

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 18 January 2022

Item 5 - Public Question Time

Question 1 – From Mr George Hibberd

The Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill that, at the time of writing, is being voted on in the House of Lords is a blatant attack by the Conservative government on the sacred human rights to freedom of speech and freedom assembly. It criminalises protest in a time when the government (and this council) is clearly not taking the required action to avert the worst impacts of the climate and ecological crisis.

As someone who feels like they have no other option to protest to fight for something as basic as a habitable future, I am terrified that I am going to end up in prison for doing so. No one should fear their liberty being taken from them for fighting for justice, equality, fairness and liberty itself. This will scare so many from expressing dissent, allow our government to rule by hegemony and create an authoritarian fascist state that only 70 years ago this country fought against. By not allowing people to protest, they are not providing a necessary pressure release and will eventually lead to incredible social instability or collapse – making your job infinitely harder than it needs to be.

The bill also criminalises the way of life of the long-marginalised Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Community. Their designated have been slashed systematically in recent decades. Councils are not providing them with the basic waste removal services that folks in fixed abode households enjoy. Councils, the media and the government are spreading misinformation about this community leading to unnecessary tensions between fixed abode and nomadic communities.

Will you, as Chief Inspector, stand against this draconian bill? Will you uphold the freedom of speech and assembly? Will you take a stand against fascism? Will you stand with the GRT community and demand more provisions of sites and waste services? Or will you stand by as the UK turns into an Orwellian state?

Question 2 – From Mr & Mrs Hebblethwaite

1. Excessive speed of vehicles travelling along College Lane Summersdale. This is of particular concern because of the close proximity to the University and the narrow pavements in this area. There is little evidence of speed enforcement of the 20 mile an hour speed limit here.

2. In addition there seems to be a lack of regard by many drivers to the 20 mile an hour speed limit in residential areas in north Chichester.

We are interested to know what Jon Carter's views are on these two issues.

Question 3 – From Oliver English

eScooters, I've noticed an increase in them since Christmas. More people are using them, sometimes while using mobile phones. I have seen your officers once speak to a rider of an eScooter **ONCE**, I've seen them mostly ignore them and take no action - numerous times, Facebook marketplace locally is full of people selling them, they are illegal, but it still seems to be a grey area, especially if it's teenagers using them and have been told as much by officers of your I've spoken to at the Cross, that you are basically powerless to stop them, so is it time that you either took more action or just make a decision and let them be?

Question 4 – From Laura Eccott

1. Medical Cannabis Access Bill is predicted to fall in the commons today (14th). It had hoped to allow GPs, who are generally more supportive of cannabis medicines, to be prescribers, too. It called for the creation of Commission on Cannabis-Based Medicines to implement 'measures to overcome barriers to access, and for greater emphasis to be given to observational trial evidence on efficacy'. This would have prevented many from being forced to access the illegal drugs networks for substances that cannot be assured to be safe. How much of your force-hours are dedicated to enforcing the current approach to cannabis use and do you feel they could be more appropriately used? For example, to increase the 1 day a month in the District currently available for patrolling the excessive speeding and driving?
2. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill seeks to introduce 51 weeks' imprisonment for simply protesting. I'd love to hear your views on how this will impact the management of force time? Particularly given the current 1 day a month in the District currently available for patrolling the excessive speeding and driving - will the Bill impact those hours via the stop and search amendments and/or place additional time pressure to your force?