

Sussex Police and Crime Panel

26 June 2020

Public and Panel Questions to the Commissioner

Report by the Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel

The table below provides 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.

Questions that relate to operational matters of Sussex Police will be passed to a relevant officer at Sussex Police for a response and a brief summary of the question will be provided below. For the current meeting, three questions have been received for a response by the Commissioner.

Question	Response
<p>1. I have been contacted by numerous residents with regarding to a current planning application to convert and expand a care home to a House in multiple occupation (HMO) for in excess of 50 people.</p> <p>Please find attached a map*, and I would like to draw your attention to the cluster of HMOs around and surrounded by Nyewood Lane, Stocker Road and Wood Street.</p> <p>In the Commissioner's experience, what effect (if any) does/could clusters of HMOs such as this have on local crime statistics and anti-social behaviour?</p> <p>Councillor Matt Stanley, Arun District Council</p> <p>* Refer to map on Page 17</p>	<p>Local police teams throughout Sussex work with their Community Safety Partnerships and other key agencies to understand the changing demographics and population densities of each division and district. This process also includes sharing information and intelligence about any particular crime trends in local areas.</p> <p>It would be unreasonable to assume that the residents of HMOs are more likely to commit crime or engage in anti-social behaviour than any other residents.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Policing Teams within Arun district use well-established and, often, multi-agency approaches to resolve any issues that may arise, including the development of proactive relationships with registered social landlords.</p> <p>I am reassured that Sussex Police, in partnership with the local authority, have the powers and resources required to respond appropriately to any reports of increased crime and disorder that may be associated with a particular locality, as required.</p>

	<p>Sussex Police now also has a named Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) for each ward, strengthening its local policing presence and enabling the Force to engage more with local residents to understand better where any problems may exist.</p>
--	--

2. During the lockdown cycling has been a pleasure, with little traffic and it has been great to see so many people out on their bikes. However, those taking up cycling will now inevitably be put off by the reckless and dangerous driving of a minority of car and van users. I cycle every day, and without fail some drivers will pass me at speed within inches, anything rather than slow down and wait to pass.

We do lack the infrastructure to make cycling safe but can do something to improve standards of driving and respect for cyclists. Other authorities have used police time to stop such dangerous behaviour by drivers, by using officers to cycle and notify colleagues to stop offenders. This policy and some publicity attached to it is at least a start.

I did write to your office before about this issue but this was dismissed as the responsibility of the local authority, who clearly do not have the powers to undertake such a project, and who also lack the funds to provide proper and sufficient cycle routes.

Mr Burford of Lancing

During lockdown, many local authorities took the opportunity to introduce or expand existing cycle lanes as a result of reduced traffic levels to assist key workers with their commute to work but it remains to be seen whether these innovations will be sustained with all local authorities facing challenging financial times ahead.

I shared your concerns with Sussex Police and the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP) because the content specifically related to operational policy and procedure. I am pleased to be able to confirm the following in respect of the points you have raised:

- Cyclists continue to remain a priority group for the SSRP;
- The Force and SSRP met with Shoreham-By-Cycle (SBC) to look at the results of their recent survey about cyclist concerns and road-behaviour;
- A long-term partnership with the SBC has been formed with further plans to reach out to similar groups throughout Sussex;
- Changes have been made to Operation Crackdown to support cyclists better (see below);
- Social media will be used to engage with cyclists and drivers regarding the expected behaviours for each group, promoting extra vigilance as lockdown measures are eased further.
- Ongoing engagement with Cycling UK, Road Safety GB and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RSPoA), together with the active promotion of their guidance and advice;
- The Traffic Management Unit within the SSRP are working with local authority partners regarding their plans for safe spaces and the reallocation of road space, including looking into issues with road surfaces that can cause significant problems for all two wheel road users.

It is also worth emphasising that Sussex Police introduced a 'Safe Pass' scheme in June 2018 to identify drivers that passed cyclists too closely and provided them with the opportunity to receive educational information to raise awareness and to influence driver behaviours positively, instead of enforcement action.

