



SUSSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

25 September 2020

The Role of the PCC and Sussex Police in Response to Rural Crime and Business Crime

Report by The Clerk to Sussex Police and Crime Panel

Focus for Scrutiny

The Panel is asked to scrutinise the Commissioner's actions and decisions in respect of Sussex Police's work in tackling rural crime and business crime.

In particular, what is the Commissioner's vision for what success will look like, and what performance measures will she use to help her determine whether or not Sussex Police's work in these areas is delivering the desired outcomes?

1. Background

- 1.1 Rural crime and business crime are issues of significance in Sussex, both meriting mention in the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan 2017/21.

On Business Crime: "I acknowledge that reduced business crime is fundamental to further investment, which supports employment and economic prosperity, and will work with the Chief Constable to ensure that consistent levels of support, access to information, and approaches to engagement are demonstrated by the police to all businesses experiencing crime and anti-social behaviour across Sussex."

On Rural Crime: "The geographic make-up of Sussex means that it is essential that a proportionate focus is placed on tackling rural crime and I will hold the Chief Constable to account for ensuring that an appropriate balance between what is happening in rural areas and urban centres exists."

Appendices

Appendix 1: Report by the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner: The role of the PCC and Sussex Police in Response to Rural Crime and Business Crime

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Clerk to Sussex Police and Crime Panel

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To:	The Sussex Police & Crime Panel
From:	The Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner
Subject:	The role of the PCC and Sussex Police in response to rural crime and business crime
Date:	25 September 2020
Recommendation:	That the Police & Crime Panel note the report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the role of the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Sussex Police in response to both rural crime and business crime and provides a summary of the activity that has been undertaken in each area.
- 1.2 The report also provides an outline of the Sussex Police response to rural crime and business crime and the measures that have been taken by the PCC to hold the Chief Constable to account for ensuring that the police response remains efficient, effective and responsive to the needs of the public.

2.0 About Sussex

- 2.1 Sussex Police serves a population of 1.7 million. The police force area covers the rural and urban counties of East Sussex (including Brighton & Hove) and West Sussex – spanning an area of 1,460 square miles.
- 2.2 The South Downs National Park covers an area of 628 square miles and stretches for 87 miles from Winchester to Eastbourne throughout the counties of Hampshire, West Sussex and East Sussex. Sussex also has Gatwick Airport – the second busiest airport in the UK – and a coastline that spans more than 80 miles from Chichester Harbour to Camber Sands.



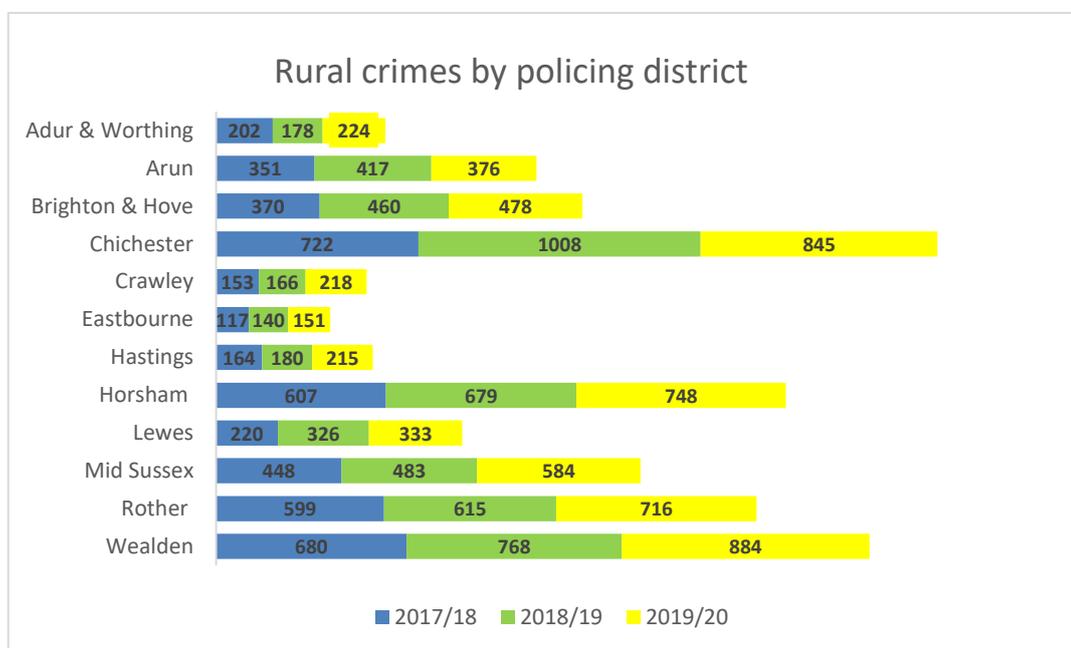
3.0 Rural Crime: Setting the Scene

- 3.1 A rural crime is defined as any offence that takes place in a rural location. There are four distinct categories of rural crime: agricultural; equine; wildlife and heritage. Rural crime can also be included within environmental crime, which covers illegal waste dumping; fly-tipping; polluting watercourses and land.
- 3.1.1 Agricultural crime – covers working farms, farm machinery, farm buildings and smallholdings. Offences include theft of equipment or fuel, damage to property and livestock worrying.
- 3.1.2 Equine crime – covers working stables and equestrian centres and includes offences such as tack theft and livestock worrying.
- 3.1.3 Wildlife crime – includes hare coursing, poaching and interfering with protected species.
- 3.1.4 Heritage crime – covers “any offence which harms the value of England's heritage assets and their settings to this and future generations.” Offences include theft of lead from churches, damage to ancient monuments and illegal metal detecting.
- 3.2 Sussex Police use a ‘rural’ marker to record any offences that take place in a rural location throughout the county. The ‘Rural-Urban Classification’ is used to distinguish between rural and urban areas – and defines areas as rural if they fall outside of settlements with more than 10,000 resident population.
- 3.3 Rural crime increased by 6% in Sussex during 2019/20, in comparison to the same period a year earlier. This equated to an additional 352 rural crimes recorded.

District	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	No. Difference 2018/19 .v. 2019/20	% Difference 2018/19 .v. 2019/20
Adur & Worthing	202	178	224	+ 46	+ 26%
Arun	351	417	376	- 41	- 10%
Brighton & Hove	370	460	478	+ 18	+ 4%
Chichester	722	1,008	845	- 163	- 16%
Crawley	153	166	218	+ 52	+ 31%
Eastbourne	117	140	151	+ 11	+ 8%
Hastings	164	180	215	+ 35	+ 19%
Horsham	607	679	748	+ 69	+ 10%
Lewes	220	326	333	+ 7	+ 2%
Mid Sussex	448	483	584	+ 101	+ 21%
Rother	599	615	716	+ 101	+ 16%
Wealden	680	768	884	+ 116	+ 15%
Total	4,633	5,420	5,772	+ 352	+ 6%

- 3.4 Offending in rural areas is most prevalent during the summer months with longer days and increased daylight hours. A reducing trend is apparent in the autumn and winter months.

- 3.5 The greatest percentage increase in rural crimes recorded in Sussex occurred in Crawley during 2019/20 which increased by 31% (and an additional 52 offences) and was followed by Adur & Worthing (26% increase and 46 additional offences) and Mid Sussex (21% increase and 101 additional offences). The highest proportion of rural offences recorded in the last financial year were within Chichester and Wealden districts, with both representing 15% of the total number of rural crimes recorded in Sussex.



- 3.6 The only two districts to experience reductions in recorded rural crimes during the year were Chichester (16% reduction and 163 fewer crimes) and Arun (10% reduction and 41 fewer crimes).
- 3.7 The greatest increase in rural crime type was observed for 'burglary' with an additional 172 offences recorded (+24%) during 2019/20, divided almost equally between 'residential burglary' (+85 offences and +22%) and 'business and community burglary' (+87 offences and +27%). This growth was largely driven by increases in Mid Sussex, Horsham and Rother districts.
- 3.8 There were also an additional 210 'violent crimes' (+12%) recorded in 2019/20, compared to the previous financial year. Of these offences, 95 were additional 'stalking and harassment' offences (+42%), with Chichester (+20) and Horsham (+18) districts accounting for 38 of these offences. Reductions were apparent for 'vehicle offences' (106 fewer offences and -16%) and 'theft and handling' (11 fewer offences and -1%).

Crime Type	2018/19	2019/20	No. Difference	% Difference
Violent crime	1,727	1,937	+ 210	+ 12%
Burglary	716	888	+ 172	+ 24%
Criminal damage	760	797	+ 37	+ 5%
Drug offences	190	223	+ 33	+ 17%
Other offences	212	221	+ 9	+ 4%
Public Order	385	393	+ 8	+ 2%
Theft and handling	766	755	- 11	- 1%
Vehicle offences	664	558	- 106	- 16%
Total	5,420	5,772	+ 352	+ 6%

- 3.9 It is recognised that rural crime continues to remain under-reported in Sussex and throughout England and Wales. It is fundamentally important that all rural crimes and incidents are reported because this enables each police force area to develop intelligence regarding repeat offenders, times and locations which can then be used to plan, target and deploy police resources.

4.0 Rural Crime: Response

- 4.1 The geographic make-up of Sussex means that it is essential that a proportionate focus is placed on tackling rural crime. The PCC remains strongly committed to ensuring that rural crimes are taken as seriously as urban crimes in Sussex. The PCC has continued to monitor the resources allocated to police rural crime in Sussex to ensure that these remain appropriate.
- 4.2 In recent years, the PCC has raised additional funding through the police precept to secure additional resources to allow Sussex Police to meet more demand and accelerate their recruitment plans to reduce crime, deal robustly with criminals, improve outcomes for victims and meet the expectations of residents, taxpayers and visitors. The PCC secured an increase to the precept for 2020/21 to enable more enforcement, increased investigation and an even greater policing presence in towns, villages and online, including investment in a specialist Rural Crime Team.
- 4.3 On 1 June 2020, Sussex Police launched this dedicated Rural Crime Team to tackle crime, incidents and unlawful behaviour that affect the rural and isolated communities most. The team consists of two sergeants; 8 police constables and six Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and operates out of bases at Midhurst (West Sussex) and Heathfield (East Sussex).
- 4.4 This team provides specialist knowledge, engagement, intelligence gathering and enforcement activity across the county, with officers distributed throughout Sussex, together with the ability to come together to deliver targeted 'days of action'. This approach not only offers a visible deterrent to criminals, it provides more proactive and preventative policing in the rural parts of Sussex.
- 4.5 The Rural Crime Team also provides increased visibility, enforcement and support for rural businesses and the crimes and offences that are either prevalent or a concern to rural businesses. This will build on the existing Sussex Police Country Watch schemes which connect those living and working in rural parts of the country to create communities that share information, develop communication networks and work with the police with the intention of reducing rural crime.
- 4.6 Since its inception in June 2020, the Rural Crime Team has already carried out the following operational activity:
- ✓ 8 stop and searches carried out and 2 arrests made. It is worth emphasising that – as the Rural Crime Team has provided support to a number of other policing teams – any stop and searches and arrests will be included in the statistics of those teams.
 - ✓ 181 intelligence reports generated following proactive policing patrols;

