

Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP
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Dear Home Secretary

I write in response to the HMICFRS PEEL inspection report of Essex Police published on 14 October 2022. The Peel inspection report provides a vital independent assessment of the force's performance, where it is doing well and where it can improve. It confirms our own assessment of the force's performance and reflects our areas of focus within the Police and Crime Plan.

It is reassuring to see the consistency in our understanding of the force's performance and HMICFRS's inspection results. I share concerns about Essex Police's responsiveness to the public. In particular I look to the force to improve the way it deals with vulnerable victims. There is more we can do to respond to non-emergency incidents and ensure we attend and support victims of crime.

I note the eight gradings assigned and acknowledge the twelve Areas for Improvement identified in this report. I share your concerns about the areas identified for improvement and would like to reassure you that these are already under local scrutiny. I note that the key observations from the Inspector and find these to be aligned to our local understanding.

'The way the force answers and responds to calls from the public requires improvement' is being looked at through an ongoing series of reports to my Performance and Resources Scrutiny Board as part of a wider piece of work looking at response to crime. It is important that Essex Police shows renewed marked improvements in call handling, particularly with regards to the 101 service.

'The force needs to improve its service to victims of crime' and, whilst the Force has made significant progress in how it supports victims of crime, more still needs to be done to offer a consistent service that maintains the support of victims and provides the best chance to secure successful prosecutions. In particular, we need to keep victims better informed as to the progress in their case, and the reasons for that.

I also note that **'The force needs to improve its management of registered sex offenders'**. I receive regular updates on this at my Performance and Resources Scrutiny Board. In the context of the detail in the PEEL report, I will seek further information and assurance about what Essex Police now intends to do differently and how that will improve offender management and reduce reoffending. We will seek further input from partners around these plans through our local Reducing Reoffending Board.

It is pleasing to see the positive assessment of how the force engages with and treats the public, in particular in regard to '**treating people fairly and with respect**', '**preventing crime and anti-social behaviour**', and in promoting '**an ethical and inclusive culture and generally supports its workforce**'. These things are all important for maintaining public trust and confidence so we can work together with communities to prevent crime. It is gratifying HMICFRS recognise so many of the new initiatives the force has taken and acknowledge their effectiveness Including hotspot policing, the domestic abuse problem solving teams, town centre teams and work through community safety partnerships. All these have a positive impact on police visibility and reduce crime. It is also good that the force has been assessed as using its resources well.

There is much in this report that the force should be proud of and I would like to recognise the efforts of officers, staff, the Chief Constable and his senior team. We should also recognise that these achievements have been secured at a time when the force is growing and as a result is training and developing a significant number of new officers.

The public have invested in policing here in Essex, as has your government, and as a result we now have more officers than ever before. The public's expectation and mine is that as a result of this investment we will continue to see improvement in the service and importantly a reduction in crime and disorder.

I have discussed the findings of the PEEL inspection report with the Chief Constable, who is equally committed to delivering the high quality of service that our residents expect and deserve, and who will be directing extra resources and ensuring we have the focus so that we make the most of our growing force and deliver the very best service to the people of Essex.

The recommendations in the Inspection Report are supported by the commitments in my Police and Crime Plan, delivery against which is regularly and rigorously monitored, including through the monthly Performance and Resources Scrutiny Board.

I will continue to monitor the work of Essex Police in this regard, and to hold the Chief Constable to account.

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