This initiative was well-received and is currently being reviewed with a view to reintroduce the scheme this summer, combined with social distancing measures, including online packages and 'top tips' video clips. Further information about the scheme can be viewed through the following link: <https://www.sussexsaferroads.gov.uk/news/give-me-some-space>

I would also like to make you aware of Operation Crackdown. This is a joint initiative run by Sussex Police and the SSRP which provides the communities of Sussex with an opportunity to report specific instances of anti-social driving and enables Sussex Police to develop intelligence regarding repeat offenders, vehicles, times and locations which can then be used to plan, target and deploy police resources. If you have any specific information about anti-social driving, including motorists passing cyclists too closely, please visit the Operation Crackdown website (www.operationcrackdown.org) to report this. Alternatively, you can call 01243 642222 during office hours to speak to an operator.

Road safety is also a theme I challenge the Chief Constable about regularly during my monthly webcast Performance & Accountability Meetings (PAM). Each of these sessions is archived and can be viewed on my website through the following link: www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/webcasting/

It is very encouraging, however, that an extra 1.3 million new bikes were purchased in the UK since lockdown began, highlighting that the public do want to get out on two wheels for exercise, environmental and cost reasons. We need drivers and cyclists to share road space responsibly, especially now that many electric bikes are as fast as most rush hour traffic, and with all of those additional bikes using the road networks it makes your points about considerate driving, education and enforcement all the more pertinent.

Thank you for taking the time to contact me and please do not hesitate to get in touch again should you have any further ideas or comments. In the meantime, stay safe and I hope that you continue to enjoy cycling around our beautiful county.

3. Previously I have expressed concern at the escalation of antisocial behaviour such as fire lighting, alcohol consumption by minors and drug dealing in isolated parks and open spaces. You undertook to raise the issue with the Chief Constable. Whilst there has been a noticeable and welcome increase in neighbourhood policing, especially during the pandemic, it now seems there is an epidemic of nitrous oxide abuse with dozens of spent canisters left lying around along with evidence of excessive alcohol consumption.

What powers do the police have and will you please raise residents' concerns with the new Chief Constable?

Councillor Norman Webster, Mid Sussex District Council

Thank you for sharing your concerns with me about anti-social behaviour and the use of psychoactive substances and alcohol consumption by minors in Mid Sussex, in particular.

I am determined to ensure that the policing in Sussex is efficient, effective and responsive to the needs of the public. I will continue to hold the new Chief Constable to account for the delivery of this local policing across Sussex, including the tackling of anti-social behaviour.

I can confirm that there are a number of powers available to Sussex Police to tackle the concerns you have raised. Nitrous oxide, also known as laughing gas, is classified as a psychoactive substance in the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. A psychoactive substance can be defined as any substance capable of producing a psychoactive effect in a person who consumes it, resulting in temporary changes in perception, mood, consciousness and behaviour. Under the legislation, it is not an offence to simply possess a psychoactive substance but it is an offence to possess it with the intent to supply or to actually supply it to others.

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides the police with the power to disperse individuals from a defined area, on the authority of an officer of Inspector rank or above, if certain conditions are met. The same legislation enables the police to seize items linked to any anti-social behaviour. Any persons under the age of 16 years old found to be present in a dispersal area can be removed to their home address or an alternative place of safety.

Sussex Police also has the power to seize alcohol from persons under the age of 18 years old through the Confiscation of Alcohol (Young Persons) Act 1997. Where there is evidence that premises might be selling alcohol to minors, further activity and enforcement action can be taken against those premises using the powers prescribed within the Licensing Act 2003.

It is worth emphasising that the powers set out above are not exhaustive and a partnership-based approach to put specific measures into place with a range of statutory partners to deter, disrupt and prevent offending behaviour and criminality would be the most effective means of responding to the specific concerns you have raised. This approach would also ensure that the wellbeing of the minors abusing these psychoactive substances and alcohol could be safeguarded.

It is important that all incidents of anti-social behaviour and offending behaviour are reported because this enables Sussex Police to develop an accurate picture of intelligence regarding repeat offenders, times and locations which can be used to plan, target and deploy local policing resources to respond.

If you have any specific information about anti-social behaviour crimes or incidents in Mid Sussex, I would encourage you to contact Sussex Police by telephone to 101, email to 101@sussex.pnn.police.uk or online through the following link: <https://www.sussex.police.uk/contact/af/contact-us/>