

Sussex Police and Crime Panel

9 October 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
14 September 2015	<p>Domestic violence is a number 2 priority of the Sussex police and crime plan however it has come to my attention that there is an inconsistent approach being adopted by Sussex police officers with regard to the DASH (domestic abuse, stalking and 'honour'-based violence) risk assessments that are completed with victims of domestic violence, with some police officers doing the assessments informally with victims while other police officers are doing the assessments more formally face to face with the victim and asking and recording their answers to the 26 DASH questions. By having an inconsistent approach to DASH risk assessments some victims of domestic violence are not receiving the correct support from Sussex Police and other statutory bodies like social services.</p> <p>1. Can the Commissioner discuss this observation with the Chief Constable, assuming she has not already?</p> <p>2. If the consistency was as widespread as I believe, what would be her response, given her high profile focus on domestic violence?</p>	<p>Questions 1 and 2.</p> <p>Tackling domestic abuse remains a key priority in my Police & Crime Plan because it is essential that victims have confidence in the service that they receive from the police and partners. Increasing the reporting of domestic abuse crimes and incidents is a key measure in both my Plan and the Chief Constable's Operational Delivery Plan.</p> <p>It is important to emphasise that a policing response alone is rarely sufficient to provide the support that victims of domestic abuse require and Sussex Police will continue to strive to further improve the way that they engage with community safety and criminal justice partners to increase reporting and to reduce repeat offending.</p> <p>I can confirm that throughout Sussex a high-level of partnership working exists between the statutory agencies which have a responsibility for supporting victims of domestic abuse. These governance arrangements help to ensure that all services are joined up and minimises the risk of inconsistent support and further harm to victims.</p>

	<p>Domestic violence is No.2 priority of the Sussex police and crime plan but the plan does not address at all the issue of false allegations of domestic violence which are often made when couples are going through divorce and relationship separation. Whereas Sussex police react promptly to investigate real allegations of domestic violence as lives are in danger there does not seem to be the same prompt response by Sussex police to false allegations of domestic violence, where a life is not in danger. Finally when the suspect who has made the false allegations of domestic violence is then prosecuted, the state or crown is seen as the victim of the crime of perjury / perverting the course of justice and not the person who the false allegations are made about in the first place, who is only treated as mere witness of the crime"</p> <p>3. What is the Commissioner's position on false allegations of domestic violence – both Sussex Police's response and the prosecution of such crimes?</p> <p>Richard Nixon of Crawley</p>	<p>Through this partnership working, a one-day training package on domestic abuse was delivered to all frontline (approximately 1,400) officers within Sussex Police to further embed a consistent approach in recognising the signs of domestic abuse and taking the most appropriate action. This training package was designed in partnership with the Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs), who are the specialist provider of support to victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>Operationally, all Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour Based Violence (DASH) forms are reviewed by dedicated officers and staff within the Adult Protection Team (APT) who are highly skilled and knowledgeable. This is a particularly important stage to ensure that the level of risk identified by the responding officer is both consistent and correct and that the most appropriate response is in place.</p> <p>External scrutiny in this area is also provided by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). This is another important mechanism available to me to better understand areas which require improvement. Following the publication HMIC's report "Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse". I challenged the Chief Constable regarding the management of risk at my Performance & Accountability Meeting (PAM) in April 2014 which was dedicated to the HMIC report, "Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse".</p> <p>At this PAM, the Chief Constable also gave me strong assurances that Sussex Police complete and grade their DASH forms in line with the National Decision Model framework. The Chief Constable was also confident that where any DASH forms have been retrospectively re-graded, this has been done for the right reasons, making the most appropriate assessment of all risks involved. This session is archived and can be viewed on my webcast using the following link: www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/webcasting/</p> <p>Furthermore, Sussex Police has just invested in an additional 700</p>
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		<p>units of body-worn video (BWV). This BWV technology is particularly important when responding to domestic abuse incidents, to independently and accurately capture any available evidence.</p> <p>I will continue to closely monitor the progress of Sussex Police in this area. I will also seek to use my position on the National Oversight Group for Domestic Abuse to further improve national policy, resourcing and support in this important area.</p> <p><i>Question 3.</i></p> <p><i>I am still awaiting information regarding Sussex Police's position on false allegations of domestic violence and I will be in a position to provide a response at the Police & Crime Panel meeting on 9 October 2015.</i></p>
22 September 2015	<p>Deaths and serious injuries from road traffic incidents has increased in West Sussex for the last couple of years. Particularly alarming is the huge increase in deaths and serious injuries of vulnerable road users</p> <p>What is the commissioner's plan to crack down on dangerous and anti social driving in order to reduce deaths and injuries on Sussex roads?</p> <p>Colin Tweed of East Grinstead</p>	<p>I have challenged the Chief Constable regarding the performance of Sussex Police in this area at the following monthly Performance & Accountability Meetings (PAMs):</p> <p>2013 – Theme at 2 meetings (18 October and 20 December) 2014 – Theme at 5 meetings (17 January x2, 25 July x2 and 19 December) 2015 – Theme at 4 meetings (16 January, 20 February, 26 June and 31 July)</p> <p>The webcasts and minutes from the previous PAMs can be viewed on the OSPCC website.</p> <p>Sussex Police continue to take road safety seriously and long-term performance (2005 to 2012) in this area demonstrated that the number of individuals killed or seriously injured (KSI) on the roads of Sussex reduced by 12%. However, increased numbers of KSIs across 2013/2014 (+17%) and 2014/2015 (+1%) have replaced this long-term reducing trend. This rise in KSIs can be attributed to increases in the number of collisions involving drivers and riders (+20%) in the vehicle types: pedal cycles (+45%), cars (+16%) and motorcycles</p>

