

PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY MEETING

DATE: 22 January 2021

LOCATION: Virtual (via Microsoft Teams)

PRESENT: Police & Crime Commissioner – Katy Bourne (KB)
Chief Executive Officer – Mark Streater (MS)
Chief Constable – Jo Shiner (JS)
Director of People Services – Adrian Rutherford (AR)
Deputy Chief Constable – Julia Chapman (JC)

Head of Performance – Graham Kane (minutes)
Chief Communications & Insight Officer – Mervin Dadd (observing)
Communications Manager – Natalie McFall (observing)

This PAM was not webcast in accordance with national lockdown restrictions in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

POLICE NATIONAL COMPUTER – DELETION OF CRIME RECORDS

Last week (15 January 2021), it was reported that more than 210,000 crime records in England and Wales were accidentally deleted due to a coding error. The incident affects fingerprints, DNA and arrest warrants on the Police National Computer (PNC).

A. Accepting that the PNC is a national database, how many of these crime records directly relate to individuals from Sussex?

B. What impact will this have on the ability of the police service to identify biometric matches between crime scenes and offenders, if these lost records cannot be recovered?

JS confirmed that this remains an ongoing critical incident for the Home Office after it was discovered on 11 January 2021. As such, no further information in relation to this matter can be shared publicly at this moment in time due to the obvious sensitivities.

It was highlighted that Sussex Police is linked into the Home Office working groups that have been established in response to this and anything that is pertinent to Sussex will be properly assessed, accordingly.

The Chief Constable concluded by stating that Home Office efforts are still ongoing to recover the deleted crime records and that this will remain the focus, rather than making any further assessments beyond that at this stage.

KB agreed to discuss this matter further with JS outside of the Performance & Accountability Meeting (PAM).

POLICING PRECEPT INVESTMENT 2020/21

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is a key planning tool which helps to identify available resources and options for delivering the priorities in my Police & Crime Plan and the strategic policing requirements for Sussex Police. The current MTFS builds on the investment made to strengthen the Force that I started in earnest 2018/19. The additional investment means that by 2023 there will be 250 more police officers, 50 more specialist police staff and 100 more Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) than there were in March 2018 – a total increase of 400 individuals.

Last year, I was given public support to increase the precept for 2020/21 by £10 for a Band D property. This increased investment, in addition to the national uplift, would enable Sussex Police to meet more demand and accelerate the recruitment plans for police officers, staff and PCSOs.

- A. Can you provide me with an update regarding the number of police officers, staff and PCSOs recruited to date? What is the total number of individuals in post for each employee category?**
- B. What challenges have you experienced with the recruitment and training of new officers, staff and PCSOs this year? How have you overcome those?**
- C. How many of the police officers recruited have dropped out of the training or failed to pass the initial training course?**

Through Operation Uplift – the Government campaign to recruit 20,000 new police officers in England and Wales by March 2022 – the Force was provided with funding to recruit a further 129 police officers for Sussex in 2020/21.

- D. The police grant settlement confirmed that Operation Uplift would continue in 2021/22, including the recruitment of a further 121 police officers in Sussex plus six officers for the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit. What are your plans for progressing this recruitment within the prescribed timescales?**

Analysis of the demands on local policing, investigations and the need for tougher enforcement in Sussex resulted in an investment case being made for three key areas in 2020/21: more enforcement; more investigation and an even greater presence in towns and villages and online.

- E. Can you provide me with a progress update about how the additional funds have been used to deliver investment in each of these three areas?**

JS began by paying tribute to Adrian Rutherford, Director of People Services for Surrey and Sussex Police, and his team for the "outstanding" work they have achieved to attract and deliver quality individuals to the organisation.

AR provided KB with assurances that recruitment was on target to deliver 250 more police officers, 50 more specialist police staff and 100 more PCSOs within Sussex Police by March 2023 – a total increase of 400 individuals. This position has been maintained throughout 2020/21, despite the increased challenges presented to the Force by the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Since March 2020, Sussex Police has recruited 330 police officers to deliver the planned increases in policing resources AND to replace those officers who have left the organisation. This has been achieved through the combined recruitment of new student officers, together with re-joiners and transferees from other police force areas. This recruitment also includes a further 50 officers recruited following the increase to the police precept and ALL 129 of the officers recruited as part of Operation Uplift. **This recruitment has equated to a net increase of 179 police officers in Sussex during 2020/21.***

KB was pleased to note that the Force has now recruited all of the additional police officer posts that have been funded by the increases in the police precept to date – this equates to 160 of the additional 250 officers required by 31 March 2023. As at 22 January 2021, there were 2,822 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) officers in Sussex.

