

Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2024

Report to: the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

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1.0 Purpose of Report

The report provides an update on the previous report presented to the June P&RSB on the actions taken and progress made by Essex Police against the 14 areas for improvement (AFI's) identified by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICFRS) during the force PEEL 2021/22 inspection and two separate elements of PEEL; Serious and Organised Crime and Vetting and Counter Corruption.

2.0 Recommendations

The Board is asked to note the report and progress made.

3.0 **Executive Summary**

HMICFRS published their PEEL inspection report and judgements of our force in October 2022. Subsequently, in May 2023, HMICFRS published the Serious & Organised Crime (SOC PEEL) inspection report which was undertaken separately to the main inspection activity for PEEL back in April 2022. Then in June 2023 HMICFRS published the Vetting and Counter-Corruption (PEEL) inspection report, which was also undertaken separately to the main inspection activity for PEEL.

In making their inspection judgements, HMICFRS reported that 'Essex Police has an ethos of early intervention to prevent crime. It uses analysis to identify crime hotspots and responds effectively with other organisations to tackle entrenched criminality and anti-social behaviour. It has developed a co-ordinated and forward-thinking approach to reducing crime.' In addition, His Majesty's Inspector commented that Essex Police is good at:

- Preventing crime and anti-social behaviour
- Treating people fairly and with respect
- Promoting an ethical and inclusive culture and supporting its workforce

Overall Performance

HMICFRS provided formal judgements for Essex Police in 10 areas of policing, grading the force 'good' in 5 areas (treatment of the public; developing a positive workforce, use of resources, serious and organised crime and vetting and counter-corruption), 'adequate' in 4 areas (investigating crime; preventing crime; protecting vulnerable people and managing offenders) and 'requiring improvement' in just 1 area (responding to the public).

As stated earlier, HMICFRS identified a total of 14 AFI's for the force; 4 under responding to the public, 2 each in preventing crime, investigating crime and managing offenders and 1 each in protecting vulnerable people, use of resources, serious and organised crime and vetting and counter-corruption.

These judgements reflected our own internal assessment, challenges identified in our Force Management Statement 2022-23 (FMS 22 / FMS 23), strategic investment decisions and operational change programmes.

The force has strong governance and oversight processes in place to monitor progress against each AFI as set out below:

- The respective ACC/ACO Led monthly Governance Board;
- The DCC's quarterly Force Performance Board (which assesses the position of all HMICFRS report recommendations and AFI's);
- A dedicated PEEL AFI Star Chamber (first held in September 2023) and finally;
- Chief Officer Group (Quarterly HMICFRS Activity Report).

4.0 Introduction/Background

Since 2014, HMICFRS have assessed the performance of all 43 forces in England and Wales through the Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) programme. In 2021/22 HMICFRS made significant changes to the programme moving to a more intelligence-led, continual assessment approach rather than the annual PEEL inspections in previous years.

HMICFRS use inspection findings, analysis and professional judgment to assess how good forces are in ten areas of policing. For the first time in the 2020-22 round of PEEL inspections a new grade of ‘adequate’ was introduced moving from a four-tier grading system to a five-tier grading system of ‘outstanding’, ‘good’, ‘adequate’, ‘requires improvement’ and ‘inadequate’. It should be noted that the introduction of the new grade ‘adequate’ makes comparison of judgements with previous years more difficult. HMICFRS advised that a previous ‘good’ could be graded under the new system and assessment framework as ‘adequate’.

HMICFRS have concluded inspection activity as part of PEEL 2020-22 for all 43 Forces in England and Wales. The inspection framework for the 2023-25 inspection cycle has been published by HMICFRS and inspections have re-commenced with the first eight reports having been published¹. Essex Police are expecting their next PEEL inspection to formally commence from June 2024 with fieldwork later in 2024 and the report published in the first quarter of 2025.

In terms of overall performance across all 43 forces in England and Wales from PEEL 2020-22, HMICFRS reported that there were 31 per cent ‘Good’ and ‘Adequate’ graded judgements, 23 per cent ‘Requires Improvement’ and circa 7 per cent ‘Outstanding’ and ‘Inadequate’. The lowest performance nationally was the graded judgement area of ‘Responding to the public’ (consistent with our own findings) with no outstanding grades and the highest number of inadequate and requires improvement grades.

5.0 Current AFI Work, Performance and Direction of Travel

Appendix 1 provides an update against each of the 14 AFIs, but the table below provides a snapshot overview of the current status as the time of writing as captured on the HMICFRS Monitoring Portal².

Red	Amber	Green	New/Draft	Closed
0	6	4	0	4
Previously 1	Previously 6	Previously 5	Previously 2	Previously 0

Appendix 2 provides the quarterly RAG assessment for each AFI since implementation as requested at the previous P&RSB update in June 2023.

¹ Force reports published to date for Surrey, Thames Valley, Greater Manchester, Durham, Kent, Dyfed-Powys, Suffolk and Merseyside.

² Whilst AFI 7 has been closed on the HMICFRS Monitoring Portal, it should be noted that the Force self-assessment remains Amber to ensure the outcome is fully embedded across the Force.

