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Office of the
**Police & Crime
Commissioner**
West Yorkshire

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Your Reference:

3 September 2014

The Rt. Hon Theresa May MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DP

Dear Home Secretary

HMIC INSPECTION – RESPONDING TO AUSTERITY, WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE

I welcome this opportunity to comment on the HMIC report, which details the excellent progress that has been made since the last report in July 2013, elevating West Yorkshire to 'good' in all categories. I have responded positively to the previous HMIC report, working hard with the Chief Constable and colleagues to drive the changes necessary to secure improvement and efficiency throughout the whole force and from the results of the recent inspection, this work has clearly been recognised. I have considered this report, the national report and the Temporary Chief Constable for West Yorkshire's response [enclosed] and I am writing to set out my response as required.

Financial Challenge

Whilst I am very pleased with the observations made, the report acknowledges that West Yorkshire Police faces a more difficult financial challenge than most other forces in England and Wales (£103.9m savings over the 4 year spending review) with an estimated savings requirement representing more than 20%, or more than one fifth, of its budget over four years (£157m over 6 years).

As I have stated on previous occasions, this variation arises from the way in which the government has decided to allocate government funding between force areas during the period of the spending review. Rather than expecting each force area to reduce spending by the same proportion, which in my view is the fairest way to go about it, the government has instead reduced each area's government funding by the same percentage, creating a situation where forces like West Yorkshire, which has high levels of demand for policing services and a limited ability to raise money locally through the council precept, have a much bigger savings target to meet.

Despite these cuts, the force has successfully delivered 72% of its savings requirement (£75m) over the first three years of the spending review, and the scale of this achievement cannot be underestimated. There has been a tremendous amount of work undertaken to reconfigure service delivery, improve force performance and work in partnership to make sure communities across West Yorkshire are safer and feel safer, and this work is continuing.

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I am confident that there is a strategy in place which will enable the budget to be balanced at the end of this comprehensive spending review (CSR) period. However, despite savings plans already being in place for the longer term, and continued effort to redesign services, we still face a considerable budget gap from 2017/18 onwards. Given that many services have already been re-configured the scope for identifying further savings is already significantly reduced. I am particularly concerned about the potential impact on the service should the Government impose the same level of cuts during the next CSR period. I will therefore continue to campaign against the deep and damaging government cuts not only to West Yorkshire Police but also to our public sector partners, fight for a fairer deal for West Yorkshire over the allocation of government money and continue to call for all of our proceeds of crime to be returned to our county so that West Yorkshire Police Service and its partners have the resources they need in an area of often real need to keep our communities safe and feeling safe.

Has the Force got an affordable way of delivering policing?

The force was criticised in July 2013 for not grasping opportunities to transform and deliver savings. The Force has now made very good progress and I am very aware that this must continue. My Police and Crime Plan sets out the outcomes I want to see for communities across West Yorkshire and I have developed my vision and strategy for its implementation. This provides the strategic direction for the force.

The new structure based on local policing was introduced in September 2013, and as outlined in the report, this was based on an assessment of demand, resource and crime modelling with a strong emphasis on frontline policing and reduced layers of management. More staff have been moved to local ward bases to improve neighbourhood policing and problem solving.

I have been working on building relationships with partners in order to assess how best the challenges we face can be met. Wherever possible I am working in partnership across the county and within the region to improve outcomes for communities, as outlined in my police and crime plan. This work should help us to be better equipped to meet the difficult challenges we continue to face in the future, and is essential to collaboration as many partners are also facing similar budgetary pressures.

Despite the decreases in funding, and significant reductions in staffing numbers (over 1700) since 2010/11, I have listened to communities, and increased the proportion of officers and staff working on the front line. I am pleased that this has also been recognised in the HMIC report.

HMIC identified that collaborative working in Yorkshire and the Humber needs to develop stronger project management practices in relation to existing and new collaborations, and this is recognised in the Chief Constable's response to me.

In respect of change management there is strong evidence of the Force's change plans and workforce plans being aligned and that the Force has robust arrangements in place, with the force leadership having an overview and actively managing these plans to ensure that they continue to deliver the priorities in my Police and Crime Plan. The report states that further work is needed however to embed the change programme and align capacity in the short term around business improvement, with a consistent, more rigorous approach to programme management. This will be co-ordinated by the Programme of Change Team, guided by the Chief Constable with my oversight and scrutiny.

I have ensured that the current savings plans prioritise expenditure for the objectives set out in the police and crime plan, and whilst it is inevitable that the size of the workforce will continue to shrink, plans are in place to maintain the number of police officers in local policing, complimented by an



increase in specials and continued PCSO investment to meet policing demands and provide a visible police presence in our communities.

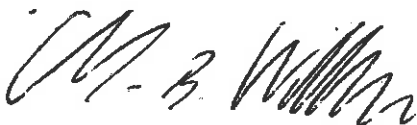
To what extent is the Force efficient?

We have worked hard to understand demand in order to ensure resources are aligned appropriately. The recognition of this in the HMIC report is welcomed, and the new operating model has been designed on this basis.

The programme of change team, under the direct leadership of the Chief Constable, has been tasked with implementing a significant change management programme which will result in further efficiency and effectiveness, whilst increasing the Forces ability to deliver the outcomes of the Police and Crime Plan. I will continue to monitor this programme closely and seek assurances that it is comprehensive, robust and focussed on protecting front line visible policing, driving efficiencies and improving value for money. It will also need to be done in a way that engages and works closely with officers and staff as much as possible.

A main objective of my policing plan, and one of my election pledges, is that communities are safer and feel safer. I feel very pleased therefore that the HMIC conducted a survey where 12% more of West Yorkshire respondents felt safer from crime than they did two years ago, compared with 9% in the rest of England and Wales. This independent review supports my affirmation that I am delivering on my election promises. In addition, in West Yorkshire 18% of those surveyed said they'd seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago – this is higher than the average of 12% in England and Wales, and demonstrates my ongoing commitment to the protection of frontline policing within West Yorkshire communities.

Yours sincerely



Mark Burns-Williamson
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire

Copy to:

Roger Baker, HMIC