Katy Bourne OBE
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner

Tel: 01273 481561
Email: pcc@sussex-pcc.gov.uk
www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk

The Office of the
Sussex Police &
Crime Commissioner
Sackville House
Brooks Close, Lewes
East Sussex, BN7 2FZ

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

28 October 2024

Dear Roy

HMICFRS – An inspection of the south-east regional response to serious and organised crime

I write in respect of the recently published findings from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following their inspection report into the south-east regional response to serious and organised crime and have carefully studied the constructive areas for improvement contained within.

South East Regional Organised Crime Unit

I am pleased that the inspection report judged the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit (SEROCU) to be 'good' at tackling serious and organised crime. HMICFRS found that the regional unit has benefitted from greater investment with each of the regional forces having increased their funding contribution by 8% to expand the senior leadership team to include a new Chief Superintendent and an additional Superintendent. This position will be strengthened further still when the SEROCU moves into new operational buildings later this year, funded by the Police & Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Chief Constables in 2019.

The SEROCU was recognised to understand the threats presented by serious organised crime (SOC) and has set clear priorities to tackle this type of criminality through the effective governance arrangements that have been established which maximise a range of different intelligence and sensitive databases to understand better any emerging crime threats within the region.

I was delighted to note that the SEROCU was awarded "promising practice" for how effectively it manages serious crime prevention orders (SCPOs). The creation of a dedicated post has also improved the quality of the applications routinely submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service for consideration, alongside the development of effective working relationships with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and each of the offender management teams within the regional police force areas. The guidance and training that has been developed by this individual, together with the work undertaken to quality assure these applications before they are submitted, means that 85% of applications are now accepted on first submission.

HMICFRS found that the SEROCU has established effective working arrangements with multi-agency partners, including the regional prison intelligence team and the regional disruption team. This includes monitoring SOC offenders in prisons to understand better any risk presented by individual prisoners who are attempting to remain involved in this area of criminality whilst serving custodial sentences, alongside the ongoing provision of overt disruption activities for SOC investigations, assisting with warrant applications and supporting regional partners with limited investigative powers, such as Trading Standards and His Majesty's Revenue & Customs, to tackle SOC and better safeguard vulnerable individuals.

Katy Bourne OBE
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner

Tel: 01273 481561
Email: pcc@sussex-pcc.gov.uk
www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk

The Office of the
Sussex Police &
Crime Commissioner
Sackville House
Brooks Close, Lewes
East Sussex, BN7 2FZ

Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner

I have sought assurances from my Chief Constable that Sussex Police and the other constituent forces of the SEROCU have collectively developed appropriate plans to address the one area for improvement highlighted within the report to improve how the regional forces work together to tackle serious and organised crime.

Sussex Police

I was disheartened to note that Sussex Police was only recognised to be 'adequate' at tackling serious and organised crime, and shared HMICFRS' concerns that the specialist SOC investigation teams can be frequently short-staffed, with several vacant detective posts held and other examples provided where officers were diverted away from their main duties to support neighbourhood and offender management teams.

Despite some of the critical observations highlighted in the report, Sussex Police is making ongoing efforts to improve in this area and is currently performing well in respect of its work to prevent SOC and protect victims, including the partnership work that exists around tackling cuckooing and the appointment of three exploitation coordinators who are routinely providing advice and guidance on investigating cases involving exploitation and safeguarding victims.

I welcome the focus this report provides around the three areas where improvements are required for Sussex Police. This includes: reviewing the resource and capacity of intelligence analysts to ensure that this is sufficient to proactively scan and identify emerging threats relating to SOC; having the capability to respond effectively to serious and organised crime by ensuring that enough detective and investigative resources are in place to tackle this area of criminality; and improving the quality and consistency of its pursue, prepare, protect and prevent approach – better known as a 4P plan.

In my role as PCC, I have discussed the content of the inspection report with Chief Constable Shiner to understand how Sussex Police plan to address each of the three areas for improvement specifically identified for the Force within the report.

I welcome the proactive approach already taken by the Force to address these areas. It was acknowledged that Sussex Police can do more to build and develop its analytical capability and improve the quality and consistency of the tactical plans established to tackle serious and organised crime threats. This was recognised to include the need for better intelligence collection, analysis and data sharing throughout the organisation to fully understand and prioritise any SOC threats identified more effectively.

Following the previous SOC inspection in 2017, Sussex Police has introduced a learning board to review its operations and the positive impact these can have in terms of tackling serious and organised crime. The learning board has considered 31 submissions during the past 12 months and confirms that the Force has fully embraced the area for improvement that was identified around this aspect of policing previously and has successfully implemented a process to address this which all operational staff are now aware of.

I will continue to scrutinise the performance of Sussex Police and the SEROCU in this important area through my attendance at the quarterly South East Regional Chief Constables and PCCs meeting.

Yours Sincerely,

Katy Bourne OBE
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner