

Sussex Police and Crime Panel

3 July 2015

Written Questions

Report by the Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel

The table below provides a schedule of the written questions received prior to this meeting and where possible responses have been included. Responses will be tabled at the meeting that were not available at the time of despatch. Written Questions must be received 2 weeks before a meeting of the Panel and the Commissioner or Panel Chairman is invited to provide a response by noon of the day before the meeting.

Questions that relate to operational matters of Sussex Police will be passed to a relevant officer at Sussex Police for a response and a brief summary of the question will be provided below. For the current meeting two questions have been received for a response by the Commissioner.

Date received	Question	Response
15 June 2015	<p>To ask the Commissioner how she reconciles her active campaigning for the Conservative Party during last month’s general election with her “Oath of Impartiality”¹ and her promise after her own election in 2012 to “park the politics of the campaign”.²</p> <p>Questioner: G Webber, Brighton</p>	<p>Mrs Bourne has been clear that in her capacity as Police & Crime Commissioner she will act in the best interests of the residents in Sussex and stands by her oath of impartiality.</p> <p>The Commissioner is an active member of the Conservative Party and, in her personal life, there is no restriction on her ability to campaign in other elections on behalf of Conservative candidates. None of this activity is carried out in the name of the Police & Crime Commissioner and no resources from her office are used.</p> <p>National Guidance for Police & Crime Commissioners observing the purdah period during the General and Local elections in May was strictly adhered to by the Commissioner.</p>

¹ Twitter, @SussexPCC, 22 November 2012: <<https://twitter.com/Sussexpcc/status/271654489143001089>>

² BBC News, ‘Sussex PCC election: Conservative Katy Bourne wins vote’, 17 November 2012: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-20346180>>

<p>19 June 2015</p>	<p>In her Police and Crime Plan the Commissioner mentions areas of additional investment, but does not speak about areas Sussex Police should focus on less.</p> <p>Facing cuts to police funding, can you ask the Chief Constable to avoid arresting people for medicinal use of cannabis and focus on other crimes instead? I live with terminal breast cancer and would like to try medicinal cannabis oil for pain relief and possibly to halt the cancer progressing. I can't try it due to fear and risk of arrest. I have never committed a crime in my life. I respect the Police and the difficult job they do.</p> <p>In most of the US and several EU countries, medicinal cannabis use is now legal. People with MS, crohns disease, epilepsy and cancer can benefit from cannabis use. Can you commit to not criminalising people like me who are already dying? We have jobs, families and mortgages. We can't risk losing all of this and possibly prison when having limited time to live. I'm 48 years old. I have lots to give in our community and want to live with less pain and no fear of arrest.</p> <p>Can you support this? This issue was discussed in the House of Lords yesterday. It is a serious and urgent issue. Thank you.</p> <p>Questioner – J T, Shoreham by Sea</p>	<p>The Government has determined that it is, and will continue to be, illegal to possess, grow, distribute or sell cannabis in the UK without the appropriate licenses.</p> <p>A question was raised in Parliament on the 17 June 2015 whether the Government has any plans to reschedule cannabis from Schedule 1 to Schedule 2 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 to enable its use for medicinal purposes.</p> <p>In response, the Minister of State confirmed that there are no plans to reschedule cannabis and that there is clear scientific evidence that cannabis is a harmful drug which can damage people's mental and physical health.</p> <p>The Commissioner is not able to comment on the individual case in this question and is sorry to hear about the questioner's health and diagnosis. However, Mrs Bourne supports the Governments view that the use of cannabis for any purpose should remain illegal. There is a due and safe process which should be followed to license new drugs for medical purposes as they become available through the Medicine and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency. If they are safe and effective, they will be licensed for use in the UK.</p> <p>When the police discover an individual in possession of the drug they have to take the appropriate action. However, this does not always mean that every case will result in an arrest or court process. This is because there are other out of court disposals available to the police, including Cannabis Warnings and Fixed Penalty Notices. These disposals are a quick and effective method of dealing with the unlawful possession of cannabis. However, it is important to emphasise that each and every case will be judged on its own merit and any particular features surrounding the case.</p>
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