

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

28 July 2020

Dear Home Secretary

Response to HMICFRS - PEEL spotlight report: The Hard Yards – Police-to-police collaboration

In line with my statutory responsibilities as Police and Crime Commissioner and following consultation with the Chief Constable, I am pleased to provide the following response to the HMICFRS and the Secretary of State for the Home Office in respect of the above report – “PEEL spotlight report: The Hard Yards – Police-to-police collaboration”, which was published on 21 July 2020.

The Chief Constable and I welcome the report. We agree with the report’s recommendations regarding what forces can do to collaborate successfully and productively, as well as the support that national organisations can provide to help.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on the 2018 decision not to pursue the potential merger Dorset Police and Devon & Cornwall (D&C) Police. Although we continue to work in a successful Strategic Alliance partnership between the two forces, I recognise that should a different decision have been made, than many of the structural challenges that the report highlights would no longer be issues for both forces.

Our extensive public consultation has taught us that the public are overly protective of local services, even when they do not fully recognise the delivery of those services. At the same time, unless PCCs are prepared to have a frank and difficult dialogue about the nature of policing and the cost of parochialism, there will be no local political driver for change.

The prize that both Chief Constables of Dorset and D&C, and their entire command teams, sought back in 2018, and as highlighted in this report, remains.

The collapse of the Warwickshire and West Mercia agreement and the Avon & Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire agreement has exposed the fragility of alliances, and a range of national agencies, including HMICFRS, has recognised the complexity, cost and duplication required to maintain separate alliance governance structures.

The Office of the Dorset Police & Crime Commissioner

MARTYN UNDERHILL
Police & Crime Commissioner
E pcc@dorset.pnn.police.uk

Force Headquarters,
Winfrith, Dorchester,
Dorset DT2 8DZ

T 01202 229084
W dorset.pcc.police.uk

Current policing structures are sub-optimal and continue to draw down excessive cost. Opportunities to brigade aligned work at the local and sub-regional level have led to a patchwork quilt of complex arrangements, supported by goodwill alone.

The governance arrangements within policing hinder the service's ability to self-reform. Where operational will might exist, local political will might not. In this circumstance, a strong guiding hand is needed to enable necessary, and overdue, change.

This issue extends itself into the uncertainty over the national delivery of Single Online Home and the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme, both of which highlight the difficulty in making national decisions on a force-by-force basis.

We would certainly agree that forces have learned some important lessons including a lack of information about collaboration best practice, particularly around ICT tools, and locally our joint ICT change and transformation programme in Dorset and D&C has allowed us to track the benefits – including financial savings – of ICT systems collaboration.

Although the HMICFRS' report is not Dorset specific, we will ensure through our Head of Corporate Development that the Force's Business Change Team are sighted on the detail to determine any appropriate changes in our practices.

This response will be published on the OPCC website.

Yours sincerely

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

Martyn Underhill
Police and Crime Commissioner