10 September 2024

Dear Home Secretary,

I acknowledge that the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) team published on the 19 July 2024 – State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2023, based on inspections conducted by HMICFRS between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. All points will be considered and monitored.

I welcome the report which seems to be both comprehensive and reflective of my own thoughts and proposals, which are contained within my Police and Crime Plan which is due to be published later this month.

Trust in the police service

We recognise the importance of building trust in policing, and I have committed to undertaking an opinion poll to understand the level of trust and confidence in Bedfordshire Police with specific emphasis on different communities in different locations. I agree there is a need for greater transparency, and in particular, on how the police allocate their resources. I also agree that having community based, collaborative policing is important not only for reducing crime but also for building trust and confidence.

Preventing crime and tackling the causes of crime

Prevention not only has societal benefit, but releases public sector resources for other priorities. Community safety cannot be achieved by the arresting of offenders alone. It requires effective collaboration and data sharing, to ensure sustainable solutions are implemented to address long term causes of criminality. There is a direct correlation between poverty, inequality and crime, as is recognised in the State of Policing report. This is why social justice is fundamental to my Police and Crime plan. This will require action by all public sector partners and ultimately the government, to commit to address them.

Action planned/actions taken

Whole system change

Unfortunately, the wider criminal justice system is too often failing victims. There is a need for long term cultural, behavioural and procedural change across the police and wider criminal justice services to ensure that victims are always respected and treated

Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire
Bedfordshire Police Headquarters| Woburn Road | Kempston | Bedford | MK43 9AX
Tel: 01234 842064 | Email: pcc@beds.police.uk

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fairly. There is also a need for more strategic and operational partnership working. It also requires allocating funds where possible to organisations within all communities that can support victims of different crimes.

Funding

As the report states, there is a need for fundamental reform of the funding formula. Bedfordshire is not, as suggested by its funding, a 'rural' area. In fact, it Bedfordshire Police is required to police towns which have all the characteristics of a metropolitan borough. The current reliance on one-off special grants is not sustainable and there is a strong case for rolling those into core funding.

A workforce for success

This section of the report is very welcome. I am fully aware of the challenges faced by the workforce, including inexperience and high workloads. I know that providing the right conditions to succeed is crucial in retaining talent, Bedfordshire's attrition rate is improving and there is a need to invest in professional development for both police officers and police staff.

I agree with the Chief Inspector that a Chief Constable should be able to hire a workforce that meets their local needs and have the operational independence to decide how to deploy staff and officers. They should be able to strike an appropriate balance between police officer and staff numbers.

Inspectorate

I recognise the importance of an independent and robust inspectorate for policing to provide reassurance to the public, police and crime commissioners, and also to provide insights into the performance of the whole system and individual police services. It is critical that PCCs are engaged in local PEEL inspections at all stages, not least so that they can hold Chief Constables to account. I personally am supportive of extending the role of the inspectorate to cover a review of the performance of PCCs and their offices.

Yours Sincerely

John Tizard
Police and Crime Commissioner

Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire
Bedfordshire Police Headquarters| Woburn Road | Kempston | Bedford | MK43 9AX
Tel: 01234 842064 | Email: pcc@beds.police.uk

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