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



The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 4DF

31st July 2020

Dear Home Secretary,

HMICFRS Report: State of Policing – The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales

As required by statute, I am writing to you with my comments on Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary's (HMCIC) report, 'State of Policing – The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2019.

Although the impact of Coronavirus only touched the last few weeks of 2019/20, I was pleased to see the acknowledgement from HMCIC of the impact the virus has had and will continue to have on the police service across England and Wales. As such, I welcomed the suspension of the inspection regime in March 2020 to allow police forces to commit their resources to support the government in keeping the public safe during the pandemic. I was proud of the leadership shown by the chief officers in Gwent and also of the officers and staff who have continued working throughout, putting themselves at risk on a daily basis. I have also welcomed the improvements to the already excellent partnership arrangements we have with other public bodies during this difficult time which have helped us pull together and do the best we possibly can for our communities in Gwent.

Due to the effect Coronavirus has had and will continue to have on the economy, I am now concerned that there will be a future impact on the continued funding of the additional officers promised by the government, and I would appreciate reassurance that this will not be the case.

My office, in conjunction with Gwent Police has also been working with the Criminal Justice partners in Wales to start addressing the backlog and to assist in the progression of court cases.

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 gwahodd i gyfweiliad neu gyfarfod ac yr hoffech ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg, anfonwch e-bost at: Commissioner@gwent.pnn.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.pnn.police.uk. Translation services will be provided.

Understandably, the impact of the delays in this area are of grave concern to both the Chief Constable and me and it is an issue we will continue to monitor closely.

Moving away from Coronavirus and its impact on policing, I welcome the recognition in the report of the increasing pressure placed on policing in managing demand relating to vulnerability and those suffering with their mental health. There are a number of successful initiatives in Gwent that have been introduced to provide the best support possible to these members of the public. One such example is the Missing Children's Team which is a multi-agency hub established in 2014 that aims to understand why children go missing in order to stop it happening again. Another is the Mental Health Triage Team, which is based in the Gwent Police Control Room. Practitioners offer support to officers and staff dealing with live incidents involving people who are experiencing problems with their mental health. This work meets my objective to provide the best possible outcome for some of the most vulnerable members of our communities as well as assisting in reducing demand on all agencies involved.

Integrated Offender Management (IOM) is an area for improvement which was also picked up in the recent national inspection. A more targeted focus on this work has been introduced with plans underway from both the force and my office to address this priority work. I will be adding this subject matter to my forward work plan so that progress can be monitored in the months to come.

I have included below a comment from the Chief Constable on the report:

We welcome Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary's annual report on the state of policing. It is pleasing that the changing demand and pressures facing the police service have been recognised. Here in Gwent, we are working hard to adapt to these changing demands and remain committed to safeguarding the most vulnerable in our communities and delivering on the public's expectations.

HMICFRS's summary of inspection activity throughout 2019-20 chimes with findings from our force-specific inspections and I am pleased that in the main these have found areas of good performance within Gwent Police. However, we are not complacent and continue to drive forward improvements to our service.

The comments regarding borderless criminality is something we are acutely aware of here in Gwent. Over the last 12-18 months, we have worked with our Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) and neighbouring forces, conducting a number of large scale cross-border operations to tackle Serious and Organised Crime. We recognise that such criminality is not confined to the boundaries of one police force and can only be addressed by working in partnership.

Similarly, noting the comments made around some collaborative policing arrangements being piecemeal, I offer reassurance that in Gwent we have robust collaborations with our neighbouring Welsh forces and with numerous partners and third sector organisations. A dedicated all-Wales Assistant Chief Constable oversees the collaboration programme to ensure consistent delivery and this is governed by all Welsh Chief Constables and PCCs at the Policing in Wales Group to ensure both efficient and effective service delivery.

In concluding, Gwent Police welcomes the findings of the State of Policing report and understands that locally, but also regionally and nationally, work must continue to ensure that policing is fit for the future, responds to the public's needs and protects the vulnerable; we are committed to making this happen.

Further to the comments from the Chief Constable, both my office and Gwent Police have put a substantial amount of effort into dealing with Serious and Organised Crime due to the huge demand it places on our service and the devastating impact it can have in our communities. As

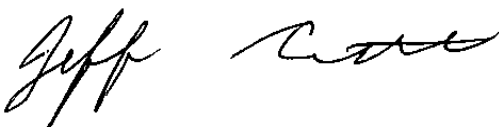
mentioned, we work well across Wales in this area with the three southern forces collaborating in the running of Tarian (the ROCU). This joint unit links into their counterparts across the UK as well as with organisations such as the National Crime Agency and has had much success, most recently in supporting the disruption of a bespoke encrypted global communication service used exclusively by criminals and seizing drugs with an estimated street value of £6 million and also £2.5 million in cash in Wales.

I also agree with the Chief Constable that collaboration in Wales works well, not just between police forces but also in Gwent with our partners in local authorities, health, fire and the third sector to name but a few, as well as with the Welsh Government. My office has recently worked with Gwent Police and a local authority to look at the association between educational attainment, criminality and exploitation. Following on from the research, we are now working with that local authority to implement a pilot project to support relevant children as they transition from primary to secondary school. This project aims to provide those children and their families with early, tailored support to improve their educational achievements, well-being and safety. We will be closely monitoring the outcomes of this project and will be sharing our findings widely. Gwent Police have also worked with South Wales Police to establish a joint procurement department which will provide better support to both organisations. We also have a Policing in Wales Group attended by all Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables from Wales at which we consider further areas for collaboration. We also have a Police Liaison Unit embedded in the Welsh Government as well as a Policing Partnership Board for Wales which is chaired by the First Minister and attended by the Secretary of State for Wales.

I welcome the inspection plans for next year and their alignment to Force Management Statements and hope the responses I have provided to the inspections undertaken during 2019/2020 have helped to support the programme of work undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. I also welcome the publication of the inspection reports as soon as they are finalised as this will help me review them in a timely manner, with the work planned for my office being adapted as necessary to reflect any concerns raised in these reports.

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 to work with the Chief Constable and 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