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Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner

Mr Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM
HM Inspector of Constabulary
His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service
6th Floor – Globe House
89 Eccleston Square
London
SW1V 1PN

15 June 2023

Dear Roy

HMICFRS – PEEL Assessment 2021/22

I write in respect of the recently published findings from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) following their Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) assessment of Sussex Police 2021/22 and have carefully studied the constructive recommendations it contains.

As Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) with a statutory role to scrutinise the performance of the Force, I value all HMICFRS reports because they provide me with an objective and external view of that performance. This focus is vital in supporting my work to thoroughly scrutinise and robustly challenge the Force's performance overall.

Firstly, I welcome the focus this report provides around the areas in which Sussex Police are performing well and are graded 'good' including:

a) 'preventing crime and anti-social behaviour' using innovative practices and data – the unique development of the Habitual Knife Carrier index has resulted in a 57% reduction in the number of possession-of-weapons offences and has been recognised by the College of Policing as 'smarter practice'
b) multiple examples of effective working with partners to build public confidence
c) their focus on reducing serious youth violence and continuation of our successful prevention programme called Reboot

The Force was also praised and rated 'good' for 'engaging with and treating the public with fairness and respect' including efforts to engage with hard-to-reach groups, providing a visible presence in local communities and their external scrutiny of stop and search powers which was rightly acknowledged as innovative practice.

Pleasingly, the report recognises the immense contribution of Neighbourhood Policing Teams which, as I know from my discussions with the public, are so valued by residents. It also highlights the Force's innovative and important work on using data analytics to properly understand its demand and, thus, where resources can be deployed to greatest effect.

HMICFRS also highlighted areas where change and improvement are much needed, especially in supporting people who are vulnerable. These areas include 'investigating crime', 'recording data about crime' and 'responding to the public' via emergency and non-emergency telephone calls.

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Aspects of the report are clearly sobering and outline areas for which the Force must take responsibility. They know that swift action must be implemented to improve recording processes, identify gaps in protocols and provide specific training to officers and staff. This is crucial if we are to provide Sussex residents with the best policing service and to maintain and build public confidence.

On a positive note, I recognise that this inspection was undertaken more than six months ago so I am aware of the extensive work that was quickly implemented to bring about improvements and I am reassured that the 'inadequate' areas identified are already being positively addressed.

However, to scrutinise and challenge Sussex Police effectively, particularly around the areas that were graded as 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate', I dedicated my recent webcast Performance & Accountability meeting (7 June at 13:00hrs) in its entirety to this PEEL inspection report. I have included a copy of the minutes with this letter which give a general outline but you can also watch in greater detail on my website through the following link: www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/webcasting/ and I urge you to do so.

In my role as PCC, I will strive to ensure that Sussex Police have the tools and support to make the changes needed to serve our residents in the best way. I will also continue to work closely with Chief Constable Shiner, holding her to account at my monthly scrutiny meetings and requesting frequent updates on how improvements and recommendations are being actioned.

From our recent conversations and your subsequent communications with the Force, I am encouraged to hear that you are pleased with the way Sussex Police has responded to the concerns identified as indeed am I.

Yours Sincerely

Katy Bourne OBE
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner