

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

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Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP
Home Secretary
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Please ask for: Mr. Martin Surl
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Date: 9 June 2017

Dear Home Secretary,

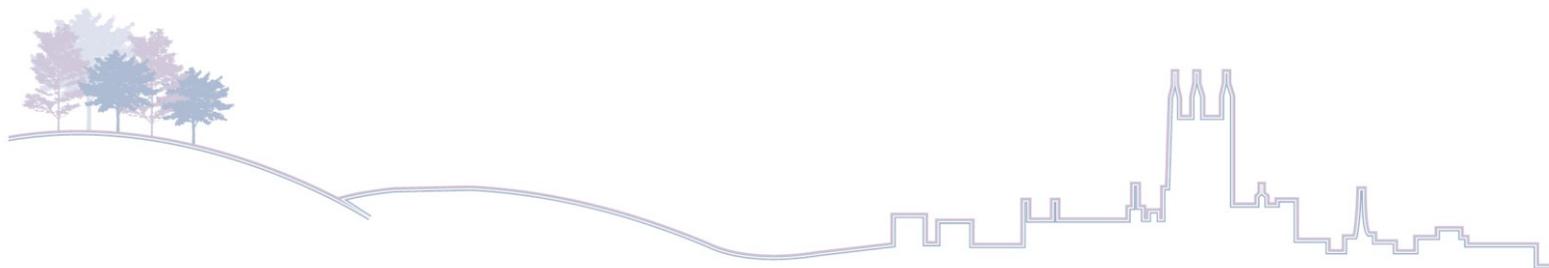
RESPONSE TO HMIC INSPECTION “PEEL: Police effectiveness 2016”

I write in respect of the HMIC Police effectiveness report for 2016 for Gloucestershire Constabulary. I have carefully studied its findings and take this opportunity to comment on its conclusions and recommendations.

In summary I am particularly concerned that while Gloucestershire Constabulary has successfully transformed itself from being one of the worst performing forces in the country in terms of reducing crime to one of only four forces to reduce crime in the preceding year, HMIC said that overall it required improvement and was even found to be inadequate in relation to its specialist capabilities. This suggests to me undue focus on the part of HMIC on certain processes and procedures while ignoring the results and outcomes actually achieved by the Constabulary over the last 12 months.

I accept that too many neighbourhood officers were being reassigned to other duties to support 999/101 response duties. This was an issue that I had already identified in my Police and Crime Plan for 2016-21 and “significant effort” is now being put into developing the Constabulary’s new Neighbourhood Policing approach by the new Chief Constable. I therefore agree with HMIC that there needs to be a focus on deploying neighbourhood officers to their proper roles but would question whether committing resources to introducing a “detailed threat assessment process” or a more structured approach to problem solving is really necessary when the Constabulary has nonetheless achieved a reduction in anti-social behaviour during the year under review.

While examining how effective the force is at investigating crime and reducing offending, HMIC have again focussed on the absence of “structured plans” to address issues identified in its 2015 report (published March 2016) while disregarding the “noticeable improvements” that have been made. While I would support many of the areas for improvement identified in this part of the



report I would question whether those listed in relation to the management of wanted individuals or the Constabulary's approach to offender management really warrant particular mention.

HMIC's approach to the issue of vulnerability and its suggestion that staff should be encouraged to look for signs of "hidden vulnerability" is of particular concern. The report recognises that call handlers and front line staff can and do effectively identify the appropriate indicators of vulnerability and that officers who attend incidents do all they can to protect vulnerable victims. Therefore expending diminishing resources on promoting an "agreed definition of vulnerability" and training officers in "safeguarding options" would not seem to be the highest priority for the force while I am aware that the Constabulary uses a range of "preventative legislation" such as DVPOs and Closure Orders where the statutory criteria are met.

I know the Constabulary was particularly concerned by HMIC's finding that it was "inadequate" in relation to the manner in which it tackled serious and organised crime which is not supported by the available evidence. Once again the emphasis seems to be on the absence of "essential processes" rather than an objective consideration of the outcomes achieved.

I have discussed the report and its findings with both the former Chief Constable and her successor. I have also formally sought the new Chief Constable's comments on the report and in particular the HMI's recommendations and these are now to be found on my website at www.gloucestershire-pcc.gov.uk.

In summary, I think the latest HMIC report and the way it was presented was unhelpful and damaging in terms of the public perception. Many of the criticisms of the force are in fact "old news" and issues which I myself have raised with the force within the last year and the force is putting in measures to address their shortcomings. But fundamentally I was elected to make my county a safer place to live. During the period under inspection crime fell in Gloucestershire. Therefore I think for me, that is a success. While I accept it is not perfect I think that is a major factor not taken into account by this latest HMIC report which is top heavy on processes and not enough on outcomes, which is ultimately how I and other PCCs will be judged.

Yours faithfully,



Martin Surl
Police and Crime Commissioner