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west midlands
police and crime
commissioner

Our reference:

Cllr Darren Cooper
West Midlands Police and Crime Panel
Scrutiny Office
Birmingham City Council
Victoria Square
Birmingham
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18 February 2015

Dear Darren,

Thank you for your letter dated 9 February 2015 with the Police and Crime Panel's statutory response to the proposed variations to the Police and Crime Plan.

This is my response to your report (PRSRA 2011, 5(6)(e)), which I will publish (PRSRA 2011, 5(6)(f)) before confirming the variation.

1. I am grateful to the Panel for its support for increasing the emphasis on economic development in the Plan, which will be a central theme of my work in the year ahead.

However, I have given consideration to the suggestion that I reintroduce police cadets, and I am not supportive of this proposal at this time. A key theme in the Plan is the emphasis on reducing reoffending, and in particular working with young offenders to support them away from crime. The Force's work with the Prince's Trust and other partners is central to this work. I believe that targeted work with offenders of the sort offered by the Prince's Trust is more effective than what could be an expensive general cadets scheme aimed at all young people. As the Plan sets out, we will be reviewing the Prince's Trust programme to ensure its overall effectiveness.

As also set out in the Plan, I will continue to develop the role of the unpaid Youth Commissioners, who are elected by their peers from across the West Midlands. I believe that they offer a more cost effective channel for reaching young people, and are more representative of the West Midlands than a cadet scheme would be. The Youth Commissioners are responsible for reaching out as widely as possible to young people across the Force area, and therefore also help us to understand and respond to young people's concerns in a way that police cadets would not. We know that young people are

most likely to be perpetrators and victims of crime, and are more likely to hold negative views about the police. It is those who have been victims or perpetrators, or who hold these negative views, that I want to reach out to, and I see Youth Commissioners as a better way to achieve this than police cadets.

Furthermore, with increasing professionalisation and specialisation in policing, the career path historically represented by police cadets is less and less relevant to modern policing. An increasing number of recruits are graduates and many students with an interest in joining the Force become Special Constables or PCSOs, which of course means that they are actually involved in the prevention and detection of crime and anti-social behaviour in a way that police cadets are not. I believe that these career paths also offer a more effective and structured introduction to policing than a cadets scheme.

2. I am pleased that the Panel welcomes the greater emphasis on hidden crimes in the Plan, and I note the suggestion that more detail should be included. The Plan sets the strategic direction for the Force, and should not therefore seek to set out operational detail in every case. If it did, it would probably run to hundreds, if not thousands of pages, which would go against my intention to make the Plan a clearer, more readable and more usable document. However, should the Panel wish to continue its emphasis on this area, I would be happy to ensure further information is available. As I indicated at our meeting, I will also be ensuring that additional information is available online.

In response to the final point, I have incorporated a reference to the Serious Crime Bill¹.

3. In response to the Panel's comments about the potential future legislative framework for Prevent in the Counter Terrorism Strategy, I have included reference to the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill¹.
4. Although the Plan makes no reference to "falling driving standards", I note the Panel's comments about roads policing. The Plan does, of course, refer to safety on the roads. I see great value in an increased emphasis on ensuring our roads are safe, and that we can exploit the obvious reliance that organised criminals have on the road network to address the threat and harm they cause.
5. In response to comments from the Panel and others about the importance of alcohol and substance abuse in offending, I have included in the Plan a commitment to support oversight and engagement to ensure partnership work to reduce alcohol and substance abuse is effective
6. Supporting people with mental health needs is an important priority in the plan. In response to the comments from the Panel about the needs of ex-service personnel, I have incorporated a commitment to remain alert to instances where any specific group has particular mental health needs when they come into contact with the criminal justice system.
7. Thank you for the suggestion that the Plan should offer more "context". It was my intent that the Foreword and Introduction would fulfil this role, and I will keep this issue under review. The Strategic Policing and Crime Board will continue to take detailed performance reports which will include the baseline and progress information the Panel wants to see. I will also be publishing more supporting information on my website. As the Plan sets out, we will be looking at how we publish performance information generally to ensure that the Panel and members of the public can get the performance information they need.

¹ At the time of writing, these are Bills before Parliament which are expected to get Royal assent before prorogation of Parliament in April 2015.

Overall, I am glad that the Panel concludes that the Plan "is reflective of the current priorities across the West Midlands and that it will support the continuation of the existing work being undertaken by West Midlands Police and partner organisations to reduce crime and improve community safety". I look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Jamieson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

David Jamieson
Police and Crime Commissioner

Handwritten text, possibly a signature or name, located in the upper right quadrant of the page.