

PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY MEETING

DATE: 18 June 2021

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 – Jo Shiner (JS)
Temporary Assistant Chief Constable – Jayne Dando (JD)

Communications Manager – Natalie McFall (webcasting)
Head of Performance – Graham Kane (minutes)

REASSURANCE TO SUSSEX COMMUNITIES – CORONAVIRUS

Earlier this week, the Prime Minister confirmed that the final step on the 'road map' towards easing the lockdown in England would be deferred [from 21 June] by four weeks until 19 July 2021, at the earliest.

A. What does this deferral mean to Sussex Police and its ongoing preparedness? What impact is this anticipated to have on demand? And, are any changes to demand predicted?

B. Last month (27 May), the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) published an update regarding the number Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued by each force. How have you reflected on the figures recorded for Sussex [2,291 as at 16 May 2021] in comparison to other areas? And, what is the total number of FPNs issued by Sussex Police to date?

C. What is the total amount of additional costs incurred by Sussex Police in response to the pandemic to date? What proportion of these costs have been reimbursed through grants? Are any further costs or reimbursements anticipated? And, how long will Operation Apollo continue to run for?

D. What is the total amount of savings that have been realised by the Force during pandemic? What areas have these been realised in? And, what is the additional savings requirement for the Force in 2021/22?

The Chief Constable confirmed that Sussex Police continue to assess any changes that are made to the restrictions – in collaboration with multi-agency partners – to ensure that an appropriate and proportionate policing response is provided.

Reassurance was provided to KB that the Force remains ready to respond to any additional challenges that are created by the planned lifting of the restrictions – either as scheduled on 19 July 2021 or earlier if this changes between now and then – together with any further delays to the 'road map' that might still be required.

It was highlighted that demand for policing services locally has, in some areas, now increased to above that of pre-COVID levels. This is attributed to reductions in the number of restrictions previously in place and the increased ability for individuals to eat, drink and socialise in public and private places, together with the greater number of 'staycations' taking place at this particular time. This increased demand continues to be managed by the Force in a measured manner in order to keep individuals safe in Sussex.

Sussex Police issued a total of 2,725 FPNs between 27 March 2020 and 7 June 2021. It was highlighted that only one further FPN has been issued since then – a £10,000 penalty issued to an individual that is currently being progressed through the court system. The reduction in the number of FPNs issued in Sussex has been maintained as a greater number of the previously prohibited activities are now permitted. This reducing trend is expected to continue further still.

The Force is using the 4Es – engagement, explanation, encouragement and enforcement – in Sussex to provide a proportionate policing response, with the enforcement stage of the process only used as a last resort if the desired action has not been achieved, the breach is clear and obvious or to target flagrant and persistent offenders ignoring the guidelines. This approach was recognised to provide both an appropriate and proportionate balance.

Sussex Police was positioned 20th out of the 43 police force areas in England and Wales in terms of the number of FPNs issued and positioned fourth out of the eight most similar group forces to Sussex. Thames Valley, Leicestershire and Hampshire have each issued more FPNs than Sussex to date and Avon & Somerset, Staffordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire have each issued fewer FPNs. Further information about the FPNs issued by each police force area can be viewed on the NPCC website through the following link: <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/update-on-coronavirus-fpns-issued-by-police>

JS confirmed that the pandemic has generated additional costs of £8.5m for Sussex Police to date. A total of £7m of these costs are set to be reimbursed from Government grants – equating to 83% – accepting that there is a slight delay between the claims submitted and reimbursements received. The Force is continuing to regularly monitor its financial planning and scrutinise the areas where further reimbursements can be sought.

The Force is utilising the additional surge grant funding – made available by the Home Office last year – to provide dedicated policing patrols and visible enforcement of the remaining restrictions at identified 'hotspots' throughout Sussex, whilst mitigating against any unforeseen costs. The planning team are confident that both the costs incurred to date and the future costs anticipated are accurate.

KB was informed that Operation Apollo – the joint Sussex and Surrey Police response to COVID-19 – will continue to run for the foreseeable future. As well as coordinating the local response to the pandemic, Operation Apollo also exists to ensure that effective planning arrangements are in place to manage the capacity and capability of the Force to respond to local events across the summer and autumn months – matching frontline resources to the planned increases in demand – and supporting mutual aid commitments to other police force areas in England and Wales. This will include the delivery of a proportionate policing response to any further protest events that may be arranged and held in Sussex, utilising any information and intelligence received from members of the public and partner agencies.

In 2020/21, Sussex Police had a savings target of £3.1m and, in addition to achieving this, made further savings of £1.2m to mitigate against the cost of the pandemic, including savings of £985,000 made in respect of fuel, travel and utilities following a greater number of individuals working from home. Sussex Police has a savings requirement of £8m for 2021/22 and KB was reassured to note that the Force is on target to deliver these savings providing that no additional savings are required between now and the end of the financial year.

MS asked the Chief Constable how Sussex Police is monitoring and tracking the vaccinations received by its workforce. All police officers and staff are being encouraged to have their vaccinations – as and when these are made available to them – and to update the Force once administered. JS recognised that most individuals are adhering to this process and expressed confidence in the overall numbers tracked and recorded.

KB concluded by asking for an update in respect of the off-duty police officers found inside a property and in breach of lockdown restrictions earlier this month. JS explained that she was not able to discuss the circumstances around this case because it remains subject to an ongoing investigation by the Professional Standards Department. The Chief Constable reiterated an expectation for "the highest standards of behaviour" for all police officers and staff in Sussex.

USE OF ELECTRIC SCOOTERS

The popularity of electric scooters has grown in recent years, with sharing schemes now operating in more than 100 cities around the world. Trials of electric scooters are currently being piloted in various parts of England.

A. Sussex is not one of the areas taking part in the trials. Can you outline the legal position in respect of the use of private electric scooters?

B. What powers do the police have if an electric scooter is found to be used illegally in Sussex? And, has any enforcement action been undertaken by the Force in relation to the use of these scooters in Sussex?

C. Electric scooters are freely available to buy in England. What advice would you offer to anyone who is considering purchasing an electric scooter?

JD began by recognising the increased use and popularity of electric scooters as a more environmentally friendly and efficient mode of transport for individuals to move around on. It was also acknowledged that the silent nature and relatively fast speeds [maximum speed of 15.5 miles per hour] that the electric scooters can travel at is causing a nuisance and concern to some members of the public and local communities.

Clarification was provided that specific changes to the law have been made to allow for the legal use of electric scooters as part of the dedicated trials taking place in 32 areas in England. These national trials have also generated some additional complexity and confusion to this relatively new area of legislation, leading some individuals to incorrectly assume that the use of these scooters is legally permitted throughout the country.

Electric scooters are recognised to be 'powered transporters' which means that they are required to abide by the same laws and regulations as motor vehicles under the Road Traffic Act 1988 and the Highway Act 1835, including compliance with technical standards; payment of vehicle tax, licensing, and registration; driver testing and licensing; provision of insurance and the use of relevant safety equipment. Further information about powered transporters can be viewed on the Department for Transport (DfT) website through the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/powered-transporters/information-sheet-guidance-on-powered-transporters>

*Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Dando was clear, however, that the use of electric scooters [outside of these trials] remains illegal and that it is a recognised offence to use these scooters on public roads, cycle lanes, footpaths and/or pavements. **Electric scooters are only permitted to be used on private land that is not accessible to the public.***

KB explained that she has received an influx of correspondence to the office from members of the public concerned about the illegal use of electric scooters on the roads and pavements in Sussex. It was emphasised that this correspondence has been received from all areas of the county, with examples from Brighton & Hove, Horsham [West Sussex], Hastings and Peacehaven [both East Sussex] discussed at the meeting.

JD confirmed that guidance has been issued to police officers about the legislation and powers that are available to them around the illegal use of electric scooters in Sussex. The approach demonstrated locally is an escalating one and will vary depending on the individual circumstances involved. This comprises a range of different actions including a verbal warning, formal warning, prosecution or seizure of the scooter as follows:

- **Verbal warning** – The Force is using the 4Es – engagement, explanation, encouragement and enforcement – approach to respond to individuals caught using these powered transporters. A leaflet has been produced for officers to disseminate to individuals who are stopped and spoken with in order to assist them in this educational process.

- **Formal warning** – A formal warning can be issued to an individual [under Section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002] if an electric scooter is used in a manner which causes alarm, distress or annoyance. This approach also provides the police with the option to seize the vehicle, should any reoffending occur.
- **Prosecution** – An individual can be arrested (if conditions are met) or a report for summons issued because electric scooters are classed as motor vehicles offences under the Road Traffic Act.
- **Seizure** – Police officers may seize and retain electric scooters [under Section 165 of the Road Traffic Act] because the riders are both unlicensed and uninsured. Seized scooters may be reclaimed from a police station on payment of a statutory fee, alternatively the scooters will be destroyed.

It is highlighted that all incidents of illegal electric scooter usage should be reported to Sussex Police. This approach enables the Force to develop intelligence regarding repeat offenders, times and locations which can be used to plan, target and deploy police resources. Members of the public were encouraged to submit these reports by telephone to 101, email to 101@sussex.pnn.police.uk or online through the following link: <https://www.sussex.police.uk/tua/tell-us-about>

KB was reassured to understand that Sussex Police is currently targeting 'hotspots' – identified through the reports received from members of the public – where electric scooters are being illegally and/or repeatedly used. The Force is also set to launch an operation in West Sussex to proactively tackle the illegal use of electric scooters by engaging, educating and explaining further the legislation around the use of these scooters to individuals and local communities.

It was recognised that the level of police enforcement around this area has increased, with Sussex Police prosecuting three individuals for the illegal use of electric scooters in the past 12 months. This includes one case of dangerous driving – instigated by a rider colliding with an elderly female and causing her injuries – that is currently with the Crown Prosecution Service for a charging decision, and two cases of driving without insurance – both of which are currently being progressed. The Force also seized 14 electric scooters during the calendar year of 2020 and has seized a further 15 scooters across 2021 to date.

JD recognised that more proactive work could be done in this area a local level through the Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) to improve the engagement with members of the public using electric scooters illegally and with the retailers selling these powered transporters. These interactions should include the provision of the [aforementioned] leaflets to better educate and explain the law around this complex area to individuals.

The Chief Constable confirmed that she will assume responsibility for the national road safety portfolio on behalf of the NPCC from 5 July 2021. This will include oversight of the use of electric scooters and the policing response in England and Wales.

Further information about the dedicated trials, advice about traveling safely, licensing guidance and the rules of the road can be viewed on the DfT website through the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-users>

ACTION: KB would like to know whether electric scooters can be destroyed in the same manner that other motor vehicles are when seized under the Road Traffic Act 1988.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is defined as behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons not of the same household as the person.

A. What are the key challenges for Sussex Police in terms of tackling ASB? And, how is the Force responding to these?

B. In 2020/21, there were 56,926 ASB incidents recorded in Sussex – an increase of 24,444 more incidents in comparison to the year before (+75%). What do you attribute this increase to? What impact did the pandemic have on the number of incidents recorded? And, how many of these were repeat incidents committed against the same individual(s) and/or location(s)?

C. There were large increases across all three ASB categories in 2020/21 in comparison to the year before: Environmental +103%, Nuisance +90% and Personal +54%. How have you reflected on these increases? What are these increases attributed to? And, what is the Force doing to address this?

D. What support is provided to victims of ASB by Sussex Police? What service can an individual making a report expect to receive from the Force? How effective is the workforce at identifying and responding to repeat or persistent victims and/or locations? And, how is the policing response measured?

E. There can sometimes be a fine line between an incident being ASB and where the circumstances around an incident amount to a crime. How confident are you that all crimes disclosed within ASB reporting are recorded accurately and investigated? And, how do you ensure that no crimes remain hidden?

F. ASB issues can often get worse over time. What are Sussex Police doing to prevent incidents from escalating to become crimes? And, how is performance in this area monitored by the Force?

G. I understand that it is difficult to identify crimes disclosed within ASB on the crime recording system. What assurances can you provide me that crimes associated with ASB are investigated to the same degree and standard as other offences? What updates are provided to victims throughout investigations? And, how is victim satisfaction monitored and victim outcomes improved?

H. Sussex Police record some ASB on the crime recording system as crime related incidents. Can you explain the reason for this and whether this decision is communicated to the victim? And, what is the process for keeping victims updated in respect of these incidents?

I. The formal powers available to the Force and local authorities to tackle ASB are set out in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014. How effective are these powers? How is Sussex Police proactively working with partners to tackle ASB? What is working well for the Force and partners in terms of tackling ASB? What preventative initiatives are put in place to deter those at risk of offending?

J. What training and support is provided to police officers and staff to help them identify, assess and respond to ASB in Sussex? Is enhanced training delivered around the safeguarding of vulnerable or repeat victims and/or locations according to job role? And, how frequently is this training refreshed?

JD explained that ASB is a complex area of policing that covers a broad range of crimes, behaviours and activities – it is also not something that exists as a standalone offence.

ASB can impact victims – either as individuals, groups or communities – or be centred around a specific location. The importance of understanding the needs and any identified vulnerabilities of a victim(s) and/or location(s) when contact is first made with the Force was recognised, linking in with responsible partner agencies at the earliest possible opportunity to understand exactly what the impact is and to maximise the opportunities for positive outcomes.

The pandemic is recognised to have had a significant impact on the 75% increase in ASB incidents recorded during 2020/21, with 18,463 of these offences directly linked to COVID-related activity and representing 32% of all reported incidents. This was attributed to the stay at home restrictions in place and the greater number of individuals having to work from home which exacerbated the number of reports of 'nuisance' and 'inconsiderate' behaviour disturbing individuals in local neighbourhoods. It was also recognised that a large proportion of ASB relates to repeat incidents committed against the same location. As such, a collaborative and partnership approach is required to minimise the impact of this offending behaviour, utilising the guidance, advice and support of the tactical ASB advisers to assist the Force in the response to this area.

Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Dando regarded this increase in reporting to be positive because, anecdotally, ASB is understood to be a "crime of confidence", whereby the more confident members of the public are in the ability of the police to respond, the more likely they are to report incidents to the police. Sussex Police has continued to encourage members of the public to report any breaches of the measures and restrictions in place throughout the pandemic.

There are three main categories for ASB dependent on the number of individuals affected as follows: Personal – when an individual targets a specific individual or group; Nuisance – when an individual causes trouble, annoyance or suffering to a community, and Environmental – when the actions of an individual affect the wider environment, including public spaces and/or buildings. Sussex Police uses Empowering Communities with Integrated Network Systems (ECINS) – a multi-agency case management system – to facilitate real-time information sharing between the Force and local authority partners by streamlining processes. ECINS provides a central hub where practitioners can determine the lead agency responsible for the ASB and the most appropriate powers available to use, before tasking and informing partners simultaneously, and enabling support to be provided efficiently and effectively to victims.

Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Dando explained that strong governance processes exist within this area, led by the Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) Board. This is further supported by a layered policing response provided through the three Divisional Accountability Meetings (DAMs) and the policing districts within to consider victim care, crime recording, and the collective partner response required. If a crime(s) is identified alongside an incident of ASB, it is an expectation of the Force that this will be investigated and dealt with effectively, appropriately and proportionately.

It was acknowledged that the Force do not always get things right in this area and a commitment to continue to improve performance was reaffirmed. Members of the public with any specific information about ASB incidents, crimes or both were encouraged to continue to report these to Sussex Police by telephone to 101, email to 101@sussex.pnn.police.uk or online through the following link: <https://www.sussex.police.uk/tua/tell-us-aboutcontact>

JD confirmed that a proportion of ASB is carried out by perpetrators who are children and young people. A significant amount of work is undertaken by the NPTs and Schools Liaison Officers – supported by youth services within local authorities – to engage with these individuals and to educate them about the impact their actions and behaviours can have on others within the local community – without unnecessarily criminalising them. The Force has an aspiration to deal with all recorded ASB at the lowest possible level of escalation. This approach is supported by a number of mechanisms within the district policing structure, including a fortnightly intelligence meeting – attended by the NPT and partner agencies – to look at all reports of ASB received to identify [repeat] victims, locations and offenders, ascertain the lead agencies responsible, develop a collaborative plan to tackle the ASB and to proactively communicate any positive action taken [or otherwise] to local communities through the media.

JD reiterated that the early identification of an incident is recognised to be fundamental in order to prevent the ASB from either becoming or escalating to a crime. KB was reassured to note that all call handlers within the Force Contact Command and Control Department (FCCCD) are specifically trained to identify any crimes as part of the incidents reported to them at the first point of contact. This will include detailed questioning to ensure that the circumstances are fully understood.

The interpretation and early recognition of ASB crimes is an area that remains subject to regular reviews and 'dip samples' undertaken [by line managers] as part of a continued focus around crime data integrity to ensure consistency of response. It was acknowledged that recording errors will always occur as part of this process and that, once identified, those individuals will be provided with additional training to support them in their continued learning and development.

Other initiatives undertaken by Sussex Police to improve performance in respect of ASB include: identifying, understanding and sharing any changes in legislation with officers and staff at the earliest opportunity to improve their knowledge around this complex area; the greater provision of technology to officers and staff [both smartphones and body worn video] to enable them to spend more time out in local communities on the frontline, together with the development of a Forcewide action plan to improve outcomes for victims of ASB. KB also welcomed the amendments made to the shift pattern for the NPTs to deliver increased accessibility and availability to local communities at more appropriate times.

JD was confident that Sussex Police understand the needs and the expectations of victims in respect of ASB. This approach is supported by early engagement with victims in an open, honest and transparent manner at all stages, including clear explanations as to exactly what will and what will not be recorded as a crime [or crime-related incident] by the Force, and what can realistically be achieved to manage expectations. Police officers are required to endorse the frequency of the updates provided to victims – around the progress and developments of an investigation – tailoring the level of contact to the service that individual victims want. It remains an ongoing responsibility for supervisors to oversee that the individuals within their teams are adhering to this.

There is an escalating range of different powers and tactics available to the police and partner agencies to respond to incidents of ASB, as set out in the set out in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The most appropriate powers or tactics to use will be dependent on each situation, the different individuals involved and the most appropriate and/or lead partner agency to respond. Sussex Police use ASB coordinators [on each of the policing districts] and tactical ASB advisors to support them in the most effective use of the legislation and to identify and utilise any best practice nationally. Further information about the powers and tactics available to the police and partners can be viewed through the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/956143/ASB_Statutory_Guidance.pdf

The Force continues to invest in ASB training for officers and staff to assist the workforce to respond to and manage offences within this area most effectively. Sussex Police has commissioned a series of 'peer reviews' [conducted by internal policing divisions within Sussex and/or by other police force areas in England and Wales] to highlight some of the improvements that have been made to 'problem-solving'. The Force continues to regularly review any changes to the legislation in this area before updating the training and disseminating any learning throughout the Force. This is supported by internal communications on the Sussex Police intranet and the greater availability of resources for the workforce on the online problem-solving hub, including information about techniques, tactical options and the most practical ways to apply the legislation.

JD recognised that police officers and staff are getting better at the use of community trigger – a process individuals can use to ask agencies to review their response to ASB or hate incidents reported to them. This system has been designed to provide victims with the right to demand that agencies deal with persistent ASB [EDIT: The threshold for activating the trigger in most local authority areas is three or more reported incidents within a six-month period]. It was recognised that the understanding of community trigger processes amongst the NPTs will be better than some other areas of policing and that further work is still required to raise awareness and promote this process further throughout the rest of the Force.

Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Dando concluded by highlighting that the national 'ASB awareness week' will take place next month [between 19 – 25 July] to raise awareness and understanding of ASB. The week of activity will also seek to encourage individuals, communities and local authorities to work together to tackle this issue more effectively. Sussex Police plan to support and promote this awareness week across the workforce.

CRIME DATA INTEGRITY

It is imperative that the residents of Sussex remain confident in the ability of Sussex Police to record crime accurately. This approach also ensures that policing resources can be deployed and targeted to those locations where they will have the greatest impact.

A. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) previously judged Sussex Police to be 'good' at crime recording. Are you confident that Sussex Police is still recording crimes accurately?

B. HMICFRS has not confirmed when the Force will next receive an inspection into crime data integrity. How do Sussex Police monitor performance in this area outside of the HMICFRS inspection process?

C. How regularly does the Force carry out internal crime data integrity audits? And, what do the monitoring, scrutiny and accountability arrangements look like around compliance? And, what is the day-to-day role of the Force Crime & Incident Registrar in respect of crime data integrity?

D. The Force was previously graded as 'requires improvement' for the efficiency of the systems and processes in place to support accurate crime recording standards. How has performance been improved in this important area?

E. What progress has been demonstrated by the Sussex Police in respect of the other five 'areas for improvement' identified in the previous HMICFRS report?

F. What supervision exists in respect of crime-recording decisions taken by officers and staff? How is any feedback [*both positive and constructive*] communicated to officers and staff regarding these decisions? And, has a common practice been implemented throughout Sussex?

G. What training provisions are in place for the workforce around crime data integrity and the processes in place? How is this training made bespoke to the level of knowledge required by officers and staff to carry out their individual roles, particularly in respect of more complex areas such as stalking, domestic abuse and sexual offences?

H. After setting up the Safer Sussex Business Partnership last year, it was clear that there was a disparity between the number of incidents of shoplifting, abuse and assaults on frontline retail workers, compared to police recorded crimes. Can you outline what improvements have been made to the recording of business crimes and the data sharing arrangements in place with partners?

I. The national dog theft survey that I launched in March 2021 had almost 125,000 respondents and again highlighted a huge disparity between public perception and experiences of dog theft, compared with actual incidents reported to the police. What measures has the Force introduced to improve the recording of dog theft [*and any other pet theft*]?

J. Are there any barriers to data sharing with other police force areas or relevant partners in respect of dog [*pet*] theft? And, are there any opportunities to extend existing data sharing apps – such as DISC – that have already been welcomed by businesses and farming communities in rural areas?

The Chief Constable recognised that crime recording is an "incredibly complicated" area of policing and confirmed that Sussex Police has an experienced, objective and transparent team working within the Crime Management Unit (CMU) to look at crime data integrity on a daily basis.

It was highlighted that the Home Office has developed a series of 'counting rules' for all recorded crime to ensure that crimes are recorded consistently and accurately throughout England and Wales. The guidance contains 544 pages about what crimes to record, remove and the processes for how this should be done. Further information about the counting rules can be viewed through the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counting-rules-for-recorded-crime>

JS is confident that high levels of crime data integrity exist in Sussex. This position is supported by the meticulous monitoring, reporting and auditing processes in place, with strategic oversight provided through the PEEL Board. Performance in this area has been improved through the introduction of a team of dedicated validators who undertake monthly audits of all crime reports submitted to ensure this process remains accurate, consistent and that no crimes have been inadvertently missed or overlooked. A summary report is presented to the Deputy Chief Constable each month to monitor crime levels, crime occurrences, reporting methodologies, validations and to highlight any areas for improvement, including training or knowledge gaps identified for officers and staff.

HMICFRS last inspected Sussex Police in this area in April 2016 [before reporting their findings in August of the same year]. The Force was found to record 94.59% of all crime accurately in Sussex – the second highest [first audit] in England and Wales [behind West Midlands Police]. Sussex Police continues to independently oversee the recording of crimes in Sussex and a recent internal audit confirmed that the Force was recording a similarly high percentage of crimes accurately and would still be considered within a band that HMICFRS would assess as 'good'.

Each police force area in England and Wales has a Force Crime & Incident Registrar to ensure the accuracy of crime data recorded. This position provides the central source of advice and guidance in relation to the practical application of the National Crime Recording Standard and the counting rules by providing a valuable link between the Home Office and Sussex Police in respect of crime recording.

KB was reassured to understand that an independent external audit into crime recording data quality processes by the Southern Internal Audit Partnership [in autumn 2020] provided the Force with "substantial assurances" that "a sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited" [EDIT: This was the highest assurance opinion available]. JS agreed to share a copy of the recent internal audit into crime data integrity with KB.

The Chief Constable confirmed that five of the six areas for improvement previously identified for the Force have been signed off as completed by HMICFRS. Sussex Police is continuing to work towards the final area of improvement to "improve how it collects diversity information from victims of crime and how it uses this to inform its compliance with its equality duty". This will be achieved through regular testing and recording of responses to understand better what information is recorded by individual systems and to ascertain how this process can be improved further still.

All supervisors throughout the Force are encouraged to monitor and review regularly the crime recording decisions taken by officers and staff as part of any investigations. These decisions are further validated by the staff within the CMU, providing feedback about any errors identified to individuals, departments or geographic locations throughout Sussex where inconsistencies are identified in respect of crime data integrity, whilst reiterating the importance of accurate crime recording. The Force Crime & Incident Registrar leads on the training delivered to the workforce around this area, with targeted and bespoke training delivered according to job role in respect of the more complex areas of stalking, domestic abuse, sexual offences and third-party reporting.

JS confirmed that a significant amount of work and investment has been made to improve the recording of business crimes in Sussex – in terms of both offences of shoplifting and abuse and assaults on frontline workers. This apparent disparity between incidents and crimes recorded was considered to be an issue of under-reporting, rather than a crime data integrity matter.

Performance in this area has been strengthened through the introduction of 9 business crime specialists within the Investigation and Resolution Centre working directly with the Business Crime Reduction Partnerships and local businesses to understand the issues and improve public confidence. The NPTs have also been involved in this work to identify repeat victims and prolific offenders, whilst supporting local businesses in the trialling of alternative reporting platforms.

The Chief Constable recognised the importance of dog theft but emphasised that, despite the continued lobbying of Government in this area, there is currently no specific offence of dog theft. The Force has made improvements to its recording practices in this area to better identify all instances of dog thefts [and related activity] and to measure this more accurately. This has been achieved through the creation of Operation Collar – a specific tag allocated to all reports of dog theft. As such, any new reports received by Sussex Police through the FCCCD are now tagged so that they can be easily tracked, monitored and managed by the Rural Crime Team who lead on the response to dog thefts in Sussex, through a collaborative approach to prevention, detection and education.

JS explained that the perception of dog theft is currently "far higher than the reality", despite the continued efforts of Sussex Police to raise awareness and encourage individuals to report all instances of this offence. Dog thefts continue to remain low in Sussex, with 14 thefts of a dog recorded in 2021 to date, although there is only evidence to suggest that a small number of these dogs were taken by a third-party, unknown to the victim. The remaining reports related to disputes over dog ownership [between known parties], instances where dogs were lost [rather than stolen] and incidents where the victim has ceased engaging with police and it is unknown as to whether the dog has been found or otherwise.

KB was informed that there were no barriers to data sharing with other police force areas or partners in respect of pet theft. It was highlighted that Sussex Police continues to receive intelligence from Operation Opal – a national intelligence unit focused on serious organised acquisitive crime where there is a series of offences impacting on two or more police force areas – including dog [and pet] theft. This information assists the Force to link investigations, where common methods or suspects are identified, and facilitates the sharing of any best practice identified. Further information about Operation Collar and the Sussex Police response to dog thefts can be viewed through the following link:

<https://www.sussex.police.uk/policy-forces/sussex-police/areas/campaigns/campaigns/op-collar/>

ACTION: KB requested a copy of the recent internal audit into crime data integrity within Sussex Police.

NEXT UP:

The next PAM is on Friday, 16 July 2021 at 13:00. Further information can be viewed on my website through the following link:

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