

A fresh approach

Katy Bourne will be standing for the Conservatives as police and crime commissioner covering East and West Sussex counties and Brighton & Hove.



Although she's only been a councillor for a year, she managed to defeat East Sussex's leader Peter Jones for the Tory nomination and is clearly an enthusiast for the controversial new posts.

A Tory activist since her university days in Aberystwyth in the early 1980s, Councillor Bourne has been a district councillor in Mid Sussex since 2011 and is national chair of the Conservative Women's Organisation.

Her only previous elected office was as a parish councillor and she was unsuccessful in seeking a parliamentary nomination in 2010; her business career has no connection with the law or police.

Councillor Bourne sees this relative lack of experience as an advantage in what she hopes to bring to the role.

"I come from outside of policing and I'm there to ask all the questions the public would ask and bring a fresh approach," she says.

"Creating commissioners is a really good, innovative, idea, and when I looked into it I realised it will be an opportunity for people at local level to have their voice heard.

"At the moment Whitehall sets the policies on policing, but this means they can be decided locally."

Of her perhaps surprising nomination win, she says: "Peter Jones is a very experienced politician, and I'm different. I'm not part of the police authority or the current establishment so I think I see the role more as strong voice for people, which is what I offered and why I was selected."

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Commissioners will replace police authorities, a source of some resentment in councils, which were represented on these bodies.

"I think under the last government police authorities lost most of their teeth," Councillor Bourne says.

"They became a bit weak because of that, and few people knew about them. The crucial difference now is that the public can influence policing and say if they are unhappy about something and I don't know that they have been able to do that with a police authority."

She may lack professional police or legal expertise, but points out, "I have set up and run businesses, and I know about budgets and will be looking to cut waste and inefficiency.

"I will bring commercial experience to an economic

landscape that is very challenging. There is no such thing as 'public money', it is taxpayers' money that is being spent and it needs to be spent more efficiently."

As an example she says that Sussex Police at present operate 170 IT systems and "there must be room for standardisation".

She is clear that her job is not that of chief constable and "I don't tell him who to arrest, I set the strategic priorities and I ask questions.

"A lot of people are very concerned about anti-social behaviour and want that tackled so I can represent that concern and say that has to be the police's main priority."

In the November election she says her main theme will be cutting crime and securing better value for money, though adds: "I will never privatise frontline policing."

Despite some speculation that independent candidates would dominate these elections, Councillor Bourne thinks party labels are desirable for them: "With a Conservative candidate you know what you are getting - a determination to be strong on law and order and family values, and on value for money."

Party labels of any kind explain to voters what a candidate stands for, while "with an independent you never know what they might be, they might be anything," she says.

If elected, Councillor Bourne intends to resign as a councillor and withdraw from her business interests.

"I think this will be an 18 hour a day job, so I will if elected do it full time," she says. 

As the Bourne Legacy – the latest in what seems to have become the 'Carry On Bourne' series of films – hits the screens, a namesake is bidding to become the head crimefighter of Sussex, writes Mark Smulian.

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