Sussex Police recruited the extra 50 specialist police staff during 2019/20. Although a further 320 police staff were recruited during 2020/21, this recruitment was primarily carried out to replace the individuals who have departed the organisation, including a number of members of staff who have left to become police officers or PCSOs. Also included within these figures is the recruitment of custody assistants for the five custody centres across Sussex, following the renegotiation of a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract, which resulted in this provision moving back 'in-house'. There were 2,229 FTE police staff in Sussex (as at 22 January 2021).

The majority of the additional 100 PCSOs were also recruited during 2019/20, with a further 56 PCSOs recruited during 2020/21 – to replace the individuals who have either left to become police officers or departed the organisation. There were 285 FTE PCSOs in Sussex (as at 22 January 2021), although this number will increase further still to the planned established level of 296 FTE PCSOs following another intake scheduled in February 2021. KB requested a breakdown of the number of PCSOs still in the process of completing their initial six-month training.

In addition, Sussex Police has recruited 41 new special constables during the financial year which has increased the total number of special constables in Sussex to 111. The management, deployment and supervision processes in place for these individuals have been improved and enhanced across the year to ensure that they feel valued and appreciated. It was also emphasised that two further intakes of special constables are planned for 2021/22.

AR concluded by highlighting the importance that, wherever possible, all entry routes into Sussex Police should remain open and visible to all.

The Director of People Services confirmed that Sussex Police has amended its recruitment and training processes, both nationally and locally, for new police officers, staff and PCSOs in response to the pandemic. This flexibility has ensured that no opportunities have been missed to maximise all available opportunities to expand the Force, whilst simultaneously improving and enhancing the 'candidate journey'.

It was highlighted that the national assessment centre for police constables, previously delivered at the College of Policing (in Ryton, Coventry), is now delivered online. In Sussex, the final interview stage has also been amended with these now carried out remotely online to ensure that the process remains COVID compliant. Amendments have also been made to the pre-employment checks, including the fitness testing, health checks and biometric vetting to improve the efficiency of the individual processes, although it was highlighted that no pre-employment checks have been missed as part of the revisions made to the recruitment processes. It was also emphasised that Sussex Police has not reduced its standards in order to deliver the increased levels of recruitment for police officers, staff and PCSOs.

The vast majority of the training for the police workforce has now moved to virtual learning – an approach that Sussex Police had been looking to introduce previously. Where this is not possible and face-to-face training is still required, such as police officer safety training, the Force has used 'bubbles' to reduce the number of individuals from different households mixing at any one time. This training has also been conducted sooner into the training timeline than delivered previously in order to ensure that officers are ready for any deployment that could be required at an earlier stage.

AR reiterated the importance of increasing the representation and diversity within the workforce during this period of sustained recruitment too. In terms of the Operation Uplift recruitment, it was highlighted that some of the early signs are encouraging, with Sussex Police outperforming other police force areas in England and Wales. This positive action has resulted in the number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) recruits accounting for 7.9% of individual recruits during 2020/21, against a workforce diversity figure of 3.2%, with female recruits into the Force accounting for 40% of all individuals in the same cohorts, compared to a workforce representation figure of 35%.

Since April 2019, 15 police officers have left Sussex Police before the end of their initial training course, through a combination of individuals either having resigned from the role or not having met the standards required. This represents an attrition rate of 4.2% which was recognised to be extremely low. The new entry routes into the police service require a higher level of assessment which means that forces can identify individuals and challenges at an earlier opportunity. There is also an improved recognition and appreciation for individuals with neurodiverse issues, such as dyslexia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, for which additional help, support and guidance can be provided, as required. Sussex Police is continuing to monitor this area closely, with enhanced exit-interview processes used for officers, staff and PCSO leavers to understand better any themes or trends and to enable amendments to be made to recruitment processes, information and training provided.

The Director of People Services confirmed that recruitment against the agreed workforce plans will continue as planned in 2021/22, with further police officer intakes agreed for March; June and September 2021 and January and March 2022. AR was "confident" that the Force would deliver the additional 121 police officers and six officers for the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit from Operation Uplift within the prescribed timescales, plus a further 50 officers following the increase to the police precept.

The precept investment in recent years has enabled the Force to deliver more enforcement, more investigation and an even greater presence in towns and villages and online. KB was provided with the following progress update about how the additional funds have been used in 2020/21, as follows:

The additional recruitment of extra police officers has enabled the Force to expand the delivery of the Tactical Enforcement Units (TEUs) across all three of the policing divisions in Sussex. The TEUs deliver proactive disruption and enforcement activity across Sussex, supporting colleagues to target serious, organised and high-impact crime. A countywide Specialist Enforcement Unit (SEU) will be launched next week (26 January 2021) to provide proactive, visible and targeted operational police activity on the road network in Sussex – expanding the capacity and capability of the Force in this area further still.

Alongside the delivery of these units, the available resources within the Road Policing Unit (RPU) have been strengthened, including the creation of a Commercial Vehicle Unit (targeting vehicles above 3.5 tonnes in relation to driver hours; insecure loads; licence offences and the carriage of hazardous materials) and the recruitment of two dedicated police motorcyclists within Brighton & Hove (to target road-related incidents). Sussex Police has also appointed a dedicated Chief Inspector to coordinate and enforce police activity around anti-social driving, noise pollution and speeding on the roads in Sussex.

Increases have also been made to the number of police dogs and handlers in the Dog Unit – including the provision of new digital search dogs (able to search for mobile phones and other electronic equipment) and general purpose dogs (to support searches for drugs and cash).

Through the precept investment in 2020/21, Sussex Police introduced a Domestic Abuse Local Resolution Team to respond to low-risk, non-urgent reports of domestic abuse. The team comprises of 39 specialist officers who have each been trained to provide support, safeguarding and investigative expertise exclusively to domestic abuse crimes and associated incidents in order to improve criminal justice outcomes. The team has contributed to improvements in the satisfaction rates for each of the victims who have used this service – with 94% of victims either satisfied or nearly satisfied.

Sussex Police has also recruited additional individuals into the Sexual Offences Investigation Team (SOIT) within the Public Protection Team to increase the capacity, capability and consistency of these teams to support better victims of sexual offences. Frontline investigative capabilities have been strengthened too through enhancements to the administrative support in place, including increases in the number of trained investigators and the recruitment of 30 x Administrative Support Assistants.

A dedicated Superintendent post has also been introduced to specifically identify and tackle all elements of serious and organised crime and criminal exploitation, including child exploitation; modern slavery and county lines drugs gangs. This approach represents a more efficient, effective and targeted approach to identify and address these types of criminality. The implementation of this post and work that has already been delivered is recognised to be good practice by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The introduction of a dedicated Rural Crime Team (RCT) in June 2020 has provided a proactive and visible policing presence for the rural communities in Sussex, targeting the areas of agricultural; environmental; heritage and wildlife crime. The RCT consists of one inspector; two x sergeants; 8 x police constables and six x PCSOs and operates out of bases at Midhurst (West Sussex) and Heathfield (East Sussex). The RCT provides specialist knowledge, engagement, intelligence gathering and enforcement activity to the rural parts of Sussex. The RCT in Sussex is now recognised to be the biggest in the South East region.

The Force has also recruited 40 social media trained contact handlers and five supervisors within the Force Contact, Command and Control Department (FCCCD) who are all trained in the use of the social media management platform.

ACTION: KB requested a breakdown of the number of PCSOs still in the process of completing their initial training.

ACTION: KB requested a copy of the role profile for the dedicated Chief Inspector role responsible for coordinating and enforcing police activity around anti-social driving in Sussex.

BUDGET PRESSURES 2020/21

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact and disrupt our lives.

A. What impact has the pandemic had on the budget plans for Sussex Police in 2020/21?

B. How have you mitigated against the increased costs, lost income and other budget pressures experienced during this year?

C. How are you planning to manage the budget plans and pressures in 2021/22?

The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that there has and continues to be a number of additional cost pressures for the Force, both directly and indirectly, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These include:

- *purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the workforce;*
- *increased police officer and staff overtime;*
- *additional cleaning of premises and vehicles (both in terms of time and materials);*
- *requirement for more IT hardware, software and licences to support more staff working from home;*
- *purchase of perspex screens, signage and making other adaptations to the workplace;*
- *increased financial support to suppliers to maintain their businesses and ensure continuity of service for the Force; and*
- *additional police officer and staff time used to measure and manage the impact and pressures on the budget plans for the Force.*

The pandemic has also resulted in reductions to the income generated by the Force. This has included a reduced provision of policing services to Gatwick Airport, following its closure; reduced numbers of speeding fines issued as a result of fewer vehicles on the roads; postponement of public and training events and reductions in foreign nationals. An income recovery scheme was made available for police forces to counterbalance some of the lost income and reductions experienced due to reduced policing activity, with the scheme meeting 75% of the losses. Additional surge grant funding has also been made available to provide extra policing patrols and visible enforcement of the COVID-19 restrictions throughout the areas in Sussex with the greatest levels of non-compliance.

It is also worth emphasising that some savings have been generated for Sussex Police during this period in respect of reduced fuel costs – through reductions in police officer and staff travelling and the provision of free fuel for police vehicles (donated by British Petroleum). The Force has also noted reduced utility bills with more of the workforce working from home.

The Deputy Chief Constable welcomed and recognised the significant financial support for police forces that has been provided by the Government – a position that was anticipated to continue. Sussex Police will continue to coordinate and submit monthly returns to the Home Office to secure the reimbursement of the additional expenditure incurred as a result of the policing response to the pandemic, including the cost summaries required to support any claim.

JC informed KB that the pandemic has generated additional costs for Sussex Police of £7.3m to date. It was emphasised that the Force is continuing to regularly monitor its financial planning and will receive Government grants worth £4.9m to reimburse them for some of these costs. However, this will still generate an additional savings requirement for the Force of £2.4million next year. These additional costs, together with the investment, inflation and reductions in income have generated further budgetary pressures and a total savings requirement for Sussex Police of £8million during 2021/22.

The Deputy Chief Constable set out the plans to manage the budget and continued pressures from the pandemic in 2021/22. It was explained that a Strategic Planning Board is held on a monthly basis, with key stakeholders from across the Force, to understand and consider what the cost pressures are, any mitigation that can be put in place, develop the response to these financial risks and identify any actions that can be taken.

Sussex Police has engaged the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to assist them in this work. CIPFA will review the financial planning, challenge any assumptions and consult with budget holders in order to develop a robust, realistic and achievable savings plan for 2021/22.

Sussex Police has already introduced a number of measures to reduce some of the additional costs, including:

- ✓ tighter controls on police officer and staff overtime;*
- ✓ reduced agency and temporary staff costs;*
- ✓ recruitment freeze for police staff (unless under exceptional circumstances);*
- ✓ pausing of all non-essential property maintenance; and*
- ✓ requirements for budget holders to delay and/or reduce all spending activity, providing that these savings will not impact on the delivery of operational policing.*

CIPFA have also met with internal budget holders to challenge expenditure and identify potential savings, including the facilitation of a bespoke 'finance day' to assess further areas for savings and budget pressures with leaders from across the Force. The savings identified through these forums were graded and presented to Chief Officers for assessment which culminated in the production of a savings plan. This approach will ensure that the Force has a sustainable financial position and that any investment is focused on the activities required to support the priorities of the Chief Constable.

The Chief Constable concluded by stating that some internal messaging has been developed for wider circulation to all police officers and staff in respect of the savings required in 2021/22. JS agreed to share a copy of this message with KB.

KB concluded by stating that the discussions at this PAM will be used to inform the financial plans for 2021/22 and the investment case that will be presented to the Police & Crime Panel for approval on Friday, 29 January 2021. The meeting will be webcast live and can be viewed through the following link:

<https://eastsussex.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

ACTION: The Chief Constable to share a copy of the internal messaging that has been developed and provided to all police officers and staff in respect of the savings required in 2021/22.

REASSURANCE TO SUSSEX COMMUNITIES – CORONAVIRUS

Earlier this month (4 January 2021), the Prime Minister announced that a third national lockdown (Tier 5) would commence in England until 15 February 2021, at the earliest.

A. The Sussex Resilience Forum declared a major incident in response to the unprecedented pressures of COVID-19 on the county on 6 January 2021. For the benefit of the viewers, what does this mean and how will this decision strengthen the Force's effort, resources and response?

B. Will Sussex Police seek to demonstrate tougher enforcement of the restrictions in place to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus? And, how will the Force use the additional surge funding to support this enforcement?

C. How many Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) has the Force issued during the third lockdown? What is the total number of FPNs issued by Sussex Police?

D. What impact do you anticipate lockdown 3.0 will have on domestic abuse in Sussex? And, how will the Force support vulnerable victims at this time?

E. Last year, Sussex Police introduced a Domestic Abuse Local Resolution Team to provide a dedicated and exclusive response to domestic abuse crimes and incidents and an improved service to victims. How will this team be used to support victims of domestic abuse at this time?

JS reminded individuals that the Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) is a multi-agency partnership with statutory responsibilities to work together to prepare, respond to and recover from emergencies and major incidents, under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The SRF define a major incident as, "an event or situation with a range of serious consequences which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agency."

The SRF made the collective decision to declare a major incident earlier this month in response to the high and increasing rate of infection across Sussex and to allow public services to make exceptional preparations for a potentially worsening situation. This decision is recognised to put all agencies in Sussex in the "best possible position" to come together to tackle the virus, including the ability to access a greater range of powers. The declaration also sets in motion standard and rehearsed escalation processes at a time of exceptional need. [EDIT: It was emphasised that the same decision has been taken by several other local resilience forums in the South East region].

The Chief Constable again thanked the vast majority of members of the public for continuing to sensibly follow the restrictions in place. Individuals were reminded that Sussex Police would continue to use engagement; explanation; encouragement and enforcement – known locally as the 4Es – to protect individuals, vulnerable communities and the National Health Service (NHS). As stated previously, the Force would prefer to achieve compliance against the restrictions before it is necessary to escalate the response to the enforcement stage of the process but confirmed that it would now escalate this process faster for any deliberate, flagrant and/or reckless breaches.

KB was pleased to note that the surge funding is being used by Sussex Police to target the areas throughout the county with the greatest levels of non-compliance, both geographically and within sections of the community. This additional funding is enabling the Force to provide a proactive, immediate and visible response to the enforcement of the COVID-19 restrictions in Sussex through the provision of additional policing patrols.

Sussex Police issued more than 300 FPNs during the latest lockdown (between 26 December 2020 and 19 January 2021) following more than 2,700 reports of breaches. The main offences recorded for these fines are: participating in a gathering of two or more people in a private dwelling; participating in a gathering of more than two people in a public outdoor space and individual leaves and/or is outside place where living without a reasonable excuse.

Sussex Police has now issued a total of 1,379 FPNs between 1 April 2020 and 19 January 2021. This has included issuing two £10,000 FPNs to individuals for arranging mass gatherings of more than 30 people and two summons' to court for individuals committing the same offence. [EDIT: These occurred during the period when these fines were temporarily suspended – the individuals could still be issued with the same fine when they are sentenced].

The Chief Constable confirmed that the new offence announced last night (21 January 2021) related to an £800 FPN for individuals attending gatherings of more than 15 people in a private dwelling. Further guidance about the offence is still awaited from the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) ahead of its introduction next week. Once enacted, the Force will enforce this in a proportionate and consistent manner throughout Sussex.

It was acknowledged that reports of domestic abuse have reduced in recent months, with circa. 1,600 reports received in December 2020, in comparison to circa. 1,800 reports in the same month the year before. Following triage and initial investigation, the number of flagged domestic abuse reports that are subsequently confirmed as crimes are at the levels expected. The Force is anticipating an increase in the number of reports of domestic abuse following the easing of any lockdown restrictions, as has been the case previously. Sussex Police is, however, trying to reduce the harm caused to victims by encouraging them to come forward and report this domestic abuse now, instead of waiting for the restrictions to ease, making more resources available to support this.

Some of the proactive policing activity in this area has included the provision of banners in supermarkets (where victims can approach the police without the perpetrator present), printed messages on the bags used by pharmacies (setting out the details of support services available in Sussex) and issuing guidance on social media platforms (setting out how victims can access support websites covertly – using incognito tabs and safety buttons – to protect victims of domestic abuse who might be living with their perpetrators during lockdown and monitoring their search history as a result).

The Domestic Abuse Local Resolution Team has continued to support the Force in this response, with appointments made with 93% of all victims within 48 hours of initial contact, either in person or through the innovative use of technology. It was highlighted that 68% of victims have opted for virtual video appointments, representing a change in victim behaviour, with only 26% of victims preferring to visit a police station. [EDIT: None of the technological platforms leave a trace on the victim's mobile telephone or computer to protect them further still].

The Chief Constable reminded individuals that fleeing from domestic abuse is a legitimate reason to leave your house and that no action would be taken against anyone for doing this. Any individuals who are experiencing domestic abuse and need immediate help were informed that they can ask for 'ANI' at any participating pharmacy. 'ANI' stands for Action Needed Immediately and phonetically sounds like the name Annie. If a pharmacy has the 'Ask for ANI' logo on display, they will offer you a private space, provide a phone and ask if you need support from the police or other domestic abuse support services. Further information about the scheme can be viewed through the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help>

JC reiterated that Sussex Police has strong and effective working relationships with the partner agencies responsible for providing victims' services and supporting the survivors of domestic abuse. The Force is continuing to meet regularly with these agencies to manage and respond to the increased demand that is anticipated.

KB asked the Chief Constable for assurances about the resilience within Sussex Police to manage the backlog in Crown Court case. JS confirmed that Sussex Police is working closely with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to understand better the volume of victims and witnesses in Sussex and the additional pressures that are being placed on the Witness Care Unit.

