

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Lincolnshire

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Alan Hardwick

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Lincolnshire

Date: 19th October 2015

Our Reference: AH/ch/HMIC-2015-051

HMCIC Sir Thomas Winsor WS
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Re: PEEL – Efficiency Inspection

I have been reflecting on the Force's recent PEEL assessment under the efficiency strand. I hope you will recognise that I and the Chief Constable have been steadfastly supportive of HMIC's approach to PEEL and keen that all forces are subject to proper and rigorous scrutiny.

I welcome your report on the Force wholeheartedly, it is due for publication tomorrow.

We have, however, experienced a number of difficulties that I felt it appropriate to raise with you.

The most significant is a lack of appreciation by the Inspection Team of the governance and accountability arrangements pertaining to Police and Crime Commissioners. Apart from a Staff Officer the Inspection Team was relatively inexperienced and low level – a point the Chief Constable has made separately.

This lack of understanding has been most apparent in relation to the resources I made available to the Chief Constable and in particular to reserves. To take reserves first; the Force does not have reserves. They are mine as Commissioner. My role is to set out for the Chief Constable the resources he will have available and require from him relevant plans and strategies for delivering policing within the resources available to him. This is more than an academic point. The Chief Constable is not responsible for the amount of resources available to him. It overstates his responsibility, as it did in our draft report, to suggest he controls the level of resources and it has led the Inspection Team into unfortunate assumptions.

This relates directly to the criticism of the Force for not having 'plans' for reducing officer numbers. Let me be clear, I have set the direction on officer numbers based on my election mandate and I will deliver what I promised to the public of Lincolnshire.

At the time of the inspection we had just had a General Election; we now face a new comprehensive spending review (CSR) and a revision to the funding formula, on the last of which we have been significant contributors to the national debate. This creates a context of significant uncertainty all in the run up to a PCC election but I have been clear with the Force on the assumptions I wish them to use for planning while simultaneously requiring a clear financial contingency plan should the allocation announcement in December not be favourable.

With the end of my term approaching and an election looming the inspection template and the unfortunate assumptions of the Inspection Team combine to run the risk of HMIC teams seeming to enter the political arena by seeking to set out the resourcing envelope in isolation from HM Government and from the locally elected policing body.

I know this is far from your intention and you have set out in crystal clarity your view of the HMIC's role as an independent inspectorate. I accept and respect that position and the Lincolnshire position could have been more elegantly handled if I had had more interaction with our HMI. As I indicated in previous correspondence, it is now more than a year since I have met with Zoe.

These are challenging times; I know you understand the particular position of Lincolnshire at this moment and I fully understand the requirement for the 'straight bat' of impartial inspection. I am left feeling we could have done better and that there is learning to be had especially around financial planning in a politically charged and uncertain environment. .

As a further example of concern I would suggest that where a Force is to be deemed to have moved from 'outstanding' to 'requires improvement' in a single bound, that HMI would seek to engage with the elected Police and Crime Commissioner if only for the purpose of triangulation?

My final point relates to the inspection framework itself. My experience has highlighted that in a strand headed 'How efficient is the force at keeping people safe and reducing crime?' the attributes 'How sustainable and affordable is the workforce model?' and 'How sustainable is the force's financial position for the short and long term?' are simply not fit for purpose. Do not misunderstand me, they are important and valid questions for the Force but placed in the structure as they are they undermine HMICs effectiveness.

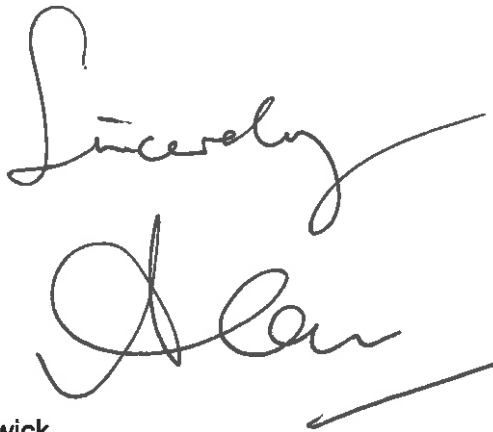
In our case in a low cost, well managed Force with good outcomes for the public (all HMI conclusions) it leads you to publically say "The Force requires improvement in how efficiently it keeps people safe and reduces crime". This is not true and cannot be right and will leave me and others with a perspective that the tick box approach is more important than a realistic informed view.

I acknowledge the framework is new and I suspect your Force Management Statements in time may address this area but make no mistake the current structure has proved unhelpful to your Inspection Team and to me and is a threat to the credibility of your judgements.

In conclusion, I make these points in a collegiate spirit looking forward not back. Our public response will focus on welcoming the report and pointing out that your judgements of 'requires improvement' are valid but refer to those that provide the funding for police services. I shall be forceful in highlighting that you believe us to be strong in financial management, well led with good outcomes in keeping the people of Lincolnshire safe and tackling crime. However, I will be clear that the wording of your judgement is erroneous and unhelpful to the public's understanding of Lincolnshire's effectiveness and efficiency and that this is a product of a flawed framework.

I would be happy to discuss these issues if you feel that would help promote a shared understanding. I have no interest in disagreements, only in good outcomes for the people of Lincolnshire. In that objective I think we are agreed.

I will forward this letter to the Secretary of State for the Home Department and it will act as my formal response to this report as required within the meaning of Section 55(5) of the Police Act 1996. I will also publish it on my website.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sincerely Alan', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Alan Hardwick
Police and Crime Commissioner for Lincolnshire

cc: The Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Secretary of State for the Home Department
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