

From Kevin Hurley to Home Secretary/HMIC/ Published on website:

I welcome the reports from the HMIC on Valuing the Police - Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge - covering how police forces are responding to the funding challenge nationally and in Surrey. It is encouraging to see that up and down the country, PCCs and police forces are putting plans in place to respond to budget cuts made to policing. In Surrey, HMIC has quite rightly identified that there are plans in place to try and meet both the cuts already made to police funding and those further reductions expected in the future.

We must recognise that there is no painless way to save 13% from a police force's total expenditure. The officers and staff of Surrey Police have endured continuous change, sacrifice and uncertainty over the last few years to achieve the savings discussed in this HMIC report. I cannot thank them enough for their dedication and perseverance in continuing to do an excellent job in one of the most challenging, stressful professions there is. Whilst the organisation has changed around them, their hunger to do the right thing for the public and confront antisocial behaviour and crime has never wavered.

I will be working with the Chief Constable over the coming years to deliver the change programme set out as well as continuing to collaborate with Sussex Police to look at how we can work together to drive out further savings. I continue to monitor closely the impact on victims to ensure they are well supported and I receive regular updates on the work Surrey Police is carrying out to improve how crimes are investigated and resolved. I will also be working with the Chief Constable to respond to the recommendations made following the review by the HMIC in their letter of 20 August 2013.

My firm view, however, is that to protect policing we need to look at merging police forces. In the Chancellor's Spending Review statement in June we were given notice of further significant budget cuts stretching beyond 2015. I reiterate now what I said then – the biggest inefficiency in policing is the number of separate forces. The future for this country is drastically reduced public spending.

The only sensible policing model for that future is one of fewer, larger forces without the needless expense and bureaucracy that comes from having 41 headquarters, 41 chief officer teams, 41 sets of support functions and 41 PCCs.