IOPC – POLICE COMPLAINTS STATISTICS FOR ENGLAND AND WALES 2019/20

In November 2020, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) published the police complaints statistics for England and Wales in 2019/20. Sussex Police recorded 885 complaints across the year – an increase of two complaints (and 0.2%) – in comparison to the 883 complaints recorded in 2018/19.

A. The report highlighted that Sussex Police took an average of 231 days to finalise local investigations – the longest time recorded for all police forces and significantly higher than the national average of 151 days. What is the reason for this and what plans are in place to reduce these timescales?

B. Sussex Police has introduced a new Public Confidence Team within the Professional Standards Department. What impact is this team anticipated to have on the experience of complainants?

C. The number of allegations made against Sussex Police employees increased by 11% to 1,465 during 2019/20, in comparison to the 1,319 recorded the year before. What were the nature of these allegations? And, what do you attribute the increased number of allegations to?

JC confirmed that local investigations are undertaken and conducted within the Professional Standards Department (PSD), with the standards in respect of complaint assessment, recording and investigations set internally, by the Head of PSD, with expectations set around the timeliness and effectiveness of each individual stage.

The Deputy Chief Constable recognised that the average time taken to finalise local investigations in Sussex (231 days) was significantly higher than other police forces in England and Wales. This was attributed to a small number of cases where difficulties were encountered engaging with the complainant and/or obtaining evidence to support the investigation.

It was highlighted that the IOPC data included two local investigations for Sussex Police which took more than 300 days to finalise within the period 1 April 2019 to 1 February 2020 and are recognised to have contributed to the longer time taken to respond. KB was reassured that these cases are uncommon and that PSD is proactively trying to identify ways to expedite such cases faster and improve engagement with complainants.

Benchmarking activity with other areas identified that the size of the PSD within Sussex Police was small in comparison to its Most Similar Group of other police forces. Additional investment and resources have been made available to enhance the effectiveness and timeliness of the local investigations delivered within the department.

The Force has also introduced a Public Confidence Team to respond to low-level complaints received by PSD, instead of allocating these out to division for response. The focus of the team is to "listen, resolve and restore" and, in addition to the dedicated staff within the team, Sussex Police has also introduced police officers on restricted and/or recuperative duties to provide further support by telephoning individuals, explaining fully the situation and developing enhanced understanding of the complaints being described. This approach has already contributed to a reduction in the number of formal complaints received as a direct result of increased levels of service recovery. Although it was recognised that further work is still required in this area, this was considered to represent a positive improvement to reduce the number and length of investigations.

The Deputy Chief Constable attributed the 11% increase in the number of allegations made against Sussex Police employees to more accurate recording processes. This is because the Force has adopted a revised approach to complaint recording processes, itemising each of the allegations made within the complaint, to ensure both clarity of understanding and to enable each allegation to be addressed individually. It was recognised that detailed and complex complaints are more likely to generate greater numbers of allegations recorded and does not necessarily correlate to more issues.

OPERATION DRAGONFLY – CHRISTMAS DRINK-AND-DRUG-DRIVE CAMPAIGN – RESULTS

Operation Dragonfly – the dedicated Sussex Police drink-and-drug-drive campaign – ran for more than four weeks in the lead up to the festive period.

A. How have you reflected on the latest campaign?

B. What was the total number of drivers who were breathalysed and/or tested for substances? And, how many of these individuals were arrested?

The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that between 1 December 2020 and 1 January 2021, Sussex Police carried out 2,051 vehicle stops and made 212 arrests for drink-and-drug-driving offences in Sussex as part of Operation Dragonfly. [EDIT: This policing activity was recorded despite a 24% reduction in the number of vehicles on the roads in Sussex as a result of the 'stay at home' restrictions imposed by the Government in response to preventing the further spread of the coronavirus].

JC recognised that there was a 21% increase in the number of breath tests administered during the 2020 campaign, in comparison to the three-year average for the previous campaigns. This was recognised to be a better comparator than a year-on-year comparison because the campaign in December 2019 only ran for two weeks and meant that the number of breath tests administered last year were lower than the other four-week campaigns in 2017 and 2018.

The Force used a combination of high-visibility operational policing to carry out vehicle stops and checks – during the evenings and early in the mornings – together with a more targeted approach – using unmarked police cars – based on intelligence received from reports made to Operation Crackdown by members of the public, in an attempt to stop drink-and-drug-driving in Sussex. A concerted communications campaign provided additional support for the campaign, together with the utilisation of available resources within the RPU and the Tactical Firearms Units to enhance the overall policing response.

