

PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY MEETING

DATE: 22 May 2020

LOCATION: Office of the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner, Sackville House, Lewes

PRESENT: Police & Crime Commissioner – Katy Bourne (KB)
Chief Executive Officer – Mark Streater (MS)
Chief Constable – Giles York (GY)
Deputy Chief Constable – Jo Shiner (JS)
Head of Performance – Graham Kane (minutes)

**** This PAM was not webcast to free up valuable time for senior officers to focus on pressing operational matters in response to the coronavirus pandemic ****

RECOGNITION FOR CHIEF CONSTABLE

KB began by placing on record her personal thanks to the Chief Constable for his six years of service at this rank in Sussex. GY received recognition for his professionalism in the role, the dedication demonstrated to the residents of Sussex and the consistent support he has provided to the Commissioner. The commitment to keep people safe and the concern and empathy demonstrated for victims was also recognised.

GY thanked the Commissioner for her "kind words" and stated that it had been an "absolute privilege to borrow the office of the Chief Constable of Sussex Police for a few short years."

REASSURANCE TO SUSSEX COMMUNITIES – CORONAVIRUS

Earlier this month, the Prime Minister set out a roadmap for easing the 'lockdown' restrictions in the United Kingdom (UK) after they were again extended by (at least) another three weeks. I would like to thank everyone on the frontline who is continuing to help in the fight against the coronavirus (COVID-19). We can all play our part by 'Staying Alert to Control the Virus and Save Lives' – cooperating fully with the restrictions in place and reducing any unnecessary pressure on our emergency services.

Public confidence and changing demand

A. How is Sussex Police continuing to balance the needs of delivering a responsive police service locally with supporting the measures introduced to tackle the spread of COVID-19 nationally?

B. Can you provide me with an update regarding contact performance in respect of emergency and non-emergency call handling times and 'non-voice' demand?

C. At last month's PAM, the sickness and self-isolation absences for police officers, staff and Police Community Support Officers compared favourably with police force areas in England and Wales. Is this still the position?

D. For the benefit of the viewers, what is the Sussex Local Resilience Forum and how is the effectiveness of its response to COVID-19 being measured?

The Sussex Police response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been structured around three areas: Sussex Police response; national policing response and impact on local policing;

- **Sussex Police response:** *Operation Apollo is the joint Sussex and Surrey Police response to COVID-19. The flexible command structure and resources in place across both police force areas, together with the working arrangements in place with multi-agency partners through the Sussex Local Resilience Forum (LRF), has ensured that an effective and resilient police service continues to be delivered to local communities in Sussex and Surrey.*

- **National policing response:** *The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) has continued to provide Chief Constables with bi-weekly updates to ensure that they have the latest information and guidance. These communications and messages have been disseminated to frontline police officers and staff in a timely manner to ensure that consistent standards of policing and styles have been implemented locally across each police force area.*
- **Impact on local policing:** *Sussex Police has continued to provide reassurance to members of the public by continuing to deliver the regular policing responsibilities expected of them through the adoption of different working practices, including the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), social-distancing and increased working from home. The Force has also been able to deliver the COVID-19 policing expected of them, including the enforcement of the measures and restrictions as set out in the new legislation.*

GY explained that an early decision was taken to divide the Force Contact Command and Control Centre (FCCCC) into four geographically separate locations across Sussex at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak to safeguard the capacity of the Sussex Police contact capability from infection. The four sites used were: Brighton & Hove; Haywards Heath; Gatwick and the existing FCCCC at Sussex Police Headquarters in Lewes.

It was highlighted that the reduction in demand to both the emergency and non-emergency telephone numbers had continued since last month's Performance & Accountability Meeting (PAM). The average waiting times for emergency calls remained consistent at less than 10 seconds for 97% of all calls received and 2 minutes and 40 seconds for all non-emergency calls received, with an abandonment rate of less than 10% too. This call demand has "shifted" online with a significant increase (+173%) in the 'non-voice' demand received through the Single Online Home (SOH) in the form of emails, webforms and online reports. It was also emphasised that more than half of the reports received by the Force through the SOH continue to relate to breaches of COVID-19 measures and other restrictions in place.

Sussex Police is continuing to monitor sickness, shielding and self-isolation figures on a daily basis. The Force currently has an abstraction rate of less than 6% for police officers, with 2.3% absent through sickness and a further 2.8% either shielding or self-isolating and not available for duty. Similar figures are also apparent for police staff, with just over 6% absent from work through a combination of sickness (2.3%) and shielding or self-isolation (4.3%). It was also highlighted that 3.7% of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and 2.5% of those working within the FCCCC are absent from work through sickness. The "courage" of the workforce was commended by the Deputy Chief Constable as individuals continue to attend work and perform their duties during this challenging time.

The Sussex Local Resilience Forum (LRF) is a multi-agency partnership with statutory responsibilities, under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, to work together to prepare, respond to and recover from emergencies and major incidents, including pandemics. The aim of the LRF for this major incident is "to maintain sustained public safety and confidence through an effective multi-agency response to COVID-19 across Sussex".

Sussex Police is a key partner within the LRF and was responsible for leading and coordinating the initial response to the outbreak by supporting the national Public Health England (PHE) response to COVID-19. It is recognised that the recent movement towards the start of a recovery phase means that it is now time for the local authorities, led by Becky Shaw, Joint Chief Executive for East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council, to assume lead-agency responsibility for the arrangements and infrastructure required in Sussex, with the Force continuing to support them in this role.

It was explained that a 'Common Operating Picture' is produced on a daily basis by the LRF which demonstrates the 'health overview' of the county, against a set of predetermined criteria agreed by all of the partner agencies. The LRF has continued to meet on a daily basis and uses a number of Tactical Coordinating Cells to organise its activity in this area. These cells have included: Logistics and Supply Chain; Personal Protection Equipment (PPE); Vulnerable People and Wellbeing; Death Management Processes; Volunteers; Recovery and Communications.

GY concluded by praising Deputy Chief Constable Paul Netherton, Devon and Cornwall Police, for his work as NPCC lead for Civil Contingencies to ensure that all LRFs in England and Wales were as prepared as they could be to respond to the pandemic. The LRF response – both locally and nationally – is anticipated to be reviewed and evaluated as the situation improves.

Domestic abuse

E. Nationally, there has been an increase in reports of domestic abuse following the introduction of the lockdown restrictions on 23 March 2020. Has this increase in reported offences been replicated in Sussex?

F. What does the Force response look like to support victims of domestic abuse and to prevent repeat perpetrators of domestic abuse during this period?

G. Sussex Police introduced a Domestic Abuse Local Resolution Team last month. Why has this team been formed, what are the anticipated benefits it will bring and what impact has its introduction had to date?

H. There may be some individuals who are concerned about making contact with the police or are finding it difficult to use telephone and online channels to ask for help and assistance at this time. What advice would you offer to any victims of domestic abuse?

I. What is the Force doing to make itself more accessible through an 'offline' response?

JS confirmed that there had been a 6% reduction in domestic abuse crimes reported in Sussex following the introduction of the lockdown restrictions, in comparison to the same period a year earlier. Any victims of domestic abuse or children or young people who may have been exposed to it were again encouraged to contact the Force by telephone to 999 (in an emergency) or 101 (for non-urgent calls). The advice offered was the same for any individuals at an immediate risk – do not stay at risk in your own home. If necessary, get out of the house and call the police immediately – Sussex Police has highly trained operators who will know how to help and support.

The Deputy Chief Constable was confident that Sussex Police has the most appropriate triaging processes, safeguarding mechanisms and relationships in place with partner agencies to recognise the victims at most risk. The Force is proactively using Microsoft Power BI data to safeguard better these victims by identifying and targeting the perpetrators most likely to offend based on probation data and previous behaviours to manage these individuals appropriately through Integrated Offender Management.

Through the precept investment in 2020/21, Sussex Police has 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 respond exclusively to domestic abuse crimes and incidents. Following triage, the team endeavour to make contact with victims of domestic abuse within 24 hours and to make an appointment within 48 hours of initial contact, either in person or via a phone app which leaves no trace on the mobile telephone.

It was highlighted that the Local Resolution Team responded to an average of 387 domestic abuse incidents a week between 27 March and 26 April 2020. This equated to 73% of the average 529 low-risk reports of domestic abuse received by Sussex Police each week over that period. This approach generated savings for the Force equivalent to an extra 145 response officer shifts. Instead, these officers are able to spend their time responding to other reports of crime in local communities across Sussex. More importantly, this dedicated team means that victims of domestic abuse in Sussex will now receive a much better service in terms of consistency and continuity.

