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Zoë Billingham BA Hons (Oxon)
HM Inspector of Constabulary, Eastern Region

28 September 2012

Mr Mike Hill
Interim Chair – Kent Police Authority

Mr Graham Hooper
Chief Executive – Kent Police Authority

Dear Mike and Graham,

HMIC Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Budget Preparedness Visits

Thank you for the time the police authority spent with the HMIC team on 14 September 2012. The meeting presented an opportunity for you to provide an overview of your budget development process for 2013/14, the funds identified for transition and the development of potential models of governance, decision making and accountability.

I am writing to provide you with a summary of the discussions and to highlight any areas that emerged for further consideration.

Budget setting process

You have set out a detailed timetable with key dates and milestones for the preparation of the 2013/14 budget. You are also synchronising the budget planning process with the plan to develop the proposals for the police and crime plan. You have made a series of sound and well thought through assumptions about budget pressures over the coming year and beyond. You are aiming to be in a position to present to the incoming PCC a comprehensive set of proposals for the police and crime plan, the 2013/14 budget and the precept. This should provide sufficient time for the PCC to consider the proposals and present them to the police and crime panel for scrutiny before undertaking wider consultation ahead of the statutory deadline.

Preparation of scenarios to support the PCC in setting the budget

You are working closely and constructively with the force to develop a detailed set of proposals for both the police and crime plan and the 2013/14 budget that will enable the plan to deliver. You are developing four options for 2013/14 based on different scenarios. You have clearly identified and articulated the risks facing the police authority and PCC in due course. You have a detailed risk management plan which identifies key risks and mitigating actions. These are being closely monitored. You have engaged with PCC candidates on the finances and budgetary options, but at this stage candidates have yet to declare proposals or options that can be costed.

Workforce and service impact

You have already made significant reductions in the workforce and further reductions are planned. These are being well managed and are on track. Beyond 2015, the impact on the workforce is not completely clear. For each of the four options currently being modelled, you have articulated the savings gap in terms of either police officer or police staff reductions in numbers, to make it clear that there will be an impact. You have begun consideration on how further savings would be delivered beyond this spending review and at a high level the impact this would have on service quality.

You have sought to minimise the impact on service delivery by reorganising the policing model and by generating significant efficiencies in a range of functions through collaboration with Essex Police. A sizeable proportion of savings over the next two years are predicated on savings in support costs from further extending this collaboration with Essex Police. You are developing a narrative around the benefits of the collaborative approach in order to fully brief PCC candidates and recognise that an incoming PCC will wish to consider the force and authority's proposed approach.

Forward planning: governance and the Office of the PCC (OPCC)

You have a well-established and constructive programme of joint working with the force to develop the transition arrangements and governance models for the OPCC. You have demonstrated a genuine commitment to developing innovative proposals to enable the PCC to carry out their new functions effectively. You have also balanced this with a pragmatic recognition that the style and preferences of the PCC will determine the final arrangements. You are developing a set of options for the OPCC staffing structure, and the associated governance models. You are also building flexibility into the proposals, which will enable the OPCC to 'mould to the personality and preferences of the incoming Commissioner'. You fully understand that it will be a matter for the PCC which, if any, options they choose to adopt.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the police authority for its continuing commitment to plan and prepare for the transition to a PCC.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zoë Billingham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'Z' and 'B'. The signature is placed on a rectangular area with a light grey dot grid background.

Zoë Billingham

HM Inspector of Constabulary, Eastern Region

Copied:
Mr Ian Learmonth QPM
Chief Constable – Kent Police

Ms Sonya Gransden
HMIC Liaison Officer