

PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY MEETING

DATE: 22 April 2022

LOCATION: Virtual (via Microsoft Teams)

PRESENT: Police & Crime Commissioner – Katy Bourne (KB)
Chief Executive Officer – Mark Streater (MS)
Deputy Chief Constable – Julia Chapman (JC)
Temporary Assistant Chief Constable – Lisa Bell (LB)

Correspondence and Admin Officer – Elliot Saunders (webcasting)
Head of Performance – Graham Kane (minutes)

HMICFRS – COUNTER-CORRUPTION ARRANGEMENTS

Last month [22 March 2022], Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published the findings from their 'inspection of the Metropolitan Police Service's (MPS) counter-corruption arrangements and other matters related to the Daniel Morgan Independent Panel'. The report highlighted that the Force's approach to tackling corruption was "not fit for purpose".

A. In the past two years, the MPS was found to have recruited individuals with criminal connections and >100 individuals who have committed offences. How does Sussex Police compare? And where some of these recruitment decisions are justifiable, what has the Force done to properly supervise these individuals to lessen any potential risks?

B. More than 2,000 warrant cards issued to personnel who have since left the MPS were highlighted as being unaccounted for. Have all outstanding warrant cards been returned in Sussex? If not, how many of these remain unaccounted? And what are you doing to recover them?

C. The Force was also unable to confirm exactly who had been allocated mobile phones and tablets. What assurances can you provide me about the asset register arrangements in Sussex?

D. The MPS was recognised not to know whether all those in sensitive posts – including child protection, major crime investigation and informant handling – have been cleared to the level of security vetting required. How do you ensure that the level of vetting is appropriate to the role that is being undertaken in Sussex? And how frequently are these levels reviewed?

E. HMICFRS found property and exhibit procedures to be "dire", with hundreds of items unaccounted for [including cash and drugs]. What do these procedures look like locally? And how is performance in this area monitored and measured?

F. The capability of the MPS to proactively monitor its IT systems was still recognised to be insufficient and ineffective, despite repeated warnings from the inspectorate. Are you satisfied that the IT monitoring used by Sussex Police enhances the ability of the Force to identify corrupt personnel? And are you continuing to make investments in this area?

The Deputy Chief Constable began by explaining that Sussex Police take counter-corruption "extremely seriously". It was explained that the Force has a dedicated Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) – within the Professional Standards Department (PSD) – which is responsible for assessing, investigating and managing all reports received through the anonymous reporting platform – 'Break the Silence' – including those reports relating to corruption and/or abuse of authority.

Sussex and Surrey Police also have a Joint Force Vetting Unit (JFVU) that "fully complies" with the Vetting Code of Practice and Authorised Professional Practice (APP) developed by the College of Policing (CoP). This includes a series of mandated basic checks that are undertaken for all officers, staff and volunteers before they commence employment with the Force. Many of these checks are repeated and/or additional vetting undertaken should changes be made to a role that an individual is performing as part of any internal movement in respect of access to vulnerable individuals, systems and/or sensitive information.

KB was informed that there are a limited set of circumstances whereby an individual may still be eligible to join the police service despite having committed a criminal offence, misconduct offence and/or behaved inappropriately previously, particularly when they may have been a juvenile at the time. It was emphasised that this is dependent on the offence, when it took place and any consequences and/or outcomes.

It was also highlighted that this eligibility has been considered by the Sussex Police Strategic Independent Advisory Group – which seeks to increase public trust, confidence, respect and accountability between the police and the communities it serves – who advocated that no individual should be judged solely on their past and any misdemeanours that may have taken place during adolescent years.

KB was reassured to note that Sussex Police undertake a thorough review of any undeclared [and declared] spent [and unspent] criminal connections, associations and convictions and or risks emerging from any of these as part of the recruitment processes used for police officers, staff and volunteers. This scrutiny is undertaken by the Human Resources Department (HRD), in partnership with the JFVU and PSD. Where individuals are recruited in accordance with the above, the Force has measures in place to support ongoing monitoring, including regular conversations with the individuals concerned and greater consideration around the locations they may be posted to within the police force area for any potentially vulnerable individuals. The Deputy Chief Constable was "confident" that these existing monitoring processes are effective.

