Response to the HMIC inspection Policing in Austerity: Meeting the Challenge

I was pleased to note that HMIC found that ‘that Greater Manchester Police has made excellent progress in challenging financial circumstances and has innovative plans to manage future austerity with public sector partners’. It is good news that GMP is being recognised for its supreme efforts in maintaining high service levels in the face of these difficult cuts. However it must be made clear that we are fast-approaching a tipping point, and these cuts cannot continue at the scale and speed that we have seen.

The HMIC recognise that the cuts in funding imposed by central government have presented Greater Manchester Police with a significant financial challenge which they have managed over the last four years. The lack of stability in funding combined with late government decisions on funding and precept referendum limits have made this task more difficult. As I have mentioned in previous discussions early decisions by central government would facilitate more robust financial planning and improve stability for GMP, public sector partners and most importantly the communities of Greater Manchester.

Whilst the report recognises the good progress to date in achieving the financial savings over the last four years and that Greater Manchester Police have robust plans in place for 2015/16, it also notes that there has recently been an increase in crime which will present challenges in future. I am concerned that the indicative cuts in funding announced by the government up to 2017/18 will make the policing of crime increasingly difficult and may ultimately lead to a degradation of the neighbourhood policing model and a return to a response only form of policing.

Clearly the scale of the financial reductions indicated would mean that we can not continue to provide policing in the way we do today and we have to look at alternative models with much reduced resources. Within this context it is pleasing to note that that the report highlights the
‘innovative and ambitious’ being done in Greater Manchester. I am not complacent about the speed and scale of transformation that is required if we are to continue to provide an efficient and effective policing service and with this in mind I have established a limited fund to finance transformative initiatives.

I would again urge you to rethink the indicative spending plans for future years to protect our policing service.

Yours sincerely

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