Over the period of the campaign, Sussex Police stopped and breathalysed 614 motorists, of which 114 individuals were arrested for drink-driving offences. Over the same period, the Force stopped and tested 45 individuals for substances – using drug-wipe tests – of which 114 individuals were arrested for drug-driving offences. A further four individuals were arrested for failing to provide a sample. The failure rates obtained for both tests demonstrated similar levels of offending to previous years. The 212 arrests were made during the following times of the day: 67 arrests between 00:01 and 06:00; 29 arrests between 06:01 and 12:00; 35 arrests between 12:01 and 18:00 and 81 arrests between 18:01 and 00:00. This information could be used to influence further campaigns, including a particular focus on the 'morning after' scenario. [N.B. The difference in the number of arrests (212) compared to the breakdown of offences (232) is a result of individuals being arrested for multiple offences].

Members of the public with specific concerns about individuals they suspect of drink-or-drug-driving were again encouraged to report these to Sussex Police. This can be done by text to 65999, through Operation Crackdown (www.operationcrackdown.co.uk), by email to 101@sussex.pnn.police.uk or via the Sussex Police website (www.sussex.police.uk). Individuals can also contact the independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111. If it is known that someone is drink-or-drug-driving, members of the public should call 999 immediately.

JC concluded by stating that drink-and-drug-driving continues to remain a priority area for Sussex Police throughout the calendar year. The Force will continue to target and pursue those responsible for drink-and-drug-driving and the other four components of the 'fatal five' – excessive speed; using mobile phones when driving; not wearing a seatbelt and careless or dangerous driving – in order to reduce the number of individuals killed or seriously injured on the roads of Sussex.

TASER USAGE IN SUSSEX AND SURREY

Last year (March 2020), the Home Office awarded Sussex and Surrey Police with £462,000 to equip 560 more officers with Tasers across both police force areas, including an extra 291 Tasers in Sussex.

A. For the benefit of the viewers, can you explain what instances Tasers can be used for?

B. There are 7 different ways a Taser can be used – drawn; aimed; red dot; arced; fired; drive stun and angled drive stun – each of which must be recorded. What does the breakdown of Taser usage look like in Sussex?

C. How has this funding been used to increase the total number of officers trained in Taser usage? How many officers are now trained in Taser usage in Sussex and what proportion of frontline officers does this equate to?

D. Carrying a Taser is just one of a number of tactical ‘use of force’ options available to police officers when dealing with incidents with the potential for conflict. How do you monitor the use of Tasers in Sussex to ensure that each use is proportionate, lawful and accountable?

E. What training is provided to officers before they are issued with Tasers? And, how frequently is this training refreshed?

F. MIND – a mental health charity – called the funding news “deeply disturbing” and was concerned that a greater availability of Tasers might result in increased usage against individuals with mental health problems and learning disabilities. The charity also stated that the training officers currently receive on de-escalation is “not fit for purpose”. How do you respond to these statements?

JS explained that Conducted Energy Devices – commonly referred to as Tasers – are carried as part of personal equipment by Authorised Firearms Officers (AFOs) and Specially Trained Officers (STOs) who have applied for and been trained in the use of Taser to assist them as part of their policing duties.



There are no specific circumstances in which the use of Taser has been deemed appropriate. This is generally based on a threat assessment of the incident, persons involved, weapons seen and any other factors that can be taken into consideration, using the National Decision Model methodology. It was recognised that Tasers would generally be used in situations where individual(s) are threatening physical harm to themselves, members of the public, police officers and/or other emergency service workers.

Tasers are recognised to be just one of range of different policing powers that frontline officers are entrusted with across the police service. [EDIT: Other use of force tactics include holding an arm; using handcuffs; using a baton; using irritant spray; deploying a police dog or using a firearm]. Sussex Police want police officers to use the lowest level of force required to respond to any given situation, with the use of verbal communication recognised to be the most important and preferred option. There is a clear expectation that the use of any use of force by officers should be proportionate, lawful, accountable and necessary and adhere to the principles set out in the Code of Ethics.

It was confirmed that Tasers were used 1,179 times by Sussex Police between 1 January and 31 December 2020. This information is summarised in the table below with descriptions of each of the 7 different ways that Tasers can be used:

Use of Taser	Description	Number	Percentage
<i>Drawn</i>	<i>The Taser is taken out of its holster.</i>	396	33.6%
<i>Aimed</i>	<i>The Taser is pointed at someone.</i>	112	9.5%
<i>Red Dotted</i>	<i>The Taser is pointed at someone with the red dot laser sight active so that a red dot appears on the person it is pointed at.</i>	566	48.1%
<i>Arced</i>	<i>With no cartridge attached, the Taser is switched on and the trigger squeezed so that electric current arcs between the two contact points on the front of the Taser.</i>	5	0.4%
<i>Discharged (Fired)</i>	<i>With a cartridge attached, the Taser is switched on and the trigger squeezed causing the cartridge to fire.</i>	96	8.1%
<i>Drive Stun</i>	<i>With no cartridge attached, the front of the Taser is placed against the person and 'arced' (the trigger is squeezed so that electric current arcs between the two contact points on the front of the Taser).</i>	4	0.3%
<i>Angled Drive Stun</i>	<i>With the cartridge attached, after an 'ineffective firing' (when the barbs of the Taser are too close together or one of the barbs does not attach) the front of the Taser is placed against the person (away from the barbs) and the Taser is activated.</i>	0	0%

The overwhelming majority of Taser usage in Sussex (91.2%) related to either red dotted (48.1%), drawn (33.6%) or aimed (9.5%). It remains the responsibility of the police officer(s) involved to explain exactly what is happening to the individual at every stage and that the process will escalate and de-escalate, as appropriate.

It was highlighted that there are currently 555 police officers accredited in the use of Taser in Sussex, with 64 of these officers scheduled to complete their annual refresher training during 2021. The COVID restrictions in place have resulted in the requirement to make amendments to the delivery of the training provided, including reductions in the number of officers within each cohort and enhanced cleaning regimes.

The Chief Constable confirmed that Tasers are available to any frontline police officer in Sussex who wants to carry one and who has passed the training and checks required. KB expressed her support for this approach. It was highlighted that 40% of all frontline officers within the Force are trained in the use of Taser. Sussex Police is planning to increase this proportion to 60% of all frontline officers during 2021/22, subject to the pandemic – this would equate to 1,056 officers trained and accredited in the use of this power. KB was informed that the Home Office funding has been used to pay for the Taser hardware. It is the responsibility of all police forces to make up any shortfall in this funding in terms of the training and additional equipment required.

JS confirmed that a clear governance structure exists in Sussex for the use of force, which is monitored through the Legitimacy & Ethics Board. This includes the mandatory completion of a form when ANY force is used by officers, including Taser, to provide a consistent level of scrutiny.

The Force also adheres to the deployment and review guidance issued by the NPCC and, following any discharge of the Taser, a standardised process exists for forensic recovery of evidence at the scene. This is recognised to be expected practice and includes the downloading of any body worn video footage available to ascertain exactly what happened and to understand better the circumstances involved.

A Single Point of Contact (SPoC) for Taser also exists on each of the three policing divisions in Sussex to review usage and identify any best practice and/or opportunities for collective learning. Anything identified is shared across the Force via the Taser training team.

It was highlighted that 92% of all Taser usage in Sussex is against individuals who are male, aged between 18 and 34 years old and declare their ethnicity as white. A total of 9% of Taser usage was recorded against BAME individuals, of which 3.5% identified themselves as Asian. This is monitored through the Equality & Diversity Board.

KB was informed that the initial Taser training is four days – this covers the theory; legislation; static drills and scenarios required to ensure that individual officers have the ability to make informed, proportionate and appropriate judgements, under pressure. Following the successful award of this policing power, annual accreditation is required to maintain it. Despite the pandemic, 151 police officers were trained in the use of Taser in Sussex since March 2020. The pass rate for this training is 87%, rising to 94% for any individuals who were unsuccessful during their first attempt.

It was emphasised that Sussex Police is always looking to improve the training that is provided to police officers and staff, particularly in respect of any additional provisions that are made available in respect of mental health. Any opportunities to learn from other organisations and improve the training provided in Sussex are collated nationally before they are disseminated to all police force areas. This applies to all elements of policing and not just Taser usage.

The Chief Constable reiterated that Sussex Police always want police officers to use the lowest level of force required to respond to any given situation. However, there will be circumstances where officers need to take positive action against those individuals with mental health issues in order to safeguard the individual and/or anyone else involved, particularly in the instances where weapons are present.

JS concluded by stating that Tasers are a use of force and, as such, should only be used where proportionate, lawful, accountable and necessary in order to adhere to the principle of policing by consent. [EDIT: This is the legitimacy within which members of the public expect police officers to act in respect of transparency about their powers, the integrity demonstrated in exercising those powers and the accountability for doing so].

ACTION: KB would like to know how Sussex Police compares to its Most Similar Group of forces for its use of Taser against individuals who declare their ethnicity as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME).

NEXT UP:

The next PAM is on Friday, 26 February 2021 at 13:00. Further information can be viewed on my website through the following link:
www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/watch-live/