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State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2024/25

I write in respect of the recently published findings from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following your State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2024/25 and have carefully studied the constructive areas for improvement it contains.

I understand that the 15-months covered by the HMICFRS report were particularly difficult for the police service, including the murder of three young girls in a knife attack in Southport [July 2024] and the widespread unrest and violent disorder that then broke out in towns and cities across England and Wales [July and August 2024].

These actions placed the police and other emergency services under significant and sustained pressure, with police officers and staff displaying immense bravery in the face of extreme violence. I would [again] like to place on record my sincerest thanks to every officer and member of police staff who worked tirelessly to restore order and keep us all safe, alongside the other emergency services.

I recognise the ongoing challenges facing police forces in England and Wales highlighted in this annual assessment [and in previous assessments published in recent years] which still need to be addressed. I referred to each of the four points specifically highlighted in the HMICFRS press release as part of my own response to your request for views on the state of policing earlier this year.

These challenges included the over-reliance by many police forces on outdated systems and poor data management which have not kept pace with rapid advancements in technology; the absence of multi-year funding and capital grants which remain a barrier to support long-term planning and investment to meet the policing challenges of the future; the continued use of the unfair and outdated police allocation formula to distribute central government grants, alongside the high levels of inexperience across the workforce and officers and staff continuing to feel undervalued and experience low morale.

I discussed the Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2024/25 with Chief Constable Shiner at my webcast monthly Performance & Accountability Meeting (PAM) on 16 October 2025, alongside some of the more specific findings contained within the assessment report. This PAM session is available to view on my website through the following link:
<https://www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/about/how-we-work/watch-live/>



HMICFRS also highlighted the variable levels of performance demonstrated by forces nationally across different areas of policing, including the ongoing need for the police service to improve its response provided to emergency 999 calls received. I am pleased to confirm that Sussex Police were recognised to be the best performing force area for answering 999 calls throughout England and Wales for the third consecutive month [in September 2025] with 97.2% of all 999 calls received answered within 10 seconds [with a mean answer time of 4.39 seconds] which reflects the significant improvements made by the Force in this important area in recent years.

The Chief Constable highlighted the ongoing financial constraints for Sussex Police and explained that these pressures continue to be amplified locally because the Force remains one of the lowest funded areas nationally. This position is compounded further by the associated challenges of supporting a transient population, including a significant number of visitors, students and commuters to different parts of Sussex throughout the year.

The ongoing demographical and geographical challenges associated with deploying resources to police a population of more than 1.72 million people across the [super] rural and urban counties of East Sussex and West Sussex [including Brighton & Hove], 137 miles of coastline from Chichester Harbour to Camber Sands [including the ports of Newhaven and Shoreham] and the second busiest airport in the United Kingdom [Gatwick Airport] add further complexities and pressures to the policing response provided locally.

I also recognise that you have taken the pragmatic approach to not make any recommendations within your State of Policing report this year which should afford the police service time and opportunity to make the necessary changes required to improve the service it provides to the public and the how it deals with the evolving challenges it faces.

In my role as Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner, I am reassured to note that Sussex Police is continuing to work hard to improve public trust and confidence in policing locally and to make our communities safer. I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account for the performance and activity delivered by Sussex Police to protect communities, catch criminals and deliver an outstanding service.

I am happy to discuss any of the points raised in this response and hope that this information is useful to you.

Thought I'd also take this opportunity to wish you all the best following your announcement this month of your retirement in five months time!

Katy Bourne OBE
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner