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Date: 2 August 2013

Dear Theresa

RE: HMIC Report - Policing In Austerity: Rising to the Challenge

I welcome this report, and very much appreciate the opportunity to comment. I am pleased that the findings are supportive of our approach in Suffolk.

I have discussed the findings from the Suffolk, and national, report with the Chief Constable, and I have attached to this letter the response that I have received from the force.

I fully support Suffolk Constabulary's response and I will be working with the Chief Constable to maintain an efficient and effective police force in Suffolk during these challenging times.

Yours sincerely

Tim Passmore
Police and Crime Commissioner

ADDRESS:
The Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Home Secretary
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www.suffolk-pcc.gov.uk

Suffolk Constabulary's response to "Policing In Austerity: Rising to the Challenge" report by HMIC

1. Background

On the 18th July HMIC published the national thematic report for the 3rd round of its Valuing the Police (VtP) inspection programme which looked at how forces are meeting the challenges of the Comprehensive Spending Review. Alongside the national thematic each force received their own detailed report. The inspection focused on three key questions:

- i. How are forces responding to the budget reduction?
- ii. What is the impact for the workforce and the public?
- iii. How is the force managing current and future risks?

2. Suffolk

HMIC has been very positive in its assessment of Suffolk's response to the funding challenge. Whilst it is acknowledged that we still face a moderate challenge, it is recognised that our strong and efficient change programme, and collaborative working with Norfolk, is enabling us to meet the financial challenge without losing our focus on reducing crime and improving safety within our communities.

We have been commended for protecting frontline posts whilst reducing workforce numbers, for the way that we have found savings through collaboration, and for maintaining a focus on crime reduction and victim satisfaction. It is noted that we have achieved savings with no significant impact on our service to the public, and remain in a good position to face further budget reductions after March 2015.

3. National

The national response to the funding challenge has been good overall, with most forces having plans to balance their budgets whilst increasing the proportion of the workforce on the front line, at the same time achieving continued crime reduction and increased victim satisfaction.

Concerns have been raised that some forces are saving money through broadening the remit of neighbourhood policing teams, who are taking on more response or investigative tasks. There is therefore a risk of a reduction in preventative work and the level of service to the public, potentially eroding neighbourhood policing in some areas. This criticism has not been levelled at Suffolk, but work will continue to ensure that neighbourhood policing is protected with a continued focus on prevention and providing an excellent service to the public.

HMIC is also 'deeply disappointed' with progress on collaboration as the pace of change is generally too slow, and relatively small proportions of savings are being made in this way. However, Suffolk and Norfolk have been commended in this area

with significant savings being delivered and resilience being added. Collaboration is expected to contribute to 49% of Suffolk's savings requirement, compared with 7% for the whole of England and Wales.

HMIC has identified five forces that will find it difficult to cope with further budget reductions. Suffolk Constabulary does not feature in this category, having been identified as being in a good position to face these challenges.

HMIC has made ten recommendations in the national report, some of which are for Chief Constables and PCCs to progress.

We are expected **to protect the front line, and our crime fighting capacity**, through a review of savings plans. Whilst we cannot be complacent, it is clear that this is a strong area for us.

There is an expectation that we will **maximise savings through reviewing collaboration plans** – an area of work currently regarded as exemplary for Suffolk and Norfolk. Consideration is already being given to future plans, given the latest round of the Government's spending review, with areas such as the CCR being scoped for potential opportunities to collaborate.

In terms of **enabling better use of police IT** the force has a number projects aimed at maximising use of new and already available IT. These include the Athena crime recording and investigation system, which will replace a number of other IT systems reducing bureaucracy and double keying for officers; a programme to roll out mobile devices (Tough Books) enabling on-patrol access to key systems; a single command and control system (STORM) for both Norfolk and Suffolk facilitating much closer cross border policing; and electronic transfer of digital case files and information to CPS.

Forces must also work with each other, the Home Office, the College of Policing, PCCs and HMIC to develop a longer term approach for policing in an era of sustained budget reductions: assessing demand in the context of falling crime whilst taking account of emerging threats; and identifying how to distribute resources so that we can withstand further budget reductions whilst delivering efficient and effective policing.

It is clear from the inspection that Suffolk has set a good foundation for policing in future austerity. We look forward to working with partners to share our experience, and take on good practice evidenced elsewhere to continue our strong performance in challenging times.

Suffolk Constabulary is pleased with the largely positive findings of HMIC's inspection, which is down to the hard work of all officers, staff and partners, and confident that this will continue as we meet the challenges of the future together.