



BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

OF BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

HELD ON TUESDAY 8th MARCH 2022

PRESENT:

Cllrs: J. Brooks, Mrs. S. Daniells, Miss. C. Needs, W. Smith, Mrs. J. Warr (left during Min. 198), B. Waterhouse and P. Woodall

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs. J. Davis (Assistant Clerk)
Mrs. R. Vervecken (Civic & Office Manager)
Mrs. K. Bourne (Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner)
3 members of the public

The Meeting opened at 6.08pm

195. WELCOME BY TOWN MAYOR AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

As neither the Mayor nor Deputy Mayor were present, it was necessary for those Members present to nominate a Chairman to preside over the meeting. Cllr. Woodall was proposed and seconded and following a vote, it was **AGREED** that Cllr. Woodall would take the Chair.

The Council's opening statement was read, and particular attention was drawn to the evacuation procedure in the event of the fire alarm sounding and the Council's Standing Orders relating to public question time.

The Assistant Clerk gave apologies for the Town Clerk, and Cllrs. J. Barrett, S. Goodheart, and Mrs. S. Staniforth, all owing to covid related reasons; Cllrs. K. Batley and J. Erskine due to family commitments; and Cllrs. A. Cunard, S. Reynolds and M. Stanley due to work commitments.

196. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman addressed those Members present to ask if they wished to confirm any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registrable and/or Ordinary Interests that they may have in relation to items on this Agenda.

As noted on the Agenda, Members and Officers should make their declaration by stating:

- a) the item they have the Interest in
- b) whether it is a Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registrable or Ordinary Interest
- c) the nature of the Interest
- d) if it is an Ordinary Interest whether they intend to temporarily leave the meeting for the discussion and vote
- e) if it is a Disclosable Pecuniary or Other Registrable Interest, and therefore must temporarily leave the meeting for the discussion and vote, whether they will be exercising their right to speak on this matter under Public Question Time.

They then need to re-declare their Interest and the nature of the Interest at the commencement of the item or when the Interest becomes apparent. They should request that it be recorded in the Minutes that they will leave the meeting and will neither take part in discussion, nor vote on the item.

As per the Agenda, it is each Member's own responsibility to notify the Monitoring Officer of all Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registrable or Ordinary Interests notifiable under the Council's Code of Conduct, not already recorded on their Register of Interests Form, within 28 days.

The Chairman reminded Members to declare their Interests as any arise or again at the relative point in the meeting if they have already.

197. ADJOURNMENT FOR PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND STATEMENTS

The Chairman adjourned the Meeting at 6.11pm

A member of the public asked whether Sussex Police could utilise with traffic cameras or traffic officers to check for defective lights on vehicles, particularly in unlit areas.

Another member of the public spoke about, what they believed to be, a lack of police presence in the Town Centre.

The Sussex and Police & Crime Commissioner, Mrs. Bourne, took note of the questions and stated that she would provide answers during the next agenda item.

The Chairman reconvened the Meeting at 6.14pm

198. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH THE SUSSEX POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER, MRS. KATY BOURNE

The acting Chairman welcomed the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner Mrs. Katy Bourne, to the meeting. Mrs. Bourne thanked those present for taking the time to attend the meeting and explained that she would try to answer as many questions as possible, first addressing the questions raised by members of the public.

Q. Defective headlights – A member of the public had raised concerns regarding the vast number of cars he had seen driving at night with defective headlights and highlighted the danger this inevitably causes, often without the driver even realising there was a problem. Mrs. Bourne was asked if anything was being done to crack down on this and listed numerous roads within the Town, where this problem was seemingly rife, along with persistent speeding.

A. Mrs. Bourne informed those present that these cases could be reported, although acknowledged the difficulty of being able to do this when cars are passing at speed. It is important that where possible, instances are reported to allow for more resources to be put into the offending areas. This can be done online (through 'Operation Crackdown'). Mrs. Bourne will also pass this information onto the new Chief Inspector Nick Bowman.

Q. Policing of Town Centre - Another member of the public commented on low policing numbers in the Town Centre, and queried when the increase in police presence, previously indicated by Sussex Police, would be evident, particularly in the Town Centre, which was often subjected to shoplifters. As a business owner, the member of the public emphasised that the crime levels in the Town Centre are a real concern for businesses and residents and that the Bognor Regis Business Improvement District (BID) are relied upon too heavily, for policing the area themselves, with PCSOs few and far between. As the precept had increased, the question was raised as to when more officers could be expected to be seen on the streets (particularly in the Town Centre) to stop the threat of offenders and reoffenders to Bognor Regis' businesses.

A. Mrs. Bourne acknowledged the concern of low police numbers in the Town. She reiterated that Sussex Police are recruiting through not only the Government 'Uplift Fund', which has recruited 126 new officers this year and 129 last year, but that using the extra precept, it is anticipated there will be 250 new officers, in addition to the above figures, by the end of March. This takes police officer levels to the same seen in 2010, which was a peak year. Although the precept had increased, Sussex Police are still the 7th lowest precept area in the country. Policing has changed dramatically, with cyber crime now responsible for around 40% of all crimes reported, and this in turn has changed the role of officers, sometimes taking them off the streets.

Q. Magistrates sentencing - A member of the public expressed frustration at the sentencing by Magistrates Courts, which doesn't appear to be stopping the ever-growing problem of criminals reoffending. Suspended sentences were mentioned as an example of this, with offenders often going back into society, after appearing in court and continually reoffending, with not much evidence of any rehabilitation. This is a worry for businesses as the same offenders are

committing crimes, such as shoplifting, on multiple occasions. Mrs. Bourne was asked for her opinion on this.

A. The Police and Crime Commissioner understood the concerns raised and admitted that in her role, she can't influence the system of the Magistrates Courts. In Sussex, Business Crime Partnerships are working with local businesses to apprehend first and second time offenders, to hopefully stop the pattern of behaviour, at an early stage. One of these schemes is beginning next month. Mrs. Bourne stressed the importance of collaborative working with organisations such as Bognor BID, who know their local area so well. Sussex Police will be applying for the fourth round of 'Safer Streets' Funding, with the intention of installing gates in certain areas, CCTV and providing better lighting. Mrs. Bourne is keen to work with the BID and other businesses in areas such as Bognor Regis, Crawley and East Grinstead, to gain further insight and ideas on how to help with crime levels and anti-social behaviour.

Q. Mrs. Bourne was asked if there will be more communication between Bognor Regis Town Council and local Police.

A. Chief Inspector Jon Carter, the previous District Commander (Chichester and Arun), had attended the Full Council Meeting on 4th January 2022, to address Members on local policing matters and the new District Commander, Chief Inspector Nick Bowman, would have been at the Full Council Meeting on 7th March 2022, if not for operational matters. With her attendance for this meeting in addition, Mrs. Bourne felt communication from Sussex Police and willingness to attend meetings to address questions and concerns, was very forthcoming.

Q. How do we counter the feeling of fear, on our streets, that is a major problem for some individuals?

A. The third round of 'Safer Street's' Funding focused on safety on streets and a lot of resources are currently being put into tackling this nationwide problem, including dedicated patrols in some areas. There is a government app being developed called 'Safe Streets', through which the public can report any street related crimes. Data collected through this helps form the bigger picture about areas that need more policing. The app can also be used to locate the user, if they are feeling unsafe, directing them to a 'safe space'. The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) are discussing whether this app will be rolled out nationally.

Q. Will the same type of survey be undertaken by the Police, that has been recently rolled out by the Fire Services?

A. Mrs. Bourne confirmed her office undertake many surveys, of which the findings are made available online. These surveys are fed back into Sussex Police and along with regular meetings to discuss

issues with local Councils, such as this, the data collected is used to help form objectives and plans for Sussex Police as well as write the precept.