Any concerns that are raised about the integrity and/or any criminal or misconduct offences committed by serving officers, staff and volunteers are considered and reviewed by PSD. If these are found to be proven, individuals will be dismissed from the Force for gross misconduct, with accelerated hearings arranged where the evidence is irrefutable. The Head of PSD is responsible for making all initial decisions in this respect and is supported in this decision-making process by the Deputy Chief Constable. This includes the decision to suspend an individual whilst an investigation remains ongoing and the progression of any formal disciplinary proceedings thereafter.

It was also emphasised that all police officers, staff and volunteers dismissed from policing following investigations under the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2012 or Police (Performance) Regulations 2012 [and the equivalents for police staff] are added to the Home Office barred list [which is administered by the CoP]. Members of the public with any concerns about police corruption were encouraged to report these to the ACU. Further information can be viewed through the following link: <https://www.sussex.police.uk/ro/report/fo/v2/report-fraud-bribery-corruption/>

Sussex Police has a formalised policy and process to manage all individuals leaving the organisation. It is the responsibility of all line managers to oversee this process and ensure that all elements of the 'formal checklist' are completed prior any departures. This includes recovering individual warrant cards [which are also used as part of the 'interflex system' to control access to the Sussex Police estate] and retrieving any personal-issue technology and/or protective equipment that may have been issued. It was highlighted that the Force is currently reviewing these processes – through testing and auditing – to ensure that these remain robust and fit-for-purpose. KB requested a copy of the findings of this review once completed.

Sussex Police has recently introduced and integrated a new asset management system to monitor and audit the distribution of all digital technology [including mobile telephones, tablets and radios] throughout the workforce. This includes allocating each item with a unique reference number that can be viewed and monitored through one software platform.

The Deputy Chief Constable expressed a "high level of confidence" around the arrangements and control measures in place to ensure that the security vetting for individuals working in sensitive posts remains appropriate. This includes HRD highlighting all internal moves to the JFVU for review and consideration, together with periodic reviews of all dedicated and sensitive posts to ensure that the level of vetting remains proportionate to the role that the individual is undertaking. The Force is looking to make further improvements in this area by introducing a system to oversee and automate these vetting arrangements. KB was also reassured to note that all vetting levels are continuously appraised on an annual basis, regardless of any internal movement.

Sussex Police use another electronic system to record all property and exhibit seizures made and deposited within a centralised property store. This includes allocating each item seized with a unique barcode at each of the transit stores contained within the police stations throughout the county before these items are transported to the centralised store. This system has been linked to the police records management system [since 2019] to enable the effective tracking and monitoring of any movements.

JC was "satisfied" that Sussex Police has appropriate capabilities in place to monitor its IT systems effectively, both proactively and reactively, in response to any information that may be shared or discovered. It was emphasised that the Force is continuing to look for opportunities to invest further in software to tackle corruption and support the police response in this important area, in partnership with IT colleagues. Following the additional investment secured by KB through the police precept in 2022/23, a further three officers will be recruited into the ACU during the year to increase the capacity and capability of this team further still.

The Deputy Chief Constable concluded by confirming that all chief officers are vetted to the highest levels and are subjected to enhanced checks by the Secret Intelligence Service. Any concerns that may be identified about an individual(s) would be considered and investigated by a chief officer in another police force area to ensure that any investigation remains independent and impartial. Further external scrutiny and oversight is also provided by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) and HMICFRS.

Sussex Police was recognised to demonstrate an open and transparent approach to honesty, integrity and legitimacy through the publication of chief officer expenses, gifts and hospitality on the Force website. Further information about each of these can be viewed through the following link:

<https://www.sussex.police.uk/foi-ai/af/accessing-information/published-items/?q=gifts+%26+hospitality>

ACTION: KB requested a copy of the findings of the review into the processes for managing all individuals who depart Sussex Police.

ELECTRONIC MONITORING TAGS

Electronic monitoring [also known as 'tagging'] is used in England and Wales to monitor bail conditions, curfews and restrictions of a court and/or prison order.

