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Surrey Police Commissioner responds to morale report

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Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner has defended a reported drop in police officer morale, pointing to public and media criticism of the force. Only 57 per cent of officers believe they are making a difference, according to a new report, but **PCC Lisa Townsend** said the decline reflects wider tensions between the force and the field. Speaking at a Surrey Police and Crime Panel meeting on November 27, she said: "It doesn't matter what this job you're in, if the profession that you do is being attacked by the public, is being attacked in the news, attacked by colleagues or other people – there is an inevitable correlation in terms of morale." She added that Surrey's proximity to the Met Police, "that features in the news on a regular basis", may also be influencing Surrey officers' perceptions. "Our officers feel that. They see police officers being attacked and it's not surprising they are not completely immune to feeling that themselves," she said.

However, Ms Townsend warned against assuming pressure is spread evenly across the force: "We've got to be careful about treating it as a single… as a uniform [experience] across all police officers or police staff." Backlogs in the justice process, not feeling adequately equipped and workload were also cited as frustrations potentially chipping away at morale. Nearly 66 per cent of officers said they were unable to finish tasks on time, according to council documents. Despite the uncertainty of local government reorganisation and the government's plan to scrap the PCC role in 2028, Ms Townsend stressed that officer numbers remain strong. "We would never have enough police officers to deal with everything every member of the public will want to deal with. It is always going to be an issue. Police officers are always going to be under a certain amount of pressure, as everyone in the public sector."

The Commissioner said work to improve retention and reduce stress is making progress but a tough reality remains: demand continues to feel high and work–life balance remains "the most common reason for leaving the force".

Emily Dalton LDRS

Image: Lisa Townsend, Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner. (Credit: Surrey PCC office)

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