn Video (BWV) but the victim does not want to support a prosecution. This has resulted in an increase in the number of victimless prosecutions that have been secured although the Force would always encourage a victim to work with them to develop a more comprehensive case and to ensure that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are made. KB would like to know what the increase in victimless prosecutions has been in Sussex.

The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that whilst police officer statements and file quality in Sussex are generally good, it was recognised that this could be improved further still. The use of BWV remains a mandatory requirement for all police officers who attend a domestic abuse incident. This is because BWV is used to capture details of a scene, injuries and the demeanour of a victim and suspect. It was highlighted that a Domestic Abuse Operational Group exists to scrutinise the quality and quantity of all domestic abuse case files and that this remains an ongoing area of focus for Sussex Police.

Sussex Police has issued a total of 203 DVPOs in the current rolling year period and that each remains subject to regular monitoring arrangements. It was emphasised that there are clear arrangements in place regarding the police response to any breaches of DVPOs, when notified of these. In particular, the Force has responded positively to 23 breaches in Sussex in the past year, to reassess the case and to understand whether any further offences have been committed and whether any additional safeguarding is required. Additional legal assistance has also been provided to the Force by Weightmans.

JS is supportive of the training that is currently being provided to officers and staff in respect of coercive and controlling behaviour. The increase in the reporting of this offence in Sussex is attributed to a better awareness and recognition amongst police officers and staff. For example, in January 2019, 106 coercive and controlling offences were recorded in comparison to 41 offences recorded in February 2018.

HMICFRS recognised the good practice that Sussex Police has demonstrated in respect of MASHs and MARACs in their published findings within the 'Effectiveness' strand of the annual inspection into PEEL. The report confirmed that "the Force is working effectively with partners to provide longer-term safeguarding through the MASH." The Deputy Chief Constable concluded by stating that strong governance and escalation processes exist in this area through the Vulnerability Board.

ACTION: KB would like to know what the increase in victimless prosecutions has been in Sussex.

POLICE FEDERATION – DEMAND, CAPACITY AND WELFARE SURVEY 2018

The Police Federation for England and Wales published the results from their Demand, Capacity and Welfare Survey 2018 last month.

A. How have you reflected on the findings of the survey?

B. 79% of respondents in Sussex indicated that they had experienced feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety, or other difficulties with their health and wellbeing over the last 12 months, with 96% also indicating that these feelings were caused, or made worse by work. What support mechanisms are currently available and how are these communicated to officers and staff?

C. What training is provided to first-line managers and supervisors in respect of mental-health and identifying signs of stress in workplace?

D. How will the additional investment from the increase to the policing part of the Council Tax for 2019/20 be used to reduce the pressures on officers?

E. 69% of respondents stated that they were 'often' or 'always' single crewed. How is the risk to police officer safety through this type of deployment balanced between the need to use officers efficiently and effectively?

JS recognised that Sussex Police has a "duty of care" to its workforce and highlighted the importance of looking after those police officers, staff and PCSOs who perform a really difficult job on a day-to-day basis, including exposure to significant trauma. It was highlighted that Sussex Police provides good levels of support to the workforce but acknowledged that more could be done still.

The Deputy Chief Constable reflected on the findings of the survey and stated that she was reassured that there was nothing identified in the report that the Force was not already aware of through close working relationships with Police Federation, UNISON and other staff networks. These established relationships enable the Force to be challenged, where appropriate, and address positively any issues and concerns.

JS was encouraged that a high proportion of the 529 respondents from Sussex Police felt confident enough to report feelings of stress, low mood, anxiety and other health and wellbeing difficulties and challenges to line managers and supervisors. There is a significant amount of support that is offered to the workforce including: Backup Buddy (mobile support app that provides 24/7 advice on how to tackle the mental health challenges of policing); clear signposting and advice on the Force intranet; dedicated counselling and psychological support provisions; Mental Health Advocate Scheme (with more than 70 individuals trained to provide peer-to-peer support) and a comprehensive defuse and screening programme (offered to individuals who work in vulnerable roles or after individuals are exposed to trauma).

First-line managers and supervisors are also good at recognising some of the symptoms and signs of stress in the workplace through regular 'focus' meetings. The Deputy Chief Constable recognised that it is the responsibility of everyone to raise any concerns they might have about another member of the workforce to another colleague.

It is acknowledged that the demand on frontline police officers and staff continues to increase and change in terms of its complexity. The additional investment made available through the increase to the policing part of the Council Tax in recent years is starting to have a positive impact and reduce some of the pressures that are being placed on officers and staff.

The Force has a Deployment Plan with each individual deployment risk-assessed based on a number of different factors including: time of day, incident or offence reported, experience of attending police officer, history of offender and whether there is an existing 'marker' on the record. It was emphasised that single crewing provides the Force with greater visibility and an opportunity to maximise the use of all available resources to the greatest benefit of the residents of Sussex.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT – FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND VETTING STANDARDS

My office continues to receive concerns from members of the public regarding delays in the processing of requests for information under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

- A. Can you provide me with an update in respect of these delays?**
- B. What proportion of requests for information are responded to by Sussex Police within the statutory timescale of 20 working days?**
- C. How many requests out outstanding, over and above this timeframe?**
- D. The 'Vetting Code of Practice' sets out the vetting standards required all for police officers and staff in England and Wales. What governance and accountability arrangements exist within the Force to ensure compliance with these national standards?**
- E. How frequently are police officers and staff re-vetted and how is the process managed in Sussex?**

JS began by stating that the number of requests for information from the Force is continuing to increase year-on-year. This includes an 8% increase in the number of requests made in 2018, in comparison to the year before. These requests for information relate to all areas of policing and reflect an increasing national trend. It was highlighted that between 1 October and 31 December 2018 over half of the requests for information received by Sussex Police were from the media.

It was explained that a small team is responsible for responding to each of these requests and that this team has not increased in capacity despite the additional demand that has been placed on them. The Force has made a commitment to put as much information on their website as possible in order to assist members of the public with their enquiries and to reduce the number of requests received for information.

Sussex Police is currently responding to 88% of all requests for information within the statutory timescale of 20 working days, across 2019 to date, against a national target of 90% for all police force areas.

The Deputy Chief Constable also confirmed that the Force does not have a significant backlog of requests for information. A total of 316 requests for information have been received across the above period, of which 27 of these have not been responded to in line with the statutory timescales – this equates to 9%. It was, however, highlighted that each of these individuals has been kept regularly updated regarding any delays and the anticipated timescales when a response will be provided to them.

The Joint Force Vetting Unit (JFVU) for Sussex and Surrey Police is a section within the Professional Standards Department and manages compliance with national vetting standards across both police forces.

It was highlighted that Sussex Police was recently dip-checked by HMICFRS to ensure that the vetting levels were appropriate, clearances were valid and that any rejections were proportionate. The Force received positive feedback for its performance in this area with no areas of concerns highlighted. On a day-to-day basis, the JFVU has effective quality assurance procedures and testing in place, together with an escalation process, should the need arise.

It was highlighted that, in addition to the national standards in place for each of the different vetting levels and the predetermined timescales for the re-vetting of each of these, police vetting is appraised annually.