- ✓ 185 new members signed up to Country Watch (increasing the total membership to 517);
 - ✓ 316 Computer-Aided Dispatches tagged with an Operation Tracker marker – the operational marker used to collate all rural crime incidents and offences;
 - ✓ Over 10,000 miles of rural roads patrolled – including narrow lanes, off the main highways that were not previously covered.
- 4.7 To assist them in this work, Sussex Police has developed a Rural Crime Strategy which outlines how the Force will incorporate rural crime and protecting rural communities into the wider approach to delivering local policing. The National Farmers' Union (NFU) and the Country Land & Business Association (CLA) were both involved in the production of this Strategy.
- 4.8 The Strategy recognises both the specific crime types which can affect rural communities as well as the unique vulnerabilities of those who live and work in rural areas. The Strategy provides an enhanced understanding of rural-specific crimes and the scale and impact that these crimes can have. The Strategy contains four policing objectives which seek to:
- ✓ Provide an effective policing service to the rural community;
 - ✓ Make the rural communities feel safer;
 - ✓ Build effective partnerships to respond to the needs of rural communities;
 - ✓ Increase the confidence of rural communities in the police.
- 4.9 The Strategy can be viewed on the Sussex Police website through the following link:
www.sussex.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/sussex/about-us/priorities-and-direction/sussex-police-rural-crime-strategy.pdf
- 4.10 Sussex Police has also developed a '*Rural Crime Network*' to raise awareness about rural crime and its impact amongst police officers and staff. The Network consists of 40 '*Single Points of Contact*' identified throughout the Force and will support the Rural Crime Team in their work. In addition, all new police constable recruits are now given practical rural crime training from local farmers as part of their initial training.
- 4.11 The Force has also modernised its approach to rural policing through a more creative use of mobile Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), i.e. drone technology. This approach has provided heightened response and prevention capabilities with Sussex Police better able to search for offenders and discarded evidence more efficiently, as well as performing other tasks such as mapping and site surveys.
- 4.12 The PCC has continued to hold roundtable meetings with representatives from across the county to look in depth at the policing approach and response to rural crime. This has included discussions about face-to-face engagement with the police, processes for reporting incidents and offences and the feedback provided by the Force about ongoing investigations.

Agenda Item 5

Appendix 1

4.13 The PCC understands – through her ongoing consultations with residents, the NFU and the CLA – that rural and village communities have, at times, felt overlooked previously. These concerns have been fed back to the new Chief Constable and her senior team, with Sussex Police renewing its commitment to proactively work in partnership with rural communities to tackle rural crime.

4.14 In addition, the PCC is also a member of the National Rural Crime Network which is working to see greater recognition and understanding of the problems and impact of crime in rural areas so that more can be done to keep people safer. Established in July 2014, the Network is supported by 32 PCCs and their respective police force areas, together with a range of other organisations with an interest in rural affairs and community safety, including Neighbourhood Watch to Historic England.

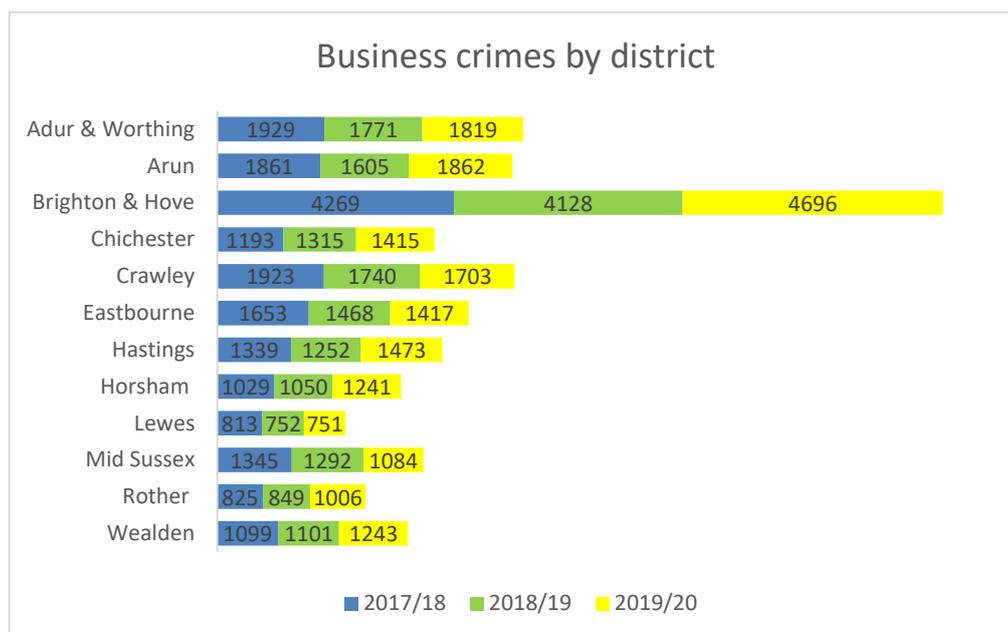
5.0 Business Crime: Setting the Scene

5.1 Business crime is defined by the National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) as “any criminal offence where a business, or person in the course of their employment, is the victim”. Much like the approach taken for rural crime, Sussex Police uses a ‘business’ marker to record any offences that take place in either a business setting or against an individual during the course of their employment.

5.2 Business crime increased by 8% in Sussex during 2019/20, in comparison to the same period a year earlier. This equated to an additional 1,510 business crimes recorded.

District	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	No. Difference 2018/19 .v. 2019/20	% Difference 2018/19 .v. 2019/20
Adur & Worthing	1,929	1,771	1,819	+ 48	+ 3%
Arun	1,861	1,605	1,862	+ 257	+ 16%
Brighton & Hove	4,269	4,128	4,696	+ 568	+ 14%
Chichester	1,193	1,315	1,415	+ 100	+ 8%
Crawley	1,923	1,740	1,703	- 37	- 2%
Eastbourne	1,653	1,468	1,417	- 51	- 3%
Gatwick	345	334	443	+ 109	+ 33%
Hastings	1,339	1,252	1,473	+ 221	+ 18%
Horsham	1,029	1,050	1,241	+ 191	+ 18%
Lewes	813	752	751	- 1	0%
Mid Sussex	1,345	1,292	1,084	- 208	- 16%
Rother	825	849	1,006	+ 157	+ 18%
Wealden	1,099	1,101	1,243	+ 142	+ 13%
Unknown	19	37	51	+ 14	+ 38%
Total	19,642	18,694	20,204	1,510	+ 8%

5.3 Brighton & Hove recorded the greatest increase in business crimes, with an additional 568 offences recorded (+14%) during the financial year, in comparison to 2018/19. The largest percentage increases were attributed to Hastings, Horsham and Rother districts which increased by 18% each (and an additional 221, 191 and 157 offences, respectively) in 2019/20.



5.4 Mid Sussex district recorded a 16% reduction in business crime – equivalent to 208 fewer business crimes – with reductions also apparent for Eastbourne (-3% and 51 fewer offences), Crawley (-2% and 37 fewer offences) and Lewes (1 fewer offence) districts across the financial year.

5.5 There were 20,204 business crimes reported to Sussex Police during 2019/20, of which 'theft from a shop' contributed to 9,415 and (47%) of all recorded crime. The greatest increase in business crime type was observed for 'theft and handling', with an additional 1,166 offences recorded (and +10%). Increases were also recorded for 'burglary' (+14% and 300 additional offences) and criminal damage (+2% and 79 additional offences).

Crime Type	2018/19	2019/20	Difference	% Difference
Theft and handling	12,199	13,365	+ 1,166	+ 10%
Burglary	2,098	2,398	+ 300	+ 14%
Criminal damage	3,748	3,827	+ 79	+ 2%
Fraud and forgery	139	166	+ 27	+ 19%
Violent crime	347	330	+ 17	- 5%
Drug offences	8	12	+ 4	+ 50%
Other offences	155	106	- 49	- 32%
Total	18,694	20,204	+ 1,510	+ 8%

5.6 Locally, there has also been an increase in violence and threats of violence towards those who work in the retail industry, with an estimated 20% increase in offences recorded this year, in comparison to 2018/19.

5.7 This issue has been further exacerbated by product shortages, social distancing measures and the requirement to enforce the wearing of face masks in shops as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It is difficult to quantify these figures exactly because these offences are not recorded as a specific category. This local trend is, however, representative of an increasing national trend throughout England and Wales.

- 5.8 Similarly to rural crime, it is recognised that business crime continues to remain under-reported nationally and the aforementioned figures may not be reflective of the actual levels of offending in Sussex. The ability of the police service to respond to business crime would be enhanced if all crimes and incidents were reported because this would enable Sussex Police to develop intelligence regarding repeat offenders, times and locations which can then be used to plan, target and deploy police resources.
- 5.9 Sussex Police is continuing to explore new ways for businesses to report crimes and incidents or share information and intelligence in order to remove some of the barriers that businesses have in terms of reporting multiple offences. The Force is also exploring ways to improve police officer and staff understanding about the scale and impact of retail crimes.
- 5.10 The Force is supportive of the guidance that has been produced by Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses to support all businesses in respect of reporting crimes and incidents and the identification and reporting of fraud and forgery offences.

6.0 Business Crime: Response

- 6.1 The PCC recognises that tackling business and retail crime remains fundamental to encourage inward investment which supports employment and economic prosperity. The PCC has sought to ensure that consistent levels of support, access to information and approaches to engagement are demonstrated by Sussex Police to all businesses and retailers experiencing crime and anti-social behaviour across Sussex.
- 6.2 Sussex Police has developed a Business Crime Strategy – one of the first of its kind in England and Wales – which has provided a baseline commitment to working with businesses in Sussex to improve confidence, prevent crime and reduce the harm caused to businesses by crime. The formation of the Business Crime Working Group will build on this Strategy for short, medium and long-term developments (see 6.17 for further information).

Reporting and Investigation

- 6.3 The Incident Resolution Centre (IRC) assesses, investigates and responds to 70% of all business crimes reported to Sussex Police, including most of the 'theft from shop' and 'violence and threats of violence' offences. The IRC also acts as a central point of contact for Business Crime Reduction Partnerships (BCRPs), Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and the Security Operations Centres (SOCs) which require police assistance.
- 6.4 The IRC has four dedicated police officers responsible for business crimes. This approach provides better communication and continuity for businesses, many of whom are reporting hundreds of crimes and incidents each year. These dedicated resources are recognised to have contributed to improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the Force response, in terms of interventions, outcomes and the number of individuals identified as prolific and repeat offenders.

- 6.5 The other 30% of business crimes are investigated by either the Response, Prevention or Investigation teams on each of the individual policing districts. This approach facilitates increased local engagement and the development of bespoke business crime action plans to address specific threats to local areas; identify high-risk or prolific offenders and establish problem-solving approaches in line with Forcewide neighbourhood policing guidance.

Partnership Working and Data Sharing

- 6.6 Sussex Police work closely with the 7 BCRPs and 8 BIDs in Sussex. The BCRPs are subscription-based and business-led action groups that work with police and the local authorities to tackle and reduce crime and disorder affecting businesses. The BCRPs are located in Brighton & Hove; Bognor Regis; Chichester; Crawley; Eastbourne; Hastings and Worthing.
- 6.7 The BIDs are business-led and funded partnerships formed to represent and improve defined commercial areas. The BIDs directly involve local businesses in local activities and allow the business communities and local authorities to work together to improve the local trading and working environments, with the BCRPs providing a crime prevention strand and capability. Six of the BCRPs have a BID co-located in their area – Brighton & Hove; Bognor Regis; Chichester; Eastbourne; Hastings and Worthing – with two further standalone BIDs located at Manor Royal Business Park in Crawley and Lancing Business Park.
- 6.8 Sussex Police also works in partnership with business wardens and private security officers – some of which are accredited, through the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme, with powers to support the police and local authorities. These individuals are allied to the BCRPs and BIDs and link into local policing teams through regular engagement and attendance at intelligence briefings.
- 6.9 Each of the BCRPs and BIDs in Sussex operate to core principles, accredited to national standards. This includes the use of one platform, DISC, for sharing information and intelligence at a local and countywide level. Sussex Police has also developed an online reporting capability, through the same platform, which enables businesses to report crimes and incidents directly to the Force. This approach represents a channel-shift in police contact from the telephone to online reporting.
- 6.10 This capability was enhanced further in 2020 with the adoption of the Digital Evidence Management System (DEMS) which enables individuals and businesses to upload digital evidence directly to Sussex Police. This digital evidence, including CCTV footage, can be accessed by police officers immediately and has enabled the Force to respond to offences in significantly reduced and improved timescales, in comparison to the previously adopted approach where evidence had to be physically collected or posted.
- 6.11 Sussex Police operates its own police-specific version of DISC which provides the capability to research all BCRP information, intelligence and image galleries, together with the ability to send out secure notifications to all of the members regarding crime prevention advice, alerts and images of persons of interest.