Following an HMICFRS Monitoring Visit to the Force Control Room on 26 October 2023, AFI 5 was verified and closed by HMICFRS on their monitoring portal. AFI 5 was; “The force needs to make sure that call takers give appropriate advice on crime prevention”.

Further, following a PEEL AFI Monitoring visit on 15 November 2023 by Force Lead Liaison Lee Presland, AFI 2, AFI 7 and AFI 9 were also verified and closed by HMICFRS.

AFI 2 was; “The force needs to ensure that neighbourhood policing officers have access to structured training.”

AFI 7 was; “The force needs to improve how it records why victims withdraw their support for investigations and should also make sure it documents whether evidence-led prosecutions have been considered in all such cases.”

AFI 9 was; “The force needs to do more to maintain / improve the wellbeing of staff involved in protecting vulnerable people”.

Lastly, at the DCC led AFI Star Chamber on 7 December 2023, the DCC took a decision to review the previous strategic assessment and internal RAG assessment of progress against the PEEL AFIs. This re-calibration takes into consideration, insight from recent PEEL Inspection reports and discussions with HMICFRS directly, to introduce an operational assessment (how the work is embedding across the force) for each AFI. This has led to a revision of the previous RAG assessments back to ‘Amber’ from ‘Green’ for AFI’s 1, 10 and 12.

This is not a reflection on performance against those AFI’s but the taking of a prudent approach until such time as the systems and plans implemented and actions taken to address each AFI are fully embedded and operationally tested by HMICFRS in our next PEEL Inspection, due to formally commence from June 2024.

6.0 Implications (Issues)

There are no current risks recorded on the force strategic risk register relating to the remaining AFI’s. Instead, they are recorded and tracked on the Force Action Tracker and HMICFRS Monitoring Portal and reported on monthly and quarterly as set out in section three. The remaining AFIs will continue to be internally monitored until they are formally closed by HMICFRS either before or during our next PEEL inspection.

6.1 Links to Police and Crime Plan Priorities

The PEEL performance assessment framework links to all priorities set out in the Police and Crime Plan. Action to meet the AFI’s makes a positive impact and contributes to one or more of the priorities with an emphasis on the six priorities below:

- Further investment in crime prevention
- Protecting vulnerable people and breaking the cycle of domestic abuse
- Reducing violence against women and girls

- Improving support for victims of crime
- Supporting our officers and staff
- Increasing collaboration

6.2 Demand

The DCC led Strategic Demand Board and ACO led Resourcing Panel review how effectively the force is working internally and with our partners to make sure officers and staff are given the time, space and support to focus on our priorities of preventing crime and catching criminals.

This includes any impact on the force in delivering against one or more of the AFIs.

6.3 Risks/Mitigation

If areas for improvement are not delivered there is potential risk of HMICFRS issuing a cause for concern about the force's performance, which in turn poses potential risk to members of the public and the levels of public confidence in our force. As described under section three, there are strong internal governance processes overseeing the progress of each AFI to ensure appropriate action takes place to identify and mitigate any risk.

In a recent meeting with the Chief Constable, HMI Roy Wilsher confirmed there are no concerns about the Force which would move Essex Police from the HMICFRS 'Scan' to the 'Engage' Phase (enhanced monitoring).

6.4 Equality and/or Human Rights Implications

There are no protected characteristics adversely affected by the PEEL assessment. Whilst there are no specific equality and/or human rights implications identified in providing progress updates against the PEEL AFIs, any activity or changes required will take account of such matters, ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and the force Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy. This includes the completion of an Equality Impact Statement for any amendments to existing or development of new policy and procedures.

6.5 Health and Safety Implications

No Health and Safety implications have been identified in the provision of progress updates. Any activity or changes required will take account of health and safety implications and ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

7.0 Consultation/Engagement

Chief Constable
DCC Prophet
ACC Nolan
ACC Mariner
ACC Baldwin
ACC Pritchard

ACO Richard Leicester
ACO Fiona Henderson
Claire Heath, Head of Continuous Improvement

8.0 Actions for Improvement

The report provides detailed updates, the current and previous RAG status against each of the AFI's from the PEEL Inspection Report. Progress is monitored through the internal governance arrangements described in section three.

9.0 Future Work/Development and Expected Outcome

Regular update meetings are held between the HMICFRS Force Liaison Officer (Claire Heath) and the HMICFRS Force Lead Inspector (Lee Presland). Any areas of concern in our progress against the AFIs will be reported to the Chief Officer team. The force expects to achieve all AFIs. We expect those remaining will be formally reviewed and closed in our next PEEL Inspection.

Internal audit meetings with Chief Officers have taken place to inform the internal audit programme for 2024/25. Each meeting has considered the PEEL AFIs for areas of potential agreement for internal audit activity and mechanisms for independent assurance of the force progress.

Proposals for the 2024/25 internal programme will be discussed further at the Chief Officer Planning Workshop in January 2024, prior to agreement of the programme through the Joint Audit Committee.

Appendix 1 – PEEL AFI Update Presentation - Separate attachment.

Appendix 2 – PEEL AFI Progress / Direction of Travel Dashboard - Separate attachment (as requested at previous P&RSB).