A. What is an electronic monitoring tag? And how many different types of tags are there at present?

B. How is the eligibility for the use of tags determined? What offences have these individuals been convicted of previously? How many tags are currently in operation in Sussex? And how does this compare to previous years?

C. How are individuals with electronic tags in Sussex monitored by the Force? What happens if the conditions of a tag are breached? How are any breaches prioritised and enforced? What do the timescales look like for this enforcement action? And how effective are the courts at supporting the police with any breaches?

D. What is Operation Monitor? How is the impact and overall effectiveness of Operation Monitor measured and evaluated? And what does success look like in this area?

The Deputy Chief Constable explained that electronic monitoring is part of a package of support offered to individuals who are subject to Integrated Offender Management (IOM) following their release from prison to try and deter them from reoffending.

All individuals must consent to wearing a monitoring tag and do so on a voluntary basis, with the tag [usually] fitted around the ankle of an individual and a monitoring base unit installed at their home address, as determined by the bail conditions and/or restrictions of a court/prison order. If the conditions of the monitoring arrangements are breached, an individual can be taken to court where the conditions can be changed, including taking the individual back into custody.

There are currently two types of electronic monitoring tags used in England and Wales: curfew tags and location tags:

- ✓ *A curfew tag monitors that an individual is at home when they are meant to be during curfew hours and will send an alert to a monitoring centre if this is not the case.*
- ✓ *A location tag records Global Positioning System (GPS) data about the movements of an individual to monitor whether they are going to any areas where they have been told not to visit by the court and/or prison, attending appointments and/or other programmes that are part of the conditions and that curfews are being adhered to.*

[N.B. The Ministry of Justice is in the process of developing three further tags to monitor alcohol consumption, driving (whilst disqualified) and domestic abuse, although none of these tags are currently in operation].

The type of tag an individual is provided with is decided by the court, prison governor and/or parole board, with potential candidates identified up to a year in advance of them being released from prison. It was highlighted that the Probation Service is responsible for paying for the monitoring tags, with the police service responsible for the expense of delivering the policing response to any breaches. Further information about electronic monitoring tags can be viewed through the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/electronic-tags>

KB was informed that Sussex Police is one of 19 police force areas in England and Wales currently taking part in Operation Monitor – a trial led by the Home Office – which involves all participating forces sharing the crime and incident data recorded locally with the Home Office for them to overlay with GPS data held nationally to ascertain whether any of the tagged individuals were in the vicinity of a crime(s) and should be interviewed about any potential involvement.

Since the start of the trial [in September 2021], Sussex Police has fitted 28 GPS tags to individuals released from prison for either burglary, robbery, theft from the person and/or vehicle-related offences. This equates to approximately 4.6 tags issued per month, against a national target of five. There are currently 17 individuals in Sussex who are still wearing the GPS tags after 11 individuals were recalled to prison for breaches to their licences and/or bail conditions. It was also explained that whilst there have been 21 instances in Sussex where further investigation has been required, following review by Operation Monitor, no charges have yet been made to date.

There are a further 134 curfew tags currently in circulation throughout Sussex. This equates to approximately 12 new tags issued each week and is recognised to be consistent with the numbers issued in previous years. All activity in relation to the curfew tags is monitored by an independent company who are responsible for producing breach statements as required. These statements are then submitted to the Force Contact, Command and Control Department for review, triage and grading before a policing response is tasked. It was emphasised that part of this process will include consideration around the individual and their previous offending history.

KB was reassured to note that Sussex Police will always target the breaches made by high-risk individuals, with a view to deploying officers, making arrests and presenting these individuals to court at the earliest possible opportunity. Low-risk individuals are subjected to regular monitoring through the Daily Management Meetings on each of the three policing divisions until they are located.

The Deputy Chief Constable concluded by stating that any decision about the potential revocation of a license and/or change to conditions is made by the Probation Service before this is ratified [or otherwise] by the Home Office following the submission of any supporting evidence from the police service.

ACTION: KB requested some examples of instances where Sussex Police have used the curfew tags to successfully prevent potential offending behaviour.

STREETSAFE TOOL

StreetSafe is a pilot service for anyone to anonymously tell the police about public places they have felt unsafe because of behaviours or environmental issues.

A. What is the StreetSafe tool? And how is this being used by Sussex Police and partners to improve public safety?

B. What does the 'journey' look like from initial report through to police [and partner] action?

C. How are Sussex Police using the reports received? What improvements have been demonstrated so far? And how will the impact and overall effectiveness of StreetSafe be measured and evaluated?

D. How has the availability of this tool been promoted to members of the public? What information has been communicated to police officers and staff within Sussex Police about the tool?

LB explained that the national StreetSafe tool – developed by the Home Office and the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) – was launched in September 2021 through Police.uk as part of the Government's agenda to tackle violence against women and girls. The tool can be used by anyone to anonymously tell the police about behavioural and/or environmental factors that have made them feel unsafe in a public place.

Sussex Police is provided with a monthly download of all the information received through the tool which is considered by analysts within the Corporate Development Department and overlaid with crime and incident data to inform the tactical response provided by the police and partners. The information shared through the tool was recognised to provide an "invaluable" picture of the areas where further improvements are required to improve public safety. This has enabled the Force to maximise its use of resources through visible policing patrols, tactical deployments and street briefings on specific days and times of the week, together with identifying locations where potential enhancements to CCTV and lighting may be required.

It was highlighted that 664 individual reports have been received by the Force since September 2021, including 281 reports and 213 reports received in October and November, respectively. It was acknowledged that these reports have continued to reduce since then, with only 25 reports received in January 2022, as follows:

	2021				2022	
	September	October	November	December	January	February
Reports received	24	281	213	63	25	58

The importance of continuing to promote the StreetSafe tool in Sussex was recognised. This promotion will be delivered by the Local Engagement Officers, attached to Neighbourhood Policing Teams across Sussex, through social media and proactive bulletin updates. Sussex Police is also using force wide emails, briefing mechanisms and the internal intranet to promote the availability of the tool to police officers, staff and volunteers.

KB was informed that no formal evaluation of the StreetSafe tool has yet been undertaken, although the Temporary Assistant Chief Constable confirmed that the Force would participate and contribute to any evaluation once this scheduled.

Members of the public were reminded that the StreetSafe tool should not be used to report crimes and/or incidents and that they should continue to report any offences to Sussex Police directly. Further information about StreetSafe can be viewed on the Force website through the following link:

<https://www.sussex.police.uk/notices/street-safe/street-safe/>

CALL HANDLING TIMES AND DIGITAL CONTACT

Call handling times and digital contact remains extremely important to me and members of the public who need to contact Sussex Police.

- A. Can you provide me with an update regarding Force performance in respect of emergency calls, non-emergency calls and digital contact?**
- B. In December 2021, the demand for 999 calls exceeded the demand for 101 calls. What was this shift in call demand attributed to? And do you expect this position to be maintained moving forward?**
- C. In 2022/23, the Force will introduce a modern telephony and public contact communication system. When will this new system be introduced? And what improvements will this system make to the efficiency and effectiveness of call handling and dispatch processes and the accessibility of policing services?**
- D. How will the capabilities of the Single Online Home be expanded further still during 2022/23? And what further improvements will this deliver?**
- E. Sussex Police will shortly launch its 'Click, Call, Connect' campaign to educate members of the public about what to contact the Force about. What are the aims of this new campaign?**
- F. How do you measure the effectiveness of the contact between members of the public and the police? And how is performance in this area monitored?**
- G. The recent precept survey indicated that more than 50% of respondents were 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with their contact with Sussex Police. Do these satisfaction rates concern you? And what work has been undertaken to look at the 'customer journey' of contacting the police – from initial report through to the policing response?**

Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Bell began by providing some context around the volume of telephone calls and digital contacts [emails, webforms and direct messaging] received by the Force Contact Command and Control Centre (FCCCD).

Sussex Police collectively receives approximately 45,000 calls each month to both the 999 and 101 numbers. Understandably, all emergency calls received are prioritised by the Force because these are acknowledged to represent the greatest risk to members of the public. Non-emergency calls are triaged and graded by the FCCCD to determine the most appropriate policing response and to identify any potential risks or vulnerabilities.

In 2021/22, Sussex Police received >259,000 calls to the 999 number. This represented a 17% increase in the total number of calls offered to the emergency number in comparison to 2020/21 and equated to >40,000 additional calls. Of the 999 calls received, the Force answered 93% of these within 10 seconds and was the fourth best performing area in England and Wales for the emergency call response.

LB explained that >288,000 calls were offered to the 101 number during 2021/22, although this was recognised to represent a 9% reduction from 2020/21 and >25,000 fewer calls received. These reductions in 101 call volumes were attributed to a combination of COVID-19 [and the restrictions in place previously] and the greater availability of alternative channels for members of the public to contact the police through.

The average wait times for the non-emergency calls also increased [by 1 minute and 41 seconds] across the performance plan year to 5 minutes and 6 seconds, with increases apparent in both February and March 2022. This was attributed to the adverse impact that external factors have had on the demand for police resources, including Storm Eunice [18 February 2022], and the continued challenges presented by the coronavirus in terms of the resources available to answer calls and respond to digital contacts.

The gap between voice and digital contact channels is forecast to continue to narrow, with conservative projections predicting a 52%/48% split in voice/digital demand by 2025. Sussex Police also predict that 999 calls will start to outnumber 101 calls by an increasing margin each year. This crossover position was apparent in December 2021 when the demand for 999 calls exceeded the demand for 101 calls and is expected to continue through a greater shift towards digital contact. In 2022/23, the Force still anticipated to receive slightly more calls to 101 than 999, although most months in 2023/24 are forecast to receive higher volumes of 999 calls.

Digital contact [emails and online forms] with the Force also reduced by 6% across 2021/22, following a spike in reports received in April and May 2020 due to the introduction of COVID-19 webforms. KB was reassured to note that Sussex Police continue to monitor the overall service provided by the FCCCD, including call handling times and abandonment rates.

The Temporary Assistant Chief Constable confirmed that Sussex Police will shortly introduce a new telephony and public contact communication system into the FCCCD. The new system will provide the Force with a platform to manage police resources with greater effectiveness, use public contact data more intelligently and an enhanced ability to 'flex' the use of staff to respond to any changes in demand, with some of these anticipated benefits set to be realised from July 2022 onwards.

LB explained that Sussex Police can now automatically move data received through the Single Online Home (SOH) – a common platform that allows the public to report, transact and contact the police online – to the police records management system without the need for manual transfer. In 2022/23, an Integration Hub (iHub) will be added to the SOH to enable the migration of online crime reporting that is expected to improve the overall support and resilience of the service provided to members of the public whilst delivering enhanced data quality and providing a greater insight into exactly what is being reported to the police.

The 'Click, Call, Connect' campaign will seek to build on the work of the previous 'Make the right call' campaign [launched in 2018] to make members of the public aware of the multiple channels now available to assist and support them with contacting Sussex Police. The campaign will highlight the different outlets available to the public to ensure that the benefits of each are understood fully and that these are proactively promoted by the Force through targeted activity and communication.

Sussex Police undertake regular inspections and audits into the telephone calls and digital contacts received to measure the effectiveness of the contact between members of the public and the police. This includes listening into 'live' calls, auditing specific types of calls and reviewing the responses provided to online contacts to ensure that the best possible service is being delivered and that all risks and vulnerabilities are routinely identified. Another mechanism used by the Force to measure effectiveness in this area are the surveys undertaken with victims of crime. This approach enables Sussex Police to understand better the service received [from a victim perspective] and provides a valuable insight into the victim journey.

LB recognised the importance of understanding the data from the precept survey to identify exactly where service improvements and adjustments can be made within existing processes – from initial point of contact through to the policing response provided – and the management of public expectations regarding the likelihood of a positive criminal justice outcome and the frequency that updates will be provided.

KB was reassured to note that Sussex Police is continuing to use an innovative approach to manage and support persistent, repeat and vexatious callers to the FCCCD. This has contributed to a significant reduction in the number of calls received [halving the previous demand] and represents a positive shift away from the disproportionate policing response that was being created by a small number of individuals.

INFORMATION ACCESS REQUESTS

My office continues to receive concerns from members of the public regarding delays in the processing of requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 and Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018.

A. Can you provide me with an update in respect of performance in this area? And what does demand look like for the Information Access Team?

B. What is Sussex Police doing to progress all requests for information received in a timely manner?

C. Part of 2022/23 precept increase will be used by the Force to provide the Information Access Team with increased capacity and capability to respond to requests for information. What do the timescales look like for progressing this investment?

The Deputy Chief Constable began by acknowledging the practice recommendation received by the Force from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in July 2021 and the requirement for Sussex Police to improve the response provided to all requests for information.

KB was provided with a summary of the scale and volume of the requests for information received by the Information Access Team within Sussex Police. This demand was recognised to equate to approximately 500 requests each month including: 80 – 120 freedom of information requests, 110 subject access requests, 80 family court orders, 120 Criminal Injury Compensation Authority (CICA) enquiries, 25 fitness to practice requests and 25 insurance-related investigations.

It was highlighted that the Force makes every effort to respond to each of the requests received within the statutory timescales provided [20 working days for requests under the FOIA and one calendar month for requests under the DPA]. However, some of the issues around the timeliness of the responses provided by the Force are set against a steady rise in requests which has continued to increase in recent months.

It was also recognised that many of the requests received are multi-faceted and complex which can take a significant amount of time to locate, obtain and process the information requested from different departments before preparing a response and providing any additional context that may be required. This task can also include seeking further clarification regarding the information requested, terminology and definitions used by the requestor and/or refocussing the request to be more specific if it is too broad.

Sussex Police has developed a clear Service Improvement Action Plan in respect of all right of access requests received. A copy of this plan is published on the Force website and can be viewed through the following link:

https://www.sussex.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/foi-media/sussex/other_information/sar-process-improvement-action-plan-v1.0.pdf

A recent follow-up review by the ICO has found Sussex Police processes to be much improved, although the timeliness of the responses provided was still acknowledged to remain a challenge. The Force is continuing to engage in open, honest and transparent dialogue with the ICO to improve further performance in this area. It was also highlighted that Sussex Police has commissioned the Southern Internal Audit Partnership to carry out an independent audit of all right of access requests which remains ongoing. KB requested a copy of the internal audit report once this is finalised.

The Deputy Chief Constable explained that additional staff from other areas of Sussex Police were temporarily seconded into the Information Access Team during 2020/21 to assist them with reducing some of the outstanding backlogs, although these individuals have since returned to their substantive posts.

Investment secured through the police precept in 2020/21 was also used to increase the capacity and capability of the Information Access Team to respond to requests for information and reduce the backlogs. Sussex Police recruited three new members of staff across the year, although this was offset against further individuals leaving the team to pursue other roles within and outside the Force.

In 2022/23, Sussex Police will commence recruitment processes for a further three additional posts to support the team. However, it was recognised that the induction and training processes required to develop each of the new recruits are considerable and can, indirectly, result in short-term reductions to the capacity of trainers to handle request themselves. The reality of this situation is that the existing backlogs will continue to present Sussex Police with substantial challenges until the new resources are fully embedded and operational within the Information Access Team. As such, additional staff from other areas of Sussex Police have again been temporarily seconded into the team to assist them in the short-term.

Another challenge for the Force relates to the supporting software used to process the requests. This is because a growing number of the requests received now involve video footage and audio content – including CCTV, body worn video and dash camera footage – which requires specialist software to redact the personal data of third-party individuals before this can be shared with requestors.

The current arrangements in place to facilitate these redactions include a combination of basic software and support from the Forensic Digital Media Unit, although it was recognised that this position is not sustainable. As such, Sussex Police is considering the procurement of a new technological solution – as a matter of urgency – to improve productivity and support a more efficient delivery of this time-consuming function.

ACTION: KB requested a copy of the internal audit report once this is finalised by the Southern Internal Audit Partnership.

NEXT UP:

The next PAM is on Friday, 20 May 2022 at 13:00. Further information can be viewed on my website through the following link:

www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/watch-live/