- 6.12 The same DISC platform is also used by Sussex Police to support the existing Country Watch schemes and the newly formed Rural Crime Team by facilitating the sharing of information, development of communication networks and partnership working to reduce rural crime.
- 6.13 The Force has established 'Information Sharing Agreements' (ISAs) with each of the BCRPs, BIDs and local authorities who employ CSAS accredited staff. This approach supports effective data sharing between the police, crime reduction agencies and businesses, whilst demonstrating compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other data protection legislation.

Safer Sussex Business Partnership (SSBP)

- 6.14 In February 2020, the PCC convened a roundtable meeting to address the concerns of local businesses. This included senior members of Sussex Police, business crime experts, representatives from Tesco, Sainsbury's, Marks & Spencer and the Co-op, together with individuals from local retail stores. This meeting culminated in the formation of the Safer Sussex Business Partnership.
- 6.15 The Partnership, chaired by the PCC, was established to facilitate consultation and seek advice from the business community to develop stronger links between Sussex Police and local businesses in order to make Sussex a safer place in which to live, work and shop. The Partnership provides a forum to recognise better the impact of crime on businesses and the wider community; to share knowledge, information and intelligence; to provide advice and guidance on measures to prevent businesses from becoming victims of crime and to cut crime, stop repeat offences and catch and detain those responsible.
- 6.16 Through the Partnership, the PCC hosted three further consultation sessions with Sussex Police, retail businesses and SSBP partners during June and July 2020. These sessions provided valuable findings and feedback from the business community in respect of violence against retail staff in Sussex; reporting of retail crimes to Sussex Police and investigation and feedback on crimes and incidents affecting Sussex businesses.
- 6.17 To support the work of the SSBP, Sussex Police has formed a Business Crime Working Group that will look to develop the strategic direction for the Force in respect of business crime; monitor performance in this area and to manage projects and change plans through to completion in respect of business crime. The PCC was represented at the inaugural Business Crime Working Group meeting on 28 August 2020 by a member of the OSPCC team.
- 6.18 Sussex Police has also established various crime prevention initiatives to help tackle crime against businesses, including Police and Security; Pubwatch; Shopwatch; Shared radio scheme and Secured Environment. Further information can be viewed on the Sussex Police website through the following link: www.sussex.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/business-robbery/business-partnerships/

7.0 Accountability

- 7.1 The PCC has sought to make additional resources available to the Chief Constable to improve the Sussex Police capacity and capability in response to rural crime and business crime.
- 7.2 Now that this investment has been realised, the PCC will hold the Chief Constable to account for its delivery. This will include an expectation that Sussex Police demonstrate an enhanced response to both rural crime and business crime and the management of prolific offenders in order to prevent further harm and to protect businesses and the local economy in Sussex.
- 7.3 It is a statutory responsibility for the PCC to hold the Chief Constable to account for delivering efficient and effective policing in Sussex that is responsive to the needs of the public. The PCC has continued to use her monthly webcast Performance & Accountability Meetings (PAMs) to scrutinise and challenge the Chief Constable about the Sussex Police response to rural crime and business crime on behalf of members of the public.
- 7.4 Rural crime was raised as a theme at the PAMs on 31 July 2015; 24 February 2017; 21 September 2018 and 21 February 2020. Business crime was raised at the PAMs on 20 February 2015, 19 May 2017 and 19 June 2020. These sessions are archived and can be viewed on the PCC's website through the following link:
www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/webcasting/
- 7.5 After concluding a year in the role as Chair of the Association of Police & Crime Commissioners (APCC), the PCC was appointed the APCC National Lead for Business and Retail Crime.
- 7.6 The PCC is already working closely with Sussex Police, business owners, business crime experts and PCC colleagues in England and Wales to address this subject. Her position as National Lead will provide the PCC with further opportunities to work with the Minister for Policing and Crime and other key representatives who are focused on tackling business crime.

Recommended – That the Police & Crime Panel note the report.

Mark Streater
Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer
Office of the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner