

**Report to:** People Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 19 November 2020

**By:** Director of Adult Social Care and Health

**Title:** Annual Review of Safer Communities Performance, Priorities and Issues

**Purpose:** To update the Committee on performance in relation to safer communities in 2019/20 and priorities and issues highlighted in the Partnership Business Plan 2020 to 2023.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- (1) To consider and comment on performance in 2019/20 and the priorities and issues identified for 2020/23**
  - (2) To consider if there are any specific issues that should be considered for inclusion in the Committee's future work programme**
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## **1 Background Information**

1.1 Over the last few years new challenges and new types of crime have surfaced. There has been a notable shift away from traditional crime types to new emerging threats such as cyber-crime, human trafficking, child exploitation and serious organised violence related to County Lines<sup>1</sup>.

1.2 The County Council's priorities for community safety are informed by the East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership business planning process.

1.3 The Safer Communities Partnership has a three-year business planning cycle. In preparation for the next three-year plan research was undertaken by the Safer East Sussex Team (SEST) to inform the partnership priority setting process. The information was then shared with partners at a partnership development morning. Following agreement by the Board on the community safety priorities for the next three years, the SEST, in conjunction with partners, developed a more detailed plan; the draft of which is attached at **Appendix 1** of this report. This document sets the direction for partnership work over the next three years.

## **2 Headline Activity**

2.1 Over the past three years there have been significant changes nationally in the way that performance information is viewed. Agencies have moved away from numerical targets and measures, focussing instead on broader outcomes over longer periods. This is reflected in the

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<sup>1</sup> County Lines is a major, cross-cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons. It involves child criminal exploitation (CCE) with gangs using both vulnerable children and adults to move drugs and money. Gangs establish a base in the market location, typically by taking over the homes of local vulnerable adults by force or coercion in a practice referred to as 'cuckooing'.

Sussex Police and Crime Plan for 2017/21, and the Sussex Police Operational Delivery Plan 2019/20. The Safer Communities Partnership has also mirrored this trend and has developed a headline report, which monitors outcomes and activity as opposed to output targets.

2.2 On the 23rd March 2020 the UK went into lockdown, significantly changing the way people live, and the way in which criminals operate. Restrictions on people's movements caused dramatic changes in crime opportunities. Nationally, many crime types from shoplifting to burglary declined, while other crime types, including domestic violence and online crimes (from fraud to child sexual abuse) increased. As we ease out of lockdown, the nature of criminality will change once again, and it is a challenge to predict the impact that the lifting of restrictions will bring, and the further impact of a predicted second wave on society. Many of the crimes that will have occurred during the pandemic are harmful and hidden crimes that are under-reported, and there are many vulnerable groups of people needing support.

2.3 In the year to end March 2020 Sussex Police recorded a total of 38,116 offences on East Sussex compared to 34,761 the previous year, an increase of 9.7% (+3355 crimes)<sup>2</sup>. This increase is mirrored within Sussex which has an increase of 8.8%, which breaks down to 8.3% for West Sussex and 8.9% for Brighton & Hove. Contacting the Police has become easier with the national Single Online Home project providing the opportunity to report more crimes and incidents on-line and investment in Sussex Police Force Contact, Command and Control Department dramatically reducing non-emergency call wait times.

2.4 East Sussex remains a comparatively safe place to live with a lower risk of crime than elsewhere in the country. With a rate of crime per 1000 population of 68.7, (Total Crime). It is similar to West Sussex (68.2), but less than Sussex as a whole (73.9) and the England & Wales rate of 88.9. Wealden in particular has a low rate at 43 crimes per 1000 population which when ranked against other local authority areas in the country placed in it the top 10 low risk areas. Lewes and Rother both have rates below the Sussex average at 57 and 64 respectively with Eastbourne and Hastings showing higher at 90 and 108 crimes per 1000 population likely influenced by their urban, coastal locations and their night-time economy attracting more visitors than their rural counterparts.

2.5 There was an increase in the majority of crime types<sup>2</sup> when compared to the previous year. The largest percentage increase was in Drugs offences at 24.5% (217 more crimes) which is driven by the increase in Drug Possessions (+30%) and can often be attributed to proactive policing targeting known hotspots and offenders. The category with the second highest increase is Violence against the person offences (+13.8%), followed by Theft offences (+11.5%) and Robbery (10.9%). The increase in Violence against the person offences is being driven by an increase in the Stalking and Harassment sub-category offences at +681 offences (+26%). This increase is similar the Sussex increase (+29%) and although higher than the national 12% increase the rate of crime is lower at 6 offences per 1000 population for East Sussex compared to 8.4 in England and Wales.

2.6 Recorded Domestic Abuse crimes in East Sussex increased 10.4% (+618 offences) for the year to end March 2020 for a total 6545 offences<sup>3</sup>. 79% (5191) of DA crimes fall within the Violence against the person category which showed a higher 12% increase (+556 crimes) against the previous year period. Stalking and Harassments offences significantly contribute to

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<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics 'Police recorded crime Community Safety Partnership open data tables, from year ending March 2016 to year ending March 2020' & 'Recorded crime data by Community Safety Partnership area (22 July 2020 revision)

<sup>3</sup> Sussex Police Performance Unit – Crimes & Outcomes report

the increase with a 28.8% increase or 414 more offences. The increase in Domestic related Violence with injury offences was less at +7.5%. There were 2 Domestic related Homicides recorded on East Sussex in 2019/20, 1 less than the previous year.

2.7 Between April 2019 and March 2020, there were 1,051 high risk domestic violence and abuse cases discussed at the East Sussex Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs). This was an increase of 18% when compared to the previous year. Repeat referral rates accounted for 32% of all cases discussed in Eastbourne, Lewes and Wealden and 30% of all cases discussed in Hastings and Rother. These are both within the Safe Lives recommended range of 28% to 40%. There was a total of 1,700 children associated with the MARAC cases recorded in the year up to the end of March 2020<sup>4</sup>.

2.8 Sussex Police recognise that Domestic Abuse and Stalking crimes often go unreported. The force regularly raises public awareness of these crimes for improved recognition of offences and increased public confidence to encourage reports to be made. This allows for Intervention, support and advice to be provided. As such increases in volume could be a result of increased confidence and awareness with more people coming forward to report offences.

2.9 The reported instances of modern slavery and human trafficking are increasing nationally each year and the reported instances in Sussex have followed this national trend. In 2019, there were 103 potential victims referred to the National Referral Mechanism by Sussex Police (39 Adult, 61 Child and 1 not recorded), and 2 NRM referrals from East Sussex County Council, both for a child under 17 years. This compares to a total of 48 potential victims referred to the NRM in 2018, an increase of (+115%). The significant rise is likely due to the increase in NRM referrals relating to County Lines. Referrals for minors accounted for 61% of all potential victims<sup>5</sup>.

## **Covid-19**

2.10 The impact of lockdown on total crime in East Sussex is evident, as looking at the crimes recorded between 23 March to 30 June, total recorded crime was showing a decrease of 19.6% (-2033 crimes) when compared to the same dates in 2019<sup>Error! Bookmark not defined..</sup>

2.11 The reduction in crime was seen in the majority of crime and incidents types reported in East Sussex particularly in Theft offences (-42%) which includes Shoplifting (-45%) and Burglary Residential offences (-36%). The main crime types showing an increase during this period were:

- Drug Possession at +86 crimes (+41.7%)
- Stalking and Harassment at +79 crimes (+8.4%)
- Public Order at +24 crimes (+2.5%)

2.12 In East Sussex, there was a notable increase in reports of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) made to police. Between April 2020 and June 2020, there were 5,302 reports of ASB (+90.4%)<sup>6</sup>. 86% of reports were recorded as 'Nuisance' ASB<sup>7</sup>. The increase can largely be

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<sup>4</sup> Safe Lives MARAC data, April 2019 to March 2020

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-referral-mechanism-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2019>

<sup>6</sup> Sussex Police Community Safety Partnership - by crime type, Report Period – July 2018 to June 2020

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

attributed to breaching lockdown restrictions including social gatherings in parks and neighbourhood disputes, including ASB and lockdown breaches by some individuals in temporary accommodation who have been housed under emergency COVID-19 powers. Substance misuse services in East Sussex have been working with providers of temporary accommodation, neighbourhood policing teams and other partners to address this.

2.13 Between April 2020 and June 2020, there were 1,558 reports of Domestic Abuse crimes in East Sussex. During the lockdown period, referrals to the specialist domestic abuse service decreased significantly from the end of March but started to rise steadily from mid-April and from mid-June were above the weekly average seen compared to the same week in 2019. The local refuge provision for those wishing to flee a domestic abuse situation remained steady, with an average of 3 units available each week throughout lockdown. In contrast referrals made to MARAC for those at the highest risk in East Sussex increased on average by 10% from mid-April in comparison to the same period in 2019<sup>8</sup>.

### **3 Partnership Priorities April 2020 to March 2023**

3.1 The East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership undertakes a Strategic Assessment of Community Safety every three years with an annual refresh in order to select work streams and plan activity for the year ahead. In two-tier areas one document may be produced which encompasses all of the districts within that area.

3.2 Partners have agreed the following priority areas for the Business Plan 2020/23:

- Serious Organised Crime - Prevent and protect vulnerable adults, young people and our communities from being exploited by Serious and Organised criminals in relation to County Lines, Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking, and Fraud Related Harm.
- Serious Violent Crime - Prevent and protect individuals from becoming victims of Serious Violent Crime, including Knife Crime.
- Domestic Violence & Abuse, Rape & Sexual Violence and Abuse, Stalking & Harassment and Harmful Practices - Prevent and protect individuals from the serious harm of Domestic Violence & Abuse, Rape & Sexual Violence and Abuse, Stalking & Harassment and Harmful Practices.

3.3 Partners have also agreed that the following work streams would be maintained as “business as usual”:

- Preventing Violent Extremism through education & training, and supporting individuals through the Channel programme;
- Assist in the implementation of the Offender Management Strategies through our joint work at the Reducing Re-Offending Sub-Group of the Surrey Sussex Criminal Justice Board;
- Helping people recover from Drugs and Alcohol misuse and preventing premature death;
- Raise awareness and identify hotspots, patterns and repeat victims of Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime within the community, and work with key partners to improve and manage partnership responses; and
- Working to reduce road casualties across Sussex with education, enforcement and engineering through the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership.

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<sup>8</sup> Information provided by Lucie Venables, Head of Commissioning

- A cross cutting enabler throughout all of our priority areas is to: Raise awareness of online safety and encourage young people to develop a positive and healthy relationship with social media, the internet and mobile phones.

3.4 For those areas that have not been agreed as priorities, such as street communities, it is important to note that these are being dealt with through other partnership structures. It is also important to note that the partnership remains interested and involved in these areas of work and provide support where appropriate. The full descriptions of the priorities are set out in the attached Business Plan (**Appendix 1**).

## 4 Community Safety Developments in East Sussex 2020

4.1 There are a number of challenges and opportunities on the horizon that will impact on partnership work over the coming year:

- The Serious Violence Bill which will place a new duty on schools, police, councils and health authorities to prevent serious violence;
- The Domestic Abuse Bill which aims to transform the approach of the justice system and other agencies to victims of domestic abuse;
- Probation Reform. The National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies will amalgamate into one service in June 2021 which means the National Probation Service will be responsible for all sentence management including interventions such as accredited programmes and Unpaid Work. The major change for partnership organisations will be that they will be dealing with one organisation;
- The independent review of Prevent will gather and analyse a range of information to underpin robust, evidence-based findings and recommendations on the government's strategy for supporting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism;
- The rollout of Dovetail will see changes to the Channel process aimed at de-securitise the process by transferring responsibilities for some elements of Channel from the police to local government, sitting more closely with local authorities' wider safeguarding responsibilities; and
- The rollout of the recommendations arising from the independent review of the Modern Slavery Act; which looked at the role of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, transparency in supply chains, Independent Child Trafficking Advocates and legal application of the Modern Slavery Act.

4.2 The COVID 19 pandemic required a fast operational response from our commissioned services to enable delivery to continue within national safety guidelines. Where possible strategic work to address the Safer Communities continued and this is outlined in **Appendix 2**.

4.3 In addition, Safer Communities are part of the change management program for adult social care and have identified a number of changes to the way we need to work as a result of the pandemic and are covered under three headings:

- Review and adapt, where necessary, current operational delivery models in light of COVID19;
- Investigate and, where beneficial, establish new models of working that take account of key challenges;
- Apply due consideration to COVID19: its evidential impact on communities and crime in future strategic and partnership planning and development

## **5 Supporting Information**

- 5.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 Police and Crime Commissioner funding for community safety is directly allocated to District and Borough Council based Community Safety Partnerships.

## **6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 6.1 The Modern Crime Prevention Strategy has developed the community safety agenda to consider the broader threat of exploitation. A common theme of the work of the partnership continues to be people with complex needs, which would relate to any one or a combination of substance misuse, accommodation and mental and physical health. During the COVID 19 pandemic the Safer East Sussex Team continued to work with partners to deliver the Safety Communities Partnership priorities and support commissioned services for substance misuse and domestic and sexual violence and abuse.
- 6.2 The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the performance and achievements of the Partnership and their plans for 2020 to 2023.

## **KEITH HINKLEY**

Director of Adult Social Care and Health

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – The Partnership Business Plan 2020 to 2023

Appendix 2 – Work to address the community safety priorities identified by the Safer Communities Board, and support users of our commissioned services during the COVID 19 pandemic.

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