

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
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Dear Home Secretary

I write in response to the publishing of the State of Policing – The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2020.

It is extremely helpful to see an overview of the 2020 Inspection Programme. It is also pleasing to see recognition of the high standards provided by those who worked in difficult circumstances to ensure the continuation of an effective police service throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, and the positivity in embracing new ways of working. It is essential that we recognise how much our officers and staff have given during the pandemic and we must respond to the challenge of maintaining interest in policing as a career, in the context of the current pay freeze and the challenging financial position that we have ahead of us.

In Essex, we monitored closely the impact on crime trends, which changed in line with the changes to Government imposed restrictions. This created challenges in resource allocation and in predicting future demand, all of which was handled very capably by Essex Police.

The court backlog identified in the report is an issue for Essex, as it is across the country. The delays in cases coming to court pose risks in terms of increased demand for supporting victims and the increasing possibility of witnesses withdrawing, as well as perpetrators being able to reoffend. We must work together to improve our Criminal Justice System and increase the public's confidence that justice will be delivered. Justice delayed is justice denied. In my role as Chair of the Essex Criminal Justice Board, I continue to foster closer joint working amongst Criminal Justice partners and to encourage system-wide approaches to improve the journey for both victims and suspects/ perpetrators.

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I support the desire for swift introduction of the Emergency Services Network (ESN) to replace Airwave, recognising that this needs to be fit for purpose at the time of introduction with no compromise for the safety of our officers.

In Essex, we continue to welcome our share of the 20,000 uplift in officers. We are progressing with recruitment of a diverse and high-quality workforce and are also proud of our Special Constabulary.

I await with interest further details on the proposed Network Code but am so far encouraged by the proposal for an alternative to Force mergers, which I agree would not be economically or operationally beneficial.

I am pleased to note the assessment that interdependence between public services is an essential feature. Policing does not operate in isolation and society requires a complete network of effective agencies to provide the services and support for overall wellbeing. I am currently developing my Police and Crime Plan and engaging with stakeholders. The importance of working locally with partners is paramount. We are working to drive improvement in local problem solving and my Police and Crime Plan will prioritise the biggest opportunity in getting crime down, which is by getting ahead of it and preventing it wherever possible.

Policing, of course, plays a key role in this partnership approach, and I continue to monitor the work of Essex Police, and to hold the Chief Constable to account, for the effectiveness of policing in Essex.

Yours sincerely

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

Roger Hirst
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

c.c. Ben-Julian Harrington, Chief Constable, Essex Police