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HM Inspector of Constabulary, Eastern Region

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Mr Andy Bliss QPM
Chief Constable – Hertfordshire Constabulary

Dear Andy

Core business: An inspection of crime prevention, police attendance and use of police time

Between January and April 2014, HMIC carried out inspection fieldwork across all 43 forces in England and Wales. This inspection, called 'Making best use of police time' (now known as 'Core business: An inspection of crime prevention, police attendance and use of police time') assessed three areas of police work. These were:

- how well forces are preventing crime and anti-social behaviour;
- how forces respond to reports of crime, including investigating crime and bringing offenders to justice; and
- how well forces are freeing up the time of their staff so they can focus on core policing functions.

Attached is an embargoed copy of the national thematic report for this inspection which will now be published by HMIC on Thursday 4 September 2014 at 00:01. This must not be published until this date and time.

The findings that specifically relate to your force are included in this letter. The initial findings were previously sent to you for factual accuracy checks and, where appropriate, have been amended following your response.

The majority of the inspection findings contained in the national thematic report do not identify individual forces. However electronic versions of the national report will link to the HMIC website where data on each force can be viewed.

We will revisit some of the evidence gathered during the 'Core business' inspection as part of the crime inspection for HMIC's Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) interim assessment.

All forces will be given the opportunity to provide an update. This updated evidence will be considered as part of the PEEL interim crime inspection, which is due to be published at the end of November.

Findings that specifically relate to your force are:

Preventing Crime

- There is reference to crime reduction and prevention in some of the force's plans and documents. Although the force does not have an overarching crime prevention strategy, this does not inhibit the effectiveness of the force's approach to preventing crime. The force has a strong preventative policing ethos, which is driven by chief officers and supported by the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- HMIC found some good examples of where the force has undertaken long-term crime prevention initiatives. In addition, the daily management meetings in the force were being used well to focus staff towards crime prevention activity.
- Although the force has a database that helps officers and staff to solve problems that support neighbourhood prevention activity, it is not being used as effectively as it could be. While we found evidence of a problem-solving response, areas such as thorough evaluation and sharing good practice were absent.
- Although the force has provided some training to officers and staff, formal crime prevention training has not been delivered to staff that frequently deal with victims of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Attending crimes and incidents

- The force does not have a policy that says that officers will attend all reports of crimes and incidents. Instead it is based on a series of considerations which includes identifying the threat, risk and harm to the victim, caller or community. However some staff do not fully understand how to assess the level of threat, harm and risk.
- There are specific occasions when crime is reported, where the force will always aim to attend. The force has a target to attend 70% of crimes reported to it. It uses the attendance data to present to Chief Officers and Area Commanders at regular operational and strategic meetings.
- HMIC understands that the force has not consulted with the public in relation to this policy.
- Officers do not attend crimes if the caller doesn't want them to, even where vulnerability might suggest it would be prudent to do so. In these circumstances PCSOs are tasked to conduct a reassurance visit to the victim.
- The culture within the force control room (FCR) is still to 'ask not task' resources to attend incidents and crimes. Officers said they would welcome a more command and control focus from the FCR.
- The force has clear policies and procedures to enable them to consistently identify vulnerable and repeat victims of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Crime is recorded by the force in one of two ways:
 - creating an incident on the command and control system and then subsequently entering details onto the crime recording system; or
 - directly recording crime onto the crime-recording system, without creating an incident first.
- During the inspection HMIC reviewed a number of crime investigations, including reports of crimes that were not attended. HMIC found that, in general, there was clear evidence of officers recording updates of the progress of the investigation and supervisory oversight.

- HMIC found that the Integrated Offender Management scheme, in place to manage those offenders likely to cause most harm to the communities, is very well managed. There are regular meetings with key partners and a structured approach is used to identify and assess risk.
- The force was able to provide HMIC with the number of named suspects that are yet to be arrested or interviewed, as well as those who had failed to answer police bail. The inspection team found that the force has clear, robust arrangements to manage its outstanding named suspects and offenders.
- A small sample of named suspect files, including those circulated as wanted on PNC, indicated clear evidence that activity had been documented and properly supervised in a number of cases.

Freeing up time

- HMIC identified that the force has a relatively good understanding of demand, and is taking steps to build up a more detailed insight of demand and how its resources are distributed. This includes analysis of different types of incidents and policing activity.
- The force has the capability to flex resources to meet demand on a quick time basis both through its tasking processes and the maturity of relations between staff across the community safety partnerships and supporting functions.
- The force is scoping partnership activity that is a duplication of effort together with those activities that partners could undertake on behalf of the police for example fire officers performing method of entry duties. The blue light integration is developing well.
- The force does not have a clear understanding of how staff are spending their time. Although some basic management information is available, staff are unclear about what is expected of them.
- The force is not able to identify the amount of savings in staff time that has been made as a result of changes introduced or as a result of new technology being implemented.
- The force has made a strong investment in the use of mobile technology devices, such as tablets to enable officers to access force systems whilst on patrol. Staff are very positive about the introduction and use of mobile technology.
- The Metis programme, where new ways of working will be supported by new technology, is vitally important to reducing costs across the Strategic Alliance. However at the time of the inspection the force did not have a strong focus on process improvement to increase efficiency. Therefore there is a danger that the force could build technology around inefficient processes.

Yours sincerely



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Copied to Kay Lancaster
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