		<p>(+9%). Sussex Police follow guidance produced by the Department for Transport and KSI statistics indicate that the risk in Sussex is in urban areas as opposed to rural locations.</p> <p>Speed is usually the primary causation factor in any collision but this is only regarded as one of the 'Fatal Four'. The other three include: not wearing seatbelts, drink/drug driving and using mobile telephones at the wheel. Mrs Bourne recognises the importance of deploying resources to locations where they will have the most impact and generate casualty reduction outcomes. This highlights the important role of Operation Crackdown to develop intelligence regarding repeat offenders, vehicles, times and locations which can be used to plan, target and deploy police resources.</p> <p>The Sussex Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP) is the primary group which directs activity across Sussex to refine and develop strategies in key areas to make the county's roads safer, build safer communities and engage with members of the public. The SSRP is made up of Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, The Highways Agency, East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service and Sussex Police.</p> <p>A governance structure exists to determine the SSRP priorities on an annual basis. The priority groups for 2015/2016 include motorcyclists, pedal cyclists/pedestrians and professional drivers. Available data demonstrates that these groups are more likely to be at risk or involved in a collision.</p> <p>The education, engineering and enforcement activity of the SSRP is directed by an evidence base which is made up of the intelligence generated through Operation Crackdown. Individuals and communities with specific road safety concerns in their local areas are encouraged to report these to the SSRP.</p> <p>The Local Policing Programme will not impact on Road Policing Unit resources and local Neighbourhood Policing Teams will continue to ensure that community engagement around road safety issues</p>
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22 September 2015	<p>In March 2015 we wrote to the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner regarding the decision by Sussex Police to remove Neighbourhood Schools Officers from East Sussex primary schools. We pointed out to the Commissioner that the schools officers are an integral part of our school curriculum and they had developed a good and trusting relationship with our school children. Also, the decision to remove schools officers was made without any consultation with schools or consideration of the impact their decision would have.</p> <p>We received a response from the Commissioner on 9th April 2015 stating that Sussex Police will continue to 'maintain a footprint' in schools and referred us to the Sussex Police's new Local Policing Model. The Commissioner had forwarded our concerns to the senior Sussex Police officer responsible for implementing the model. We received a letter from Superintendent Taylor, Sussex Police on 16th July advising that consultation would be undertaken but have heard nothing since. We have also studied the new Policing Model to which the Commissioner referred (Sussex Police in 2020 - Working for a Safer Sussex) and can find no mention of schools whatsoever within the plan so are unsure as to what the Commissioner means when she refers to 'maintaining a footprint' in schools.</p> <p>We note that under section 1(8)(e) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 the Commissioner MUST in particular hold the Chief Constable to account for the effectiveness and efficiency of the their arrangements under Section 34 of the Act, engagement with local people. This provision includes ensuring that arrangements are made for obtaining the views of persons within each neighbourhood about local crime and disorder, for providing persons within each neighbourhood information about policing in that neighbourhood and for ensuring regular meetings between</p>	<p>Question 1.</p> <p>I attended sessions with the Chief Constable and his senior command team as different aspects of the Local Policing Programme (LPP) were presented and scenario tested. Having seen the proposal to remove schools officers I made it clear to the Chief Constable that Sussex Police must continue to listen to and engage with young people and that a continued police interface exists within schools. However, I also recognise that this cannot continue to be done in the same way that it has been previously and it will be up to the Chief Constable to determine how this is serviced.</p> <p>I will continue to challenge the Chief Constable regarding the impact of the LPP, including the school/police footprint, at my Performance & Accountability Meetings.</p> <p>Question 2.</p> <p>It is imperative to the success of the LPP that police officers are focused on core policing work. This means that all non-core activities will be reconsidered, and this includes dedicated schools officers.</p> <p>The physical deployment of officers and resources is an operational decision that is the responsibility of the Chief Constable and is delegated through his command structure. Whilst I cannot direct officer deployment, in my role as Police & Crime Commissioner, I can influence the design of the LPP and challenge the Chief Constable on the performance of the service.</p> <p>Question 3.</p> <p>We are delighted that the Sussex Youth Commission (SYC) has been acknowledged as a success. The SYC has moved on from being an initiative to engage with young people around policing and crime to</p>

	<p>people in that neighbourhood and police officers carrying out policing in that area. The decision to withdraw neighbourhood schools officers means that our children and we as a school will no longer have regular meetings with our local police, or the opportunity to discuss issues of crime and disorder and no information has been given on any new policing arrangements. This seems to contradict the requirements under the Act. The Commissioner in her letter stated that 'she had provided constructive challenge throughout the process, representing the public's interest and their likely concerns'. With regards to the Commissioner's legal responsibility to hold the Chief Constable to account can we ask the Panel with regards to the withdrawal of schools officers the following;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. how did the Commissioner hold the Chief Constable account regarding the withdrawal of schools officers, and what specific concerns did she raise that represented the views of schools and pupils? 2. when the Commissioner states that 'Sussex Police will continue to maintain a footprint in schools' what does that mean and as the Sussex Local Policing Model makes no reference to that, how will the Commissioner hold the Chief Constable to account for maintaining that footprint? 3. We applaud the Commissioner's initiative to establish a Youth Commission for 14 to 25 year olds but what provision has the Commissioner made to give a voice to children under 14 years of age on policing and crime? <p>We ask this last question in light of Sussex Police's decision to withdraw Neighbourhood School's Officers. It is interesting to note that under Section 176 of the Education Act 2002, local authorities and schools are legally bound to consult with pupils in connection with the taking of decisions that affect them. We support this provision and our experience shows that children under 14 years of age are more than capable of presenting their views. Whilst we recognise that the Commissioner and</p>	<p>become a valuable asset and critical friend to Sussex Police.</p> <p>The SYC members want to continue to make a difference and I would like to explore how they could link up with the existing school councils referred to in the letter which accompanied these questions to discuss giving a similar voice on policing and crime to children under 14 years of age.</p> <p>The Chief Constable and I agree that engaging young people with policing is hugely important but that this has to be achieved within the means available. Superintendent Laurence Taylor, Policing Lead for Children and Young People in the South East, has undertaken a piece of work to look at the options available which could include supporting volunteers to deliver programmes to young people around policing and crime through a smarter use of technology, video and social media.</p>
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No Background Papers