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Comisyynydd Heddlu a Throseddau Gwent | Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent: Jeff Cuthbert B.Sc., MCIPD

The Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP  
Home Secretary  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
LONDON  
SW1P 4DF

19<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Dear Home Secretary,

### **Police Performance: Getting a Grip – PEEL Spotlight Report.**

As required by statute, I am writing to you to respond to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) report, titled above.

I would like to take the opportunity to welcome this report, which provides a useful benchmark to cross-reference Gwent Police's own PEEL inspection report, published earlier this year. The key findings from the report reflect some of the areas for improvement identified here in Gwent, showing we are not alone in facing some of the challenges highlighted. Although there are no recommendations specifically for PCCs, I am fully supportive of the recommendations that the report makes, particularly in relation to improving performance and governance arrangements.

The Chief Constable here in Gwent already has the work programme underway to start addressing some of the concerns raised as a result of the local PEEL inspection. At my quarterly Strategy and Performance Board I now receive and scrutinise reports on Gwent Police's progress against the recent inspection, which gives me reassurance that efforts are being focused on the right places.

Areas of focus include:

- The initial response from the call handlers in the control room through to attending an incident, we have seen a shift in how Gwent Police is focused on these matters and managing and monitoring performance.
- Making improvements in crime recording practices and data integrity in the past 2 years, with more confidence that we are recording crime more appropriately, particularly public order related ASB.
- Activity to improve investigations (such as the introduction of a new dedicated 'i-hub' prisoner handling team whose aim is to improve volume crime investigations whilst freeing up frontline officer time), where we are starting to see outcome rates increase.
- The OPCC has a robust Legitimacy Scrutiny Panel in place that reviews Stop and Search information including the quality of the stop and associated body worn video, albeit we are always seeking to make improvements to the process.

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg, a phan ddaw i law, byddwn yn ateb yn y Gymraeg – ni fydd hyn yn gohirio ein hymateb. Os hoffech dderbyn gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg o hyn ymlaen, neu os ydych wedi cael eich gwahoddi gyfweiliad neu gyfarfod ac yr hoffech ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg, anfonwch e-bost at: [Commissioner@gwent.police.uk](mailto:Commissioner@gwent.police.uk). Darperir gwasanaethau cyfieithu.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and where received, we will reply in Welsh - this will not delay our response. If you wish to receive correspondence in Welsh hereafter or if you have been invited to an interview or meeting and you wish to use Welsh, send email to: [Commissioner@gwent.police.uk](mailto:Commissioner@gwent.police.uk). Translation services will be provided.

- Making improvements in how the force identifies and manages vulnerability. My office recently commissioned a Victim's Needs Assessment, which will be used to recommission our victim care services by March 2024. The service specification has an expanded range of services expected to ensure victims can be referred to the right place to get the support they need.

As the elected representative of the communities of Gwent, a significant part of my role is to hold the Chief Constable to account for delivering my Police and Crime Plan, by scrutinising the work of Gwent Police more broadly. As such, I am acutely aware of some of the challenges facing Gwent Police and UK Policing more broadly around data collection, analysis and using insights to drive strong performance and business improvements. My team and I are working closely with Gwent Police to support their review into current governance arrangements seeking to improve this, and I look forward to seeing the outcomes of this work.

It would be remiss of me to not reference that after the reductions of police officers and staff during the austerity years of the 2010s, following Operation Uplift, Gwent Police now has the second youngest workforce in the country. This inevitably causes challenges with regards to experience and, therefore, efficiency and effectiveness of the service. It also has a significant impact on wellbeing, which I am pleased is reflected in the PEEL Spotlight Report. I regularly discuss this matter with the Chief Constable and have confidence that she has the right plans in place for training, skills, and experience development for her teams, with a focus on staff welfare and wellbeing threaded throughout.

I am not complacent in regard to the challenging financial climate we are currently facing and the difficult decisions that will be needed in the short and medium term, particularly the challenges in relation to the expenditure required for our capital programme. On this point, I am pleased that the report raises concerns over the inevitable increases in Council Tax Precept to plug funding black holes, which is not sustainable. I fear some of the challenges reflected in the report will not recede in the short term as we attempt to close some of the funding gaps and the inevitable impact on our workforce and skills. Although it is relatively easy to divert resources to a specific issue to increase performance in the short term, it's important that all police forces, not just Gwent, are able to sustain these increases and not see reductions elsewhere. I believe that the Home Office need to be aware that this could be a problem in the future.

The issues raised in the report are fundamental to how police forces perform. I am immensely proud and steadfast in my commitment to ensuring Gwent continues to be a safe place to live, work and visit. Alongside this, I welcome the areas which need to be improved and will continue to work alongside the Chief Constable to ensure we are ever evolving in Gwent to manage this.

In Gwent, this is re-iterated by the Chief Constable in her comment below:

*I welcome this report from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services which brings together the findings of the PEEL 2021/22 inspection programme.*

*The importance of workforce well-being is referenced throughout the report. The findings during PEEL 2021/22 highlight that although well-being provision had improved in most forces, there is value in relation to gaining a detailed understanding of the underlying issues that affect workforce well-being. In Gwent, our Occupational Health department are collecting more in-depth reasons for sickness absence to expand on work-related and personal stress. Common themes will be shared with our Wellbeing department to create more specific support, and annual themes will be identified to create preventative support packages. In addition, our Wellbeing Specialists are holding focus groups in stations and departments and a Sickness Absence Task and Finish Group has been established.*

*The report also highlights concerns at a national level regarding how forces understand and manage their performance through the collection of the right data and analysis, and evaluation of what works and why. The report describes the lack of support to first-line supervisors and emphasises the importance of effective supervision to oversee performance. In Gwent, this is an area of significant investment. The force has developed a leadership framework to improve leadership capability, strengthen an inclusive and valued workforce, add value to the force Wellbeing Strategy, provide effective talent management and develop leaders that are ready for the future. Since May 2022, our Learning and Development department has delivered Introduction to Management courses to 65*

*newly promoted sergeants and staff supervisors. The course includes managing staff, managing performance, managing incidents and managing investigations. In addition, since August 2022, the force has delivered a First Line Leaders Programme based on College of Policing First Line Leaders Curriculum to 152 officers and staff.*

*I am committed to implementing the recommendations made within the report to Chief Constables to improve performance management.*

Further to the comments from the Chief Constable, I am confident that we can continue our focus on making communities safer by preventing crime and managing offenders through working with partners to continue improving the safety and service for the people of Gwent.

Overall, I am pleased to see that forces are generally providing a good service to the public, although there is always room to improve. I look forward to continuing working with the Chief Constable, partners locally, across Wales and nationally to improve policing further for the public.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Cuthbert', written in a cursive style.

Jeff Cuthbert B.Sc., MCIPD  
Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent