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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katy Bourne".

**HMICFRS – PEEL Assessment 2023/25**

I write in respect of the recently published findings from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following your police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy assessment of Sussex Police 2023/25 and have carefully studied the constructive areas for improvement contained within.

As Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) with a statutory role to scrutinise the performance of the Force, I value all HMICFRS reports when 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 overall standards of policing within Sussex Police. The inspection report highlights many areas of strong performance, as well as areas where improvements could be made.

I am aware of the extensive work that has been undertaken by the Force and the multiple changes that have already been implemented to bring about improvements quickly. I also recognise that part of the fieldwork for this inspection was completed more than 12-months ago with some systems and processes referred to in the report having since been revised, changed or no longer used by Sussex Police.

I am delighted to confirm that Sussex is recognised to be the fourth most improved police force area in England and Wales from the previous PEEL inspection 2021/22 [published in 2023] with the Force ranked 16/43 for its performance across all areas of the latest PEEL inspection process. As acknowledged by HMICFRS, I am pleased with of the positive changes made by Sussex Police, with five areas of promising practice and two areas of innovative practice specifically identified in the inspection report.

Sussex Police was also one of only four police forces nationally to be graded 'good' for 'responding to the public' which highlights the significant improvements made in recent years to make it easier for members of the public to contact the Force. Performance in this area is also now in complete contrast to the 'inadequate' grading that was received for responding to the public in 2023.



Sussex Police is now able to consistently answer emergency and non-emergency calls and webforms submitted through the single online home (SOH) in a timely manner, including the use of a structured process to assess threat, risk, harm and vulnerability, alongside the identification of any repeat victims of crime. The abandonment rate recorded for 101 calls is also acknowledged to have reduced to less than 5% for all non-emergency calls received and the introduction of a new call grading policy and service level agreement [October 2024] within the Force Contact, Command and Control Department (FCCCD) has had a positive impact on average police attendance times too.

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

Seven areas within the Force were rated as 'adequate', including leadership and force management; protecting vulnerable people; managing offenders; preventing crime; police powers and public treatment; recording data about crime, and developing a positive workforce. I also recognise that the PEEL inspection was more rigorous than before so to achieve the same ratings in many areas – with limited investment – is a sign of success and is testament to the continued hard work of Chief Constable Shiner, Deputy Chief Constable McLaren and the police officers, staff and volunteers working so hard to keep us all safe throughout the county.

However, HMICFRS found that Sussex Police must improve how it investigates crime to ensure that it consistently achieves more acceptable outcomes for victims. It determined that the Force lacks capacity to ensure investigations are progressed in a timely manner and to an appropriate outcome, resulting in low numbers of victim-based crimes being solved.

I shared the concerns raised in the report that the proportion of victim-based crimes assigned outcome 18 [investigation complete – no suspect identified] by Sussex Police [48.3%] was higher than expected when compared with the other police forces in England and Wales [43.3%].

Over the last two years, I am pleased to confirm that Sussex Police has increased the number of victim-based crimes with a successful outcome type by 51%. The Force has also seen the charge rate for victim-based crime [outcome 1 – charged/summonsed] increase to 6.9% in the year ending June 2025, compared to the figure of 5.3% referenced in the inspection report [June 2024] – this is now higher than the national average.

It was disappointing to note that this area was, again, graded 'requires improvement' despite the significant amount of work and effort the Force has undertaken to improve the standard of investigations and achieve more successful outcomes for victims of crime. Sussex Police had recognised the need to make changes to its investigation processes because, at the time of the report, the charge rate for investigations was below the national average and there was a significant number of live and outstanding investigations which was impacting on the ability of the Force to deliver an efficient and effective service.

I am reassured to note that this area will be addressed as part of longer-term plans to improve investigations in Sussex, with large-scale changes already underway to move police officers into more specialist teams for adult and child protection, and high-risk domestic and sexual offence investigations.



I am also encouraged to hear that you and your inspection team are pleased with the way Sussex Police has responded to the areas for improvement identified and the measures that have been implemented so far. I accept that there is still more work to do to improve the investigation of crimes and to deliver an outstanding service to the people of Sussex, although I am pleased to confirm that Sussex Police recorded a 27% increase in the actual number of offences detected across all crime types in 2024/25, in comparison to same period 12-months earlier, which bodes well moving forward.

Sussex Police has assessed each of the 16 areas for improvement specifically identified for the Force in the HMICFRS report which seek to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy of the Force. Many of the areas for improvement set out in the report had already been identified through internal review processes, with improvement plans now well underway. I am also pleased to confirm that where these areas have not already been completed following the inspection last year, the Force has developed action plans to address each of these outstanding areas with immediate effect.

As one of the lowest funded police force areas in England and Wales, Sussex Police continue to operate in a challenging financial environment. However, I will continue to work closely with Chief Constable Shiner to maximise the amount of funding received and to explore all possible avenues for any additional funding to ensure that the Force can effectively manage the demand it faces in terms of recording, responding to and investigating crime.

Last week [11 September 2025] I dedicated my monthly webcast Performance & Accountability Meeting (PAM) in its entirety to discuss the PEEL inspection report with Chief Constable Shiner and Deputy Chief Constable McLaren. I have included a copy of the notes from this meeting with this letter which provide a general outline of these discussions, although you can also watch this PAM session in full on my website through the following link: [www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/webcasting/](http://www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/webcasting/)

In my role as Sussex PCC, I will continue to work with Government to see that Sussex Police has the resources, tools and support to make the changes required to ensure that the best possible policing service is delivered for the people of Sussex. I will also continue to work closely with Chief Constable Shiner, holding her to account at my monthly PAMs and requesting frequent updates about how the areas for improvement are being addressed, to ensure that members of the public maintain trust and confidence in the effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy of the Force.

*Yours sincerely  
Katy*

**Katy Bourne OBE  
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner**