

ARUNDEL TOWN COUNCIL

Policing & Anti-Social Behaviour

Public Meeting with Katy Bourne, Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner and Andrew Griffith MP

Thursday 14th March 2024

Welcome

The Mayor, Cllr. Tony Hunt, welcomed residents to the meeting and introduced the guests who had come along to answer residents' questions:

- Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner, Katy Bourne OBE
- Chief Inspector Will Keating-Jones Sussex Police, Arun District Commander
- PCSO, Abi Jefferies

The Mayor explained that Andrew Griffith MP had sent his apologies for lateness. He had been delayed by parliamentary business, but he was on his way to the meeting.

February Meeting Objectives

Cllr. Tony Hunt explained that the purpose of the meeting was to act as a follow-up to the Public Meeting about Anti-Social Behaviour which took on Wednesday 7th February. At that meeting, which our Neighbourhood Policing Team ('NPT') and the Arun District Council Anti-Social Behaviour Team had attended, the issues discussed fell into two categories:

1. Shop looting: people brazenly removing goods from shelves and walking out of the shop without paying for them, intimidating anyone who remonstrated with them or tried to stop them.
2. Anti-social behaviour: which included breaking into hotels, throwing bottles and stones at residents, intimidating people working in the town in the evening and sinking boats moored on the River Arun.

Resident Views

At the February meeting, Residents had expressed their belief that:

1. There was a hard core of young people in Arundel who thought that they could do whatever they wished and that there would be no consequences to their actions –

because there was no police presence in the town. As a result, and as they got older, their behaviour had worsened.

2. This was affecting the quality of life in the community and – unless it was stopped - it would become a threat to Arundel’s visitor economy.
3. The identity of the young people was known, both to the police and to Arun District Council, but nothing was being done to address the problem.
4. Whilst the Neighbourhood Policing Sergeant was an experienced police officer who had the best of intentions nothing would change given the insufficiency of the police resources allocated to Arundel.
5. Arundel therefore needed to hear from the people involved in making resourcing decisions.

Based on the overcrowding at the first Public Meeting, it was also decided that this second meeting would be a ticketed event, to ensure that numbers were managed and those attending could participate comfortably.

Priorities

The Mayor asked Katy Bourne the opening question: “Given your enormous responsibilities covering the whole of Sussex, where does dealing with shop looting and anti-social behaviour in the small market town of Arundel fit into your priorities for Sussex Police?”

Retail & Business Crime

Katy Bourne explained that her role as Police and Crime Commissioner was to be the voice for residents in Policing; that was what she was elected to do. She recognised that Arundel residents were not having a good time of late, with there being a feeling that there was a general disregard for the town’s way of life. She was sorry for that, and her promise to residents was that she would raise Arundel at her meeting with the Chief Constable and monitor the situation.

Katy Bourne highlighted that often shoplifting had not always been viewed with the appropriate level of seriousness. However, in her earlier life, she had been a business owner and now amongst Police and Crime Commissioners she is the national lead for Business and Retail crime, which has put Business and Retail crime firmly in the policing plan.

She went on to explain the different types of shoplifting: 1) organised crime and gang-driven shoplifting, operating across different policing areas, 2) prolific offenders, 3)

opportunists. She added that she believed that Arundel was mostly like a victim of the latter two types.

Katy Bourne described how she had set up a partnership with businesses in the community. As part of this, she has worked with the Co-op to launch a pilot project with a new “one touch” reporting system which enables Co-op staff to quickly report thefts directly to Sussex Police. This pilot included 24 Sussex Co-op stores and, staggeringly, these 24 stores represented nearly 20% of total business crime in Sussex. Prior to this scheme, the police would have been unaware of the scale of the problem because stores were not reporting the crimes. This sort of reporting helps to identify crime waves and highlights the importance of reporting all crime.

Police Visibility

The Mayor suggested that contrary to a recent comment made about increased police visibility in Sussex attributed to Katy Bourne, Arundel residents’ experience was that the police were not visible in the town – and that this was a major factor in the behavioural issues under discussion. On a show of hands from the audience, the vast majority of residents had not seen a PCSO or a Police Officer in Arundel in the past week.

Katy Bourne responded by saying that it was clear that residents were not seeing police often enough. She agreed that visibility of policing mattered as it was closely linked to public confidence and safety. However, feeling safe and being safe are two distinct things. Statistics showed that despite the recent problems Arundel remained one of the safest places in the country. She added that she could not promise a police officer walking down the High Street every day, stating that she had to work with the resources that she had available. However, she promised should she be re-elected in May she would return to Arundel if residents were still unhappy with the situation.

In response to residents highlighting that they see several officers in police cars, rather than walking the streets, she said these officers would probably be responding to 999 emergency calls and incidents on the A27. She highlighted that Sussex is the top performing Police Force in the country when it came to answering 999 calls, with Response Units now at full complement.

Katy Bourne commented that in her role she could not interfere with operational decisions, but asked Chief Inspector Will-Keating Jones to comment, explaining that he had only just taken up his new role as District Commander.

Operational Action

Chief Inspector Will Keating-Jones responded by saying that whilst he did not question that something needed to be done, statistically there are very few instances of crime in

Arundel. He confirmed that in the last 3 months, there were 12 thefts reported in Arundel, and 9 of these can be attributed to members of the same family. He added that the statistics suggest that without that family, this meeting would not be happening.

Will Keating-Jones acknowledged that perhaps Sussex Police had not got a grip on the situation with that known family as quickly as he would have liked. However, he confirmed that he had taken the situation away from the police group which had been handling it and transferred it to a specialist response department. He also went on to explain that the member of the family who had been given a Community Protection Warning (CPW), has now had that upgraded to a Community Protection Notice (CPN) – a powerful piece of legislation. Another younger member of the family has been given an Acceptable Behaviour Contract. These should not be regarded as a soft option; they are designed to steer young people away from a life of crime, but if young people or their families disregard them, they are on a path that leads to being charged in a youth court. Experience in Sussex showed that these measures were effective in changing behaviour in the majority of families.

Andrew Griffith made the point that he took the situation in Arundel seriously, which is why he had supported the Town Council in asking Katy Bourne to come to Arundel. If problems were being caused by families who were living in housing owned by Arun District Council, Arun had a role in dealing with the problem.

In response to a member of a resident stating that there had been threats to use a knife, arson and instances of assault, Will Keating-Jones reiterated the importance of reporting these to the Police because what was being described here were serious crimes. He said he would look into the reports that had been received.

A resident asked why Arundel Police Station was only being used as a police car park. Why could it not operate as a Police Station? In the past when the town was smaller it had had its own Police Station and officers. Katy Bourne confirmed that the premises in Arundel is a Roads Policing Station. She added that she is currently looking at the feasibility of the whole police estate and that she would like to see a front desk, available to the public, in Arundel. However, she added that there is no infrastructure /technology at Arundel Station and that officers now use mobile data terminals or laptops to carry out much of their work.

Reporting Confusion

The information handed out by the Safer Arun Partnership at the previous public meeting had left residents confused as to whether anti-social behaviour should be reported to the Arun District Council Anti-Social Behaviour team or Sussex Police. This was clarified by Will Keating-Jones – the behaviour described at the meeting was of a serious nature and should be reported to Sussex Police.

A dismissive response provided by the ADC Anti-social behaviour team was read out by one resident. Katy Bourne invited the resident to join her at the next Arun Safer Partnership Meeting to help share her feedback directly with the group.

Constitutional Separation

Andrew Griffith explained that in the UK a clear separation between politicians and policing exists – and it is highly desirable that this should be the case. However, he would support the town dealing with these problems, and act as a conduit to Katy Bourne, who had very wide responsibilities. Andrew Griffith spoke about the ‘Broken Window’ theory and how turning a blind eye to the small instances of anti-social behaviour, leads people to feel unsafe and undermines civic pride in a community. In conclusion, he echoed the message of the Police and urged residents to report crimes and anti-social behaviour and not to fail to act because ‘reporting it will be a waste of time’.

Closing Comments & the Way Forward

The Mayor thanked our guests for their contribution and for dealing with some tough questions and explained that Katy Bourne, Will-Keating Jones and our PCSO, Abi Jeffery, and Andrew Griffiths had all kindly agreed to stay on to talk with residents after the meeting had closed. The importance of reporting crime and anti-social behaviour to Sussex Police continues to be a key takeaway from the meeting.

In conclusion, he asked what steps each of our guests would be taking tomorrow as a result of the evening’s meeting:

1. Katy Bourne confirmed that she would highlight the views of residents to the Chief Constable in her Performance and Accountability Meeting the next day, Friday 15th March. She also confirmed that should she be re-elected in May she would return to Arundel in 6 months’ time to review the situation.
2. Will Keating-Jones confirmed that we had his attention and that dealing decisively with the small number known offenders in Arundel would form part of his agenda. Arundel would see improvements.
3. Andrew Griffiths said he would add a date to his diary for a month’s time to track progress.

Carolyn Baynes

Town Clerk

18th March 2023.

HOW TO REPORT CRIME

	Telephone	Online	Circumstances
Sussex Police	999		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A serious offence is in progress• Someone is in immediate danger or risk of harm• Property is in danger of being damaged• A serious disruption to the public is likely
Sussex Police	101	www.sussex.police.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anti-social behaviour involving crime, theft, assault, criminal damage or public order