

CAMBRIDGESHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL	Agenda Item No. 10
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Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Contact Officer – Dorothy Gregson

Contact Details - cambs-pcc@cambs.pnn.police.uk 0300 333 3456

COMMISSIONER'S RESPONSE TO HMIC REPORT ON CAMBRIDGESHIRE CONSTABULARY'S APPROACH TO TACKLING DOMESTIC ABUSE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to report to the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel (“the Panel”) the Police and Crime Commissioner’s (“the Commissioner’s”) response to Cambridgeshire Constabulary’s (“the Constabulary”) response to Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary’s (HMIC) Report ‘*Cambridgeshire Constabulary’s approach to tackling domestic abuse*’ 2014.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the report.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 3.1 To review or scrutinise decisions made or other action taken, by the Commissioner in connection with the discharge of the Commissioner’s functions.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In September 2013, HMIC was commissioned by the Home Secretary to inspect the police response to domestic violence and abuse. HMIC conducted their inspection of the Constabulary in December 2013 and revisited in February 2014. In March 2014, HMIC published their full overarching report on all force inspections ‘*Everyone’s business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse*’ along with individual force reports.
- 4.2 All Commissioners have a statutory duty under section 55 of the Police Act 1996 to comment on reports published by HMIC about their force and arrange for those comments to be published in such a manner as appears appropriate to each individual Commissioner. Any comments, including any that the Chief Constable may have, can be included within the Commissioner’s published comments. A copy of the published document must be sent to the Home Secretary. HMIC also require a copy for their information.
- 4.3 In addition to the statutory reporting requirement, Commissioners also have a statutory duty, amongst other duties, to hold the Chief Constable to account for the performance of the force’s officers and staff; scrutinise, support and challenge the overall performance of the force including the priorities agreed with the Commissioner’s Police and Crime Plan; and maintain an efficient and effective police force.
- 4.4 I chair the Business Co-ordination Board (BCB) which is a monthly meeting between myself, the Deputy Commissioner, Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable and other senior officers and staff of the Constabulary and my Office, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. It is a forum in which current and future business is discussed between the senior leaders of the two bodies, focussing on issues relating to strategy, governance, business and holding the Chief Constable to account.

4.5 I fulfil my statutory duty to comment on HMIC reports by publishing the minutes of BCB meetings where I have held the Chief Constable to account for the report's findings and the Constabulary's response.

4.6 My Police and Crime Plan includes a commitment to protect vulnerable people from abuse. I requested a report for the Board in November 2013 which set out the work that had been undertaken to prioritise Domestic Abuse. This paper highlighted some performance issues and that the Constabulary had requested a peer review to be conducted.

5. HMIC INSPECTION

5.1 HMIC's December 2013 inspection considered:

- the effectiveness of the Constabulary's approach to domestic violence and abuse, focussing on the outcome for victims and whether risks to victims of domestic violence and abuse are adequately managed;
- identifying lessons learnt from how the Constabulary approach domestic violence and abuse; and
- making any necessary recommendations in relation to these findings when considered alongside current practice.

5.2 The findings of the HMIC inspection were disappointing. HMIC had significant concerns about the ability of the Constabulary to deal consistently and appropriately with victims of domestic abuse and to reduce the risk of harm to them. HMIC made 15 recommendations which ranged from reviewing capacity, training, structures and processes through to partnership working and leadership.

5.3 As soon as the findings were available, I liaised with Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary during which the major concerns were detailed. I then spoke to the Chief Constable to obtain his initial response. The Chief Constable informed me that:

- he was disappointed and concerned and accepted the findings;
- the Constabulary were able to respond to the issues raised;
- that an action plan was urgently being prepared to address the findings.

The action plan was rapidly prepared and actions commenced to address the issues raised.

5.4 I requested an update on the Constabulary's response for consideration at the BCB meeting on 22 January 2014. The Chief Constable informed me of progress at that meeting.

5.5 HMIC re-inspected the Constabulary in February 2014 to establish whether progress had been made. I requested an update from the Chief Constable following this re-inspection at the 27 February 2014 BCB meeting. The Chief Constable reported that the results of the initial debrief were extremely positive with HMIC commenting that significant progress had been made since the initial inspection. HMIC had also reviewed the action plan which was assessed as being coherent, robust and provided confidence that the Constabulary were effectively managing all the recommendations previously made.

5.6 Following publishing of the HMIC report in March 2014, I requested a full report from the Chief Constable to the June 2014 BCB meeting covering the Constabulary's response to the inspection findings. The Chief Constable provided a full report on progress of the implementation of the action plan which was under his direct leadership. The Constabulary had accepted all of the recommendations made by HMIC and attributed much of the improvements to the ever growing culture of victim care.

5.7 The Minutes of the June 2014 BCB meeting will be submitted to the 24 July 2014 BCB for consideration and approval. Once approved, these minutes will be submitted to the Home

Office as my published comments in respect of the HMIC Report in accordance with the my statutory duty under the Police Act 1996.

6. GOING FORWARD

- 6.1 I am reassured that there is a commitment throughout the Constabulary to continually strive for improvements to the way that domestic abuse is handled, in particular ensuring that there is a strong focus on identifying and reducing vulnerability for victims.
- 6.2 Equally, both the Constabulary and myself recognise the importance of partnership and inter-agency work to tackle domestic abuse but acknowledge that there is still work required at a partnership level to achieve this.
- 6.3 I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account for this area of work.

7. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 7.1 *'Cambridgeshire Constabulary's approach to tackling domestic abuse'*, HMIC 2014
<http://www.hmic.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/cambridgeshire-approach-to-tackling-domestic-abuse.pdf>

'Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse', HMIC 2014
<http://www.hmic.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/improving-the-police-response-to-domestic-abuse.pdf>

Police Act 1996 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/16/section/55>

Police and Crime Plan <http://www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Cambridgeshire-Police-and-Crime-Plan-10-June-2014.pdf>

BCB meetings – papers and minutes <http://www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/business-coordination-board/>

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