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Police and Crime Commissioner Caroline Henry  
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner  
Arnot Hill House  
Arnot Hill Park  
Arnold  
NG5 6LU

15 June 2021

Dear Commissioner Henry,

Thank you for attending yesterday's meeting of the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Panel. As you are aware the documents closing the term of the previous Commissioner that were presented at the meeting included the Annual Report on his Police and Crime Plan. It is a statutory duty of the Panel to make comment on the Commissioner's annual report, which we include in this letter.

During discussion of the Annual Report, the Panel acknowledged the previous Commissioner's many years of dedicated public service. Members felt that the contents of this Annual Report provided a good position to conclude his term of office, setting out the activities in which he was involved and his achievements.

Firstly, we are grateful to you for taking questions on the previous Commissioner's report; the panel recognised that this was a legacy document that covered a unique and unprecedented year. That said, we hope the feedback provided here will be useful to you as you produce your own Police and Crime Plan.

Within the report, the Panel was pleased to note an increase in the proportion of the workforce undertaking frontline duties, which has increased progressively over the last three years. In recognising that increase, the Panel highlighted concerns about whether efficiencies in backroom functions would ultimately draw officers away from frontline duties. You indicated that you planned to review the workforce to identify potential efficiencies and the Panel asks that you are cognisant of this concern.

As well as the discussions at the Panel meeting on Monday 7 June 2021, over the course of the year, we have heard about Operation Uplift and how Nottinghamshire is a year ahead of where it should be.

Panel members were delighted to hear about the outcome of the recent staff survey, which was shared during the meeting and would like to congratulate the force's Chief Officer team.

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We understand that the University of Durham will be carrying out future work to understand what has led to the improvements. We hope you will keep us abreast of this in a future update report to the Panel. We would also be keen to hear about the further work that is being done, particularly around the physical and mental health of the workforce.

Over the year the Panel has welcomed the efforts under theme 4 to ensure that the police workforce is more representative of the communities it serves and to improve relationships with, and confidence in, policing on behalf of the BAME communities. We recognise that important steps have been taken but also that there is more to be done.

Panel members queried the reported figures for the overall position for all rates of crime, which were set out in the performance overview on page 2 of the Annual Report. The report indicates that the city saw a 24% reduction in overall crime while the county saw an increase of 17.5%. Based on the information shared with Panel at previous meetings, members queried whether the county figure should also be showing a reduction.

During the year, the Panel had many discussions with the previous Commissioner about the number of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. We recognise that a proportion of the increase can be attributed to people spending more time at home during lockdown and reporting neighbourhood nuisance. The Panel is also aware that the figure has been skewed by people reporting breaches of COVID Regulations. Separating those figures out has been useful in helping the Panel understand the increases and would find it beneficial if this practice could continue until all Regulations cease.

While the pandemic has led to increases in reports of anti-social behaviour, Panel members recognise that through being at home more, the rates of other types of crime have reduced. The Panel may wish to examine the changing patterns of crime as restrictions continue to ease and opportunity for certain types of crime grows.

One area that has been of particular interest to the Panel is domestic abuse. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Panel had begun to shine a spotlight on the issue of domestic abuse in Nottinghamshire. We continued to look at the issue through the pandemic and explored trends in reports of domestic abuse, the number of people accessing support services and the impact of delays in the wider criminal justice system. This area continues to be a priority for the Panel and we ask that you pay particular attention as locked down restrictions ease; during previous lockdowns, the easing of restrictions saw increases in the number of reported incidents. Going forward, the Panel would also like to understand more about repeat victims.

The development of the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy was seen by the Panel as a key strand in of Nottinghamshire's efforts to tackle domestic abuse and ensure appropriate services are commissioned and available. The Panel hopes that this is something that you will also pursue.

A real benefit arising from the pandemic highlighted both within the Annual Report has been the introduction and development of new ways of working, which we believe can help drive further improvement going forward. The Panel has also been keen to hear about improved use of technology to drive improvements in safeguarding. Of particular interest has been the deployment of drones to search for high risk and vulnerable missing persons.

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There is much support amongst Panel members for Operation Reacher and the tangible benefits it has brought for neighbourhoods within Nottinghamshire. Members of the Panel have been made aware of requests for additional equipment from teams involved in Operation Reacher and ask that this be kept under review to ensure they have access to the tools they need to deliver.

The Panel has responded to concerns raised by the previous Commissioner regarding delays in the Criminal Justice System and the impact of those delays on victims of crime as well as those people who are accused of committing crimes. While we recognise that there were delays in accessing justice prior to the pandemic, the impact of ensuring proceedings were COVID-secure has exacerbated these delays.

We were pleased when a Nightingale Court for Nottinghamshire was announced and opened and look forward to seeing the impact this has. You also indicated that you would continue to work with criminal justice partners; we would be grateful if you keep us informed of your progress. We would also like to understand the wider context including the use of alternative methods of disposal including restorative justice and community resolutions. We recognise the work highlighted within the Annual Report regarding the efforts made to date to improve the response of the Criminal Justice System and would like to see this work go further.

The Panel recognises the activity around initiatives to keep young people safe online, with a focus on preventing exploitation, bullying and technologically assisted harmful sexual behaviour. This sits within the context of overall increases in online crime, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. When you responded to Panel members' questions you indicated that online crime was one area about which you are undertaking further work. The Panel was pleased to hear that you are engaging young people and look forward to hearing about the initiatives arising from that. The Panel also welcomes the wider work that you will be doing to help prevent people becoming victims of cybercrime and fraud.

While working with the previous Commissioner, the Panel often referred to measures in place to contact rural crime. While this did not feature as a priority within his Police and Crime Plan and the annual report, we are pleased that the issue is high on your agenda.

The Panel looks forward to working with you and receiving progress reports on the preparation of your draft Police and Crime Plan in September 2021 and the presentation of your Police and Crime Plan at our meeting in November 2021.

Yours sincerely,

Christine Goldstraw OBE  
Chair of the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Panel

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