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Drusilla Sharpling, CBE

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

28 September 2012

Mr David Pearsall

Chair – Staffordshire Police Authority

Mr Damon Taylor

Chief Executive – Staffordshire Police Authority

Dear David and Damon

HMIC Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Budget Preparedness Visits

Thank you for the time the police authority spent with the HMIC team on 06 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 our discussions and to highlight areas that emerged for further consideration.

Budget setting process

Your budget setting process is in place and your plans for 2013/14 are based on up-to-date and prudent assumptions. There has been good and thorough planning and preparation to support the incoming PCC through the budget setting process. Using detailed modelling carried out by Staffordshire County Council, in conjunction with the eight district councils, you have been able to analyse the impact on your budget of a range of factors such as changes to the council tax benefit. You have also developed a worst case scenario that involves a precept freeze and scenarios which include precept increases over the spending review period.

You have earmarked reserves which puts you in a good position should you need to use them.

Preparation of scenarios to support the PCC in setting the budget

There has been some preparatory work already undertaken by you and the force to support the PCC in setting the budget. This includes a number of alternative scenarios for the incoming PCC to consider to assist them with the budget setting process. There is a clear timetable for decision making around key deadlines.

Workforce and service impact

You described your current workforce plans which are progressing and it is clear that they are on course to align with your projections. There is a sound and realistic understanding of the challenges faced in reducing the workforce. Priority has been given and continues to be given to reducing back office and protecting the front line.

You continue to pursue collaborative options with West Midlands Police as a means of increasing efficiency and resilience and reducing costs but your savings plans are not reliant on this work.

Forward planning: governance and the Office of the PCC

You have set the provisional budget for the office of the PCC (OPCC), based on the current police authority budget.

You have also mapped out the key dates during the first 130 days following the election of the PCC, showing key meetings and decisions that need to be taken to deliver the police and crime plan and associated budget ready for March 2013.

You have considered the requirements of the OPCC and detailed work has been undertaken on how this will operate. A proposed governance and decision making model has been drafted, together with a scheme of delegation and you have developed a timetable for key decisions from November 2012 through to March 2013.

The Police and Crime Panel (PCP) is already up and running, having met twice and there is a programme of future meetings scheduled at key points in the budget and precept setting process.

You are still developing a range of options for how the PCC will hold the Chief Constable to account. Although this is still work in progress, you have produced a draft annual scrutiny programme for quarterly performance monitoring meetings. These will enable the PCC to scrutinise the force and are supported by PCP meetings which will in turn undertake formal scrutiny of the PCC.

In summary, you have made good progress to date in developing the governance, decision making and scrutiny arrangements necessary to support the PCC when appointed. You have had detailed discussions with both of the current candidates and have briefed them on the financial and strategic issues facing the incoming PCC.

You have also developed a comprehensive proposal for decision making and governance and a framework to enable the PCC to hold the force to account. 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, appearing to read 'Drusilla Sharpling', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Drusilla Sharpling

HM Inspector of Constabulary, Wales and Western Region

Copied:

Mr Michael Cunningham

Chief Constable – Staffordshire Police

Ms Deborah Wilne

HMIC Liaison Officer