



## **Sussex Police and Crime Panel - Public and Panel Questions to the Commissioner**

**12 March 2021**

### **Report by the Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel**

Below is a schedule of the 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.

Any questions relating 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.

#### **1. Written question from a resident of East Sussex - name and address withheld at the correspondent's request.**

##### **Question:**

Dear Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner,

According to figures supplied by Sussex Police, between the years 2017-2019, the county force paid out just under £190,000 in compensation, in response to claims made against the force for the specific offences of:

- Unlawful Arrest,
- False Imprisonment,
- Breach of Human Rights,
- Assault/Battery,
- Mischief,
- Embarrassment/Humiliation,
- Anxiety/Distress,
- Data Protection Failures.

(I can provide the breakdown of cases and compensation amounts if needed).

£190,000 is not the total amount paid out in compensation by the force over these years, just the settlements exclusively related to the types of offences

outlined. There are still 10 outstanding cases from this period of a similar nature, which remain to be settled. For the year 2020, only one case related to this list of offences has so far been settled (for £3,600) and a further five cases remain outstanding.

I am advised by the Home office and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCCS) that Police forces are operationally independent and the management of force budgets is a matter for chief constables and that the PPCs hold the local force to account. The Head of Performance with the OSPCC informed me that the Commissioner's Office does not keep records of the types of crimes allegedly committed by members of the public that the county force was investigating, which led to the Police misdemeanours that required compensation. Surely this is information that the Commissioner should be asking for? By doing so this would give the OSPCC an inbuilt warning system if Sussex Police are forming patterns of behaviour and investigation that are cause for concern, meaning that they can be quickly identified and corrected. The publication of the information related to such a safe guarding measure would also be good for public confidence in Sussex Police and would help to nip any bad behaviour in the bud.

Two individual settlements from the period outlined were £25,000 and £55,000 respectively, representing an excessive and avoidable waste of public money? Would Commissioner Bourne agree, that at a time when she has requested an increase of 7.5% in the Police Precept, that such transparency as outlined in the paragraph above would encourage ethical behaviour by Sussex Police, thereby saving significant amounts of public money. The total amount paid out annually in compensation could also be publicly listed. Would she also agree that while such a policy of transparency is being considered, that Freedom of Information requests related to this matter should be properly complied with, in line with the statutory requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, so that a retrospective check of police behaviour over the 2017-20 period can be carried out in the public interest? Particularly as the proposed raising of the Precept is in part based on a commitment to an "Increase in capacity to deal with Freedom of Information requests to assist with responses to public enquiries."

**Answer:** To Follow

## **2. Written question from Kahina Bouhassane of Brighton and Hove**

### **Question:**

In the past year it has come to light that black people are 10 times more likely to be stopped and searched by Sussex Police and still, there is little mention of addressing this racial discrimination in the draft Plan. Is the PCC content with the steps (if any) being taken to address this kind of institutional discrimination

and why has it been allowed to get to this appalling point?

**Answer:** To Follow