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25 January 2017

Nick Ramsay AM

Chair of Public Accounts Committee, National Assembly for Wales

Dear Nick

Wales Audit Office Community Safety Review

Many thanks for your recent correspondence seeking the views of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) regarding the above report and recommendations. Essentially the recommendations aim to put Community Safety working on a more formal footing in Wales with better planning, performance management and audit structures, more visibility from Public Service Boards and more joined up budgets. Whilst there is nothing here with which I would disagree, the report lacks some significant detail in terms of when and how this will happen and who is to be held responsible. The report serves to reinforce the existing and indeed ongoing issues experienced by partners within the Community Safety arena but provides only limited direction in terms of the necessary responses.

Early discussions between my office and the Wales Audit Office team indicated that a regional Community Safety Partnership footprint would be recommended; this would have been highly favourable for Commissioners along with a number of other partner agencies. However, this recommendation appears to have been diminished within the final report. There is mention within the report, rather than explicitly within the recommendations, of regional partnerships with the report stating that PCCs have been central to driving this forward in many areas. The report references both North Wales and Gwent's positive approaches to regional working arrangements and I am currently working with partners within Dyfed Powys regarding the benefits of a Force-wide approach and joint funding.

I welcome the move towards pooled budgets, but again this needs commitment from Welsh Government and other funders to deliver grants with these terms and conditions attached. This recommendation is the joint responsibility of Welsh Government, Police and Crime Commissioners and Local Authorities and therefore needs more drive to ensure it is delivered. Effective joint commissioning of services involves much more than merely pooling budgetary arrangements. Within Dyfed Powys we are currently taking a collaborative approach to the VAWDASV agenda, with the ultimate aim of joint commissioning of Independent Domestic Violence Advisory services. The work involved in reaching this goal should not be underestimated.

I would keenly support the recommendation to establish effective performance management; currently only one of the Community Safety Partnerships within Dyfed Powys works to an agreed performance framework although this is still under development as it doesn't yet reflect the priorities of all partner agencies. There is a distinct lack of performance information shared at partnerships; whilst all constituent members provide updates on organisational performance, they fail to identify those areas where joined up working is adding value and there is no measurement of the outcomes achieved.

The report highlights the fact that consulting local people has not typically formed part of the process of identifying community safety priorities. The review of key plans concluded that only 6 of the 20 community safety partnerships have effective consultation approaches with the public. Through the public survey, Wales Audit Office also found that 91% of citizens who responded to the survey stated that they were unaware of how their community-safety partnership consulted or engaged with them when developing their priorities for community safety. Police and Crime Commissioners are vital in providing this community engagement that is so clearly missing. This is something I am personally committed to and have already established links with numerous community groups, along with seeking input from local communities for both the recruitment of a new Chief Constable and to inform the development of my Police and Crime Plan. I have recently recruited two Community Engagement Officers to join my team; these roles will help to build a more informed and effective relationship between local communities and my office and are in a position to work with Community Safety Partnerships to improve further engagement opportunities.

The report references the limited safety information or self-help facilities on many Community Safety Partnership websites, with no performance information and no 'Have Your Say' section. Wales Audit Office states that "as a result it is hard to see how the public can take responsibility for their own safety...which is a missed opportunity to engage with younger people". I am working closely with partners to encourage a more collaborative approach to media and communications and I plan to launch a specific youth strategy to align with my new Police and Crime Plan to ensure that the needs and views of young people are identified and incorporated into service planning and delivery.

The response from Welsh Government correctly highlights the additional complexities faced within Wales as a result of devolved and non-devolved policies and recognises that current arrangements are not sustainable in the long term. I welcome the commitment from Welsh Government to review and refresh the arrangements for Community Safety in Wales and I believe that if all stakeholders remain open to addressing these issues then together we can achieve the required efficiencies and improvements.

Furthermore Police and Crime Commissioners, as the elected representatives with responsibility not only for Policing but actively working across a wide range of responsibilities, must be seen as the leaders in this activity. PCCs have the opportunity to significantly impact and influence the Community Safety agenda in Wales. Welsh Government and Local Authorities, along with other partners, must work with PCCs to achieve these shared goals.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dafydd Llywelyn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dafydd Llywelyn
Police and Crime Commissioner