KB also recognised that Sussex Police is one of only four police force areas – alongside Devon and Cornwall Police, North Yorkshire Police and the Metropolitan Police Service – to have been invited to take part in the Home Office 'deep dive' into the policing response to domestic abuse during the pandemic.

The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that Sussex Police is ready for any second 'surge' of domestic abuse that might occur during this time and has expedited arrangements locally to ensure that an appropriate response is in place for victims. The Force has also expanded their communications in this area to encourage any victims to report these offences now so that safeguarding arrangements can be made. This approach has included providing victims with more opportunities to come forward and report these offences through the promotion of key telephone numbers and an increased policing presence in supermarkets and on high streets, together with a "discreet" offline response through subtle printed messages on the bags used by pharmacies, mobile display boards and stickers on rubbish bins.

ACTION: KB would like to know how many arrests have been made by Sussex Police for domestic abuse offences following the introduction of the lockdown restrictions on 23 March 2020.

Recorded crime and enforcement activity

J. How is the Force continuing to monitor changes in the levels of recorded crimes, including COVID-19-related crimes and scams in Sussex?

K. The Coronavirus Act 2020 introduced additional enforcement powers for the police service. At last month's PAM, it was highlighted that Sussex Police had issued 163 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) between 27 March and 13 April 2020. How many more FPNs have been issued since then?

L. What is the Force doing to raise awareness of hidden crimes, both internally and externally, to increase recognition and reporting during this time?

JS confirmed that Sussex Police has developed the use of Power BI to provide a dynamic and intelligence-based capability to look at changing crime types, reporting mechanisms, geographical locations, times of day and perpetrators on a daily basis.

This approach enables the Force to be more responsive and adapt processes, messaging (both internal and external) and enforcement capacities and capabilities according to demand. This approach also maximises the use of specialist resources, including the Tactical Enforcement Unit and Road Policing Unit, alongside the existing local policing response.

The Force has used this tool to develop a forecasting model to anticipate the 'spike' in criminal activity that may occur when the COVID-19 restrictions and measures are eased further and (eventually) lifted completely, together with the resource planning arrangements required to respond to that. This approach is focussed on the proactive use of resources to minimise the number of crimes and offences recorded through preventative policing.

KB was informed that police officers in Sussex are continuing to use their discretion to take a proportionate, appropriate and patient approach to the additional enforcement powers afforded to them by The Coronavirus Act 2020. In particular, the process of 'four Es' – engagement; explanation; encouragement and enforcement – is being applied throughout Sussex before any Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) are issued to ensure consistency. The final stage of the process has only been used as a last resort if the desired action has not been achieved as part of the interaction with police officers or if the breach is so clear and obvious. The Force continues to be impressed with the compliance levels demonstrated by members of the public in respect of the measures and restrictions in place

It was highlighted that Sussex Police has issued a total of 888 FPNs to date. The vast majority of these FPNs were issued following contraventions of the following three offences:

- *requirement as to restriction of movement during emergency period;*
- *requirement to not participate in a gathering in public of more than two people; and*
- *a direction or fail to comply with instruction.*

It is also worth emphasising that of those FPNs issued by the Force, 51% of these were issued to individuals who reside outside of Sussex. It was also highlighted that fewer than 5% of these FPNs have been challenged in Sussex, either for administrative errors or for not meeting the threshold for the offence. This number is reportedly relatively small compared to the challenge rate for other police force areas in England and Wales and is attributed to the police officers in Sussex using Mobile Data Terminals – otherwise known as smart phones – to issue the FPNs through. This platform provides users with information and reminders about the law, operational policies and the expectations of the Force in different circumstances, together with a template form to record the offences through.

Further to the easing of some of the lockdown restrictions, the focus for the police service is now much narrower in respect of enforcement. However, the Chief Constable confirmed that Sussex Police will continue to target those activities that are not listed as a reasonable excuse for leaving or being outside of home, including the gathering of large groups, travelling for the purposes of a holiday or visiting a second home. GY also reiterated that any police officer or member of staff who is spat at during the course of their duty would receive the full support of the Force.

Sussex Police identified hidden crimes as a potential risk at the start of lockdown, with processes, procedures and working arrangements with partners reviewed to ensure that the identification of hidden crimes at the earliest opportunity were maximised. JS confirmed that there had been a small increase in the number of hidden crimes reported to the police during this time, with a number of these relating to online crimes. The Force is continuing to monitor performance in this area closely.

ACTION: KB would like to know whether there has been an increase in the number of stalking offences reported to Sussex Police since lockdown commenced on 23 March 2020.

Personal Protective Equipment

M. Are you still happy that Sussex Police has sufficient PPE for all frontline officers and staff to use?

N. What is the Force doing to raise awareness amongst officers and staff about both the availability of this PPE and the effectiveness of it in different situations or environments, in particular?

The Deputy Chief Constable remained confident that there is a "sufficient" supply of PPE for all frontline police officers and staff to use and the Force is continuing to monitor its reserve stocks on a daily basis.

Sussex Police has also raised awareness amongst officers and staff about the availability of this PPE throughout the organisation and about what equipment is most effective in different situations or environments. These approaches continue to be updated and adapted following any changes in NPCC and/or PHE guidance and advice.

Expenditure

O. Earlier this month, Her Majesty's Treasury agreed to increase flexibility on funding for Operation Uplift – the Government campaign to recruit 20,000 new police officers over the next three years – to assist police forces with additional expenditure incurred as a result of the policing response to COVID-19. What impact will this decision have on the Force's financial planning in this respect?

P. Has COVID-19 had any impact on Sussex Police plans to recruit an additional 250 police officers, 100 PCSOs and 50 specialist staff before 31 March 2023, together with an additional 129 officers through Operation Uplift before the end of March 2021?

Q. How has the Force been using innovation to facilitate recruitment, ongoing training and day-to-day policing operations during this period?

GY expressed gratitude for the increased flexibility this decision by HM Treasury has afforded the Force in respect of its cash flow and the requirement to assist suppliers by paying invoices promptly. This revised approach will also assist Sussex Police with its ability to meet the increased costs experienced in respect of policing COVID-19.

It was, however, emphasised that this decision does not represent additional funding for the Force because this remains fully committed to meeting the planned increases in police officers, PCSOs and specialist staff. The Chief Constable also explained that there is an expectation that the Home Office will retrospectively meet the additional costs incurred by each police force area in response to policing the pandemic in full through an increase in the police budget.

KB was provided with assurances that Sussex Police remains "on track" to recruit the additional 250 police officers, 100 PCSOs and 50 specialist staff before 31 March 2023, together with the additional 129 officers through Operation Uplift before the end of March 2021. It was emphasised that only a small number of changes have been made to new cohort intake start dates as a result of the pandemic with 36 new PCSOs set to commence in post on Tuesday (26 May 2020).

The Chief Constable confirmed that Sussex Police has adapted its recruitment and training processes for new police officer and PCSOs recruits in line with College of Policing advice and existing capabilities already developed by local universities in Sussex. This has included the greater use of a blended-learning approach that is both flexible and inclusive for those involved by increasing the use of online training programmes and implementing effective social-distancing when physical training is still required.

Easing of lockdown measures

R. How are Sussex Police and the LRF planning and preparing for the incremental easing of the lockdown measures, as set out by the Prime Minister earlier this month?

Sussex Police is working with the LRF to understand better the anticipated impact the incremental easing of the lockdown measures will have on all services as it seeks to develop further the recovery plans in Sussex. It is recognised that it will take members of the public time to adapt to the 'new normal' and the expectations of them in respect of the revised 'Stay Alert, Control the Virus and Save lives' message.

The first stage of lockdown was structured around the police service protecting the capacity of the PHE and the National Health Service, through the use of the additional enforcement powers introduced by the legislation. The recent movement towards the start of a recovery phase has shifted this focus away from the police service and it now time for the local authorities in Sussex to assume lead-agency responsibility, together with a greater onus being placed on personal social responsibility. This approach will also include a shift in the agencies responsible for delivering the communications and messaging around this area to ensure that these remain clear and consistent.

Sussex Police is continuing to play an active role in the recovery phase by delivering the core policing responsibilities expected of them, supporting the work of the lead partner agencies and enforcing the measures and restrictions still in place, where blatant and unreasonable breaches occur.

The Chief Constable concluded by thanking the vast majority of members of the public in Sussex again for their continued compliance with the legislation.