Q. Do you support the principle of all emergency services sharing venues and equipment to save on costs?

A. If there was a good business case for the sharing of buildings and equipment, Mrs. Bourne indicated she would be in support of this, as emergency services must always be aware they are spending public money. There are some examples where this is already done and is very successful, but whether this is always appropriate must be looked at on an individual basis.

Q. Within Sussex, what is being done to enable women to feel safer when out at night?

A. Trauma informed training is currently taking place in numerous night-time economy venues, to help staff, such as doormen, know how to assist anyone in distress. Money has also been focused on training taxi marshals and targeted patrols are present in areas where nightlife is particularly busy. The 'Do the Right Thing' campaign is currently active, aiming to educate men and help them call out misogynistic behaviours. Fronted by four well-known Sussex male figures, the campaign saw great success over the Christmas period, with men able to access the online site and get advice. As well as this campaign, more training is taking place in schools, to teach children healthy relationships at a younger age, to hopefully prevent certain behaviours becoming 'normalised'.

Cllr. Mrs. Warr left the Meeting

Q. Within Sussex, what is being done as a deterrent against vandalism and disruptive behaviour in Town Centres by young people?

A. The biggest deterrent to help to crackdown on these behaviours is by making sure any crimes, including vandalism, shoplifting etc is reported, so action can be taken. The new District Commander, Chief Inspector Nick Bowman, is aware of the current issues and hopefully will be able to arrange a date to address members soon.

Q. Are Sussex Police currently recruiting?

A. Sussex Police are continuing to recruit, and do so usually four times a year, with around 70-80 positions filled, in a variety of positions. Mrs. Bourne reiterated her earlier point that there is another year to go in terms of government recruiting, as well as a year of recruiting within the precept.

Q. Are Sussex Police having any difficulty in recruiting new recruits of a suitable calibre?

A. Mrs. Bourne confirmed that Sussex Police are very pleased with their new recruits. It was admitted that challenges are created for Sussex Police sometimes keeping their new recruits, as officers can live in Sussex but apply to work for the Metropolitan police, which is sometimes appealing.

Q. At a recent Council meeting, Members were informed by Chief Inspector Jon Carter that police powers to enforce anti-social and drinking laws on Bognor Regis railway station were limited, due to the forecourt being private land. However, it also emerged that enforcement of some misdemeanours could be undertaken by the Railway Transport Police. If this is the case, better co-operation between both organisations, could result in better policing of this most complained about area. Will the Police and Crime Commissioner investigate if better co-operation between both organisations could result in better policing on this site?

A. Mrs. Bourne informed Members that she was fully aware of the situation at the station, having visited the site a few weeks prior. She confirmed that a meeting had now been arranged between Sussex Police and the Railway Transport Police to ascertain working on a collaborative strategy to improve the levels of policing here. Mrs. Bourne had asked for an update, prior to this meeting, but was yet to receive a response. As such, she will investigate the current situation and if not satisfied that enough action is being taken, will escalate this matter further in her role as Police and Crime Commissioner.

Cllr. Smith left the Meeting

Q. Mrs. Bourne was asked to confirm if Bognor Regis still have 'Special Constables'. If so, could they assist the PCSO's in the Town, at least during the daytime, at weekends and during the week if possible? Is it correct that 'Special Constables' have more powers than PCSO's, which could therefore be more of a deterrent to shoplifting, unsociable behaviour within our town centre and surrounding areas?

A. It was confirmed that 'Special Constables' have the same warranted powers as police officers, but that the position is voluntary. As such, the 'Special Constables' can choose the area they serve, and it could be that there are none (or few) covering the Bognor Regis area at present. The minimum requirement for hours worked in the role is 16 hours per month. Mrs. Bourne commented that recruitment for this position had taken a back seat during Covid but suggested the Town Council may consider leading a recruitment drive to encourage more 'Special Constables' within the Town.

Cllr. Smith returned to the Meeting

Q. The subject of youth services is always an issue in Bognor Regis. The Police and Crime Commissioner was asked if she could confirm that Sussex Police are 100% supportive of the youth venues in the Bognor Regis area?

A. Sussex Police are extremely supportive of youth provision. Mrs. Bourne informed that there are two openings a year for youth services to apply for the 'Safer in Sussex Community Fund', with the next round opening in April. Many local youth services have benefited from this funding stream.

Q. West Sussex County Council (WSCC) are closing two venues which local youth organisations are bidding to take over, would Sussex Police support these organisations with funding?

A. Unfortunately, Sussex Police cannot use their budget on purchasing the buildings, as the overall budget of Sussex Police is very tight and must be used for policing matters. Help with funding of equipment and smaller purchases could be applied for, as indicated in the previous question. Mrs. Bourne's office can be approached directly, to see if any further help can be sought.

Q. Are there examples of Sussex Police financially supporting youth services/venues in the town?

A. Mrs. Bourne confirmed that through funding streams, grants had been awarded to several youth services in and around Bognor Regis. These included Bognor Regis Youth Football Club, disability charity 'Kangaroos', Littlehampton Foodbank, 39 Youth Club and UCAN Spray.

Q. Who would be the correct contact within the service to discuss youth services with?

A. The Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed her office would always be willing to help where possible. The Community Safety Partnership at Arun District Council may also prove a useful contact.

Q. One Member asked whether there was supportive evidence of a higher proportion of violent crimes toward women and girls in the Town, or whether the Police and Crime Commissioner felt this was perhaps a reaction to the Sarah Everard criminal case?

A. Sussex, in comparison to many other counties, has a lower level of criminal offences toward women and girls, on average receiving 4-5 reports of serious sexual assault across the county on a daily basis. Since the Sarah Everard case, there has been a lot of evidence gathering, to assess whether women and girls feel safe. Practical tips and ideas are shared through online forums and apps, as well as national websites where victims can share their stories. The widespread

thoughts from the women Mrs. Bourne has spoken to, is that they want misogynistic behaviours to change and that any data and subsequent positive outcomes delivered as part of this, can only be of benefit in helping to combat these crimes.

Q. Is there any update on 'Operation Space' currently running in Bognor Regis?

A. Mrs. Bourne will provide an update on the operation through the Town Clerk.

Q. Have 'Safe Space' taken on board the hidden disability lanyard scheme?

A. A chosen group of officers within Sussex Police (champions), receive regular training on the scheme, which Mrs. Bourne believes is then shared through the force. The Policing College is responsible for new training and setting out these priorities.

Q. Disappointment was expressed by a Member that policing numbers for 2010 are seemingly being aspired to rather than trying to improve on these and looking forward. The Police and Crime Commissioner was asked for her justification for this.

A. Mrs. Bourne informed Members that when she joined Sussex Police in 2012, policing numbers in the county were at their highest. Mrs. Bourne strongly emphasised however, that policing has changed dramatically over the last ten years, with online fraud, malware and cybercrimes (which make up 40% of all crimes reported), having changed the way police are not only trained, but making the role of a police officer two pronged, with time having to be split between the digital side to policing as well as physical presence on the streets. On average, when over 75's are defrauded, they lose approximately £25,000. Mrs. Bourne stated this alone shows how serious the digital side of the job now is, inevitably requiring extra resources. Mrs. Bourne was however proud to report that Sussex Police, along with Surrey Police, are the first in the country to set up a dedicated 'Cyber Force', looking at innovative ways of tackling online crime.

Q. With the precept raised, what value for money do Sussex Police offer the county it serves?

A. Mrs. Bourne reported that Sussex Police does have the 7th lowest precept in the country and that when the precept is raised, she wants to know what services and benefits the public will receive with the extra spend. Mrs. Bourne stated that some areas in the north of England do receive significantly larger budgets than Sussex Police. If Sussex Police had this same budget, approximately 500 extra officers could be patrolling our streets in the county. Lastly for transparency, Mrs.

Bourne informed those present that her office costs approximately £1.3 million a year to run.

The Chairman thanked the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner for attending the meeting

The Meeting closed at 7.13pm