The Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP

Home Secretary

Home Office

2 Marsham Street

LONDON

SW1P 4DF

11th August 2023

Dear Home Secretary,

**A report into the effectiveness of vetting and counter-corruption arrangements in Gwent Police**

As required by statute, I am writing to you to respond to His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection report entitled, ‘A report into the effectiveness of vetting and counter-corruption arrangements in Gwent Police’.

I welcome this report, which is especially timely as policing has been placed under the spotlight for its practices in identifying and dealing with the minority of officers and staff members who should not be working in public service and do not represent our values and expected standards of behaviour. Vetting and Counter Corruption are key tools in helping to ensure our communities are protected by those exercising their roles with the expected professional standards and to identify anyone who may use their position of power to their advantage. As such, I was extremely pleased with the report from HMICFRS and that the areas they identified were minimal and easily resolved. This is supported by the comment from the Chief Constable in response to this inspection report:

*‘I am grateful to HMICFRS for their inspection report which examines the effectiveness of our vetting and counter-corruption arrangements. The report highlights the full range of measures in place to vet new and existing officers in a thorough and timely way.  It also evidences the work we do to maintain professional standards of behaviour. We have set clear expectations around how we expect our officers and staff to behave and the high standards the public rightly expect of us.  The inspection findings highlight that we have robust processes in place to identify any potential areas of concern.  When colleagues fail to uphold those standards we will not hesitate to take action’.*

The report highlights that the force has a good understanding of those officers and staff members who need re-vetting and that steps have been taken to improve staff awareness regarding the reporting of a change in circumstance. I am also pleased to report that an internal review of the vetting workstream in 2022 has resulted in an increase in staffing levels with the introduction of a Vetting Supervisor role.

Gwent Police has had a Vetting Appeal Panel in place for a number of years. The Head of Assurance and Compliance from my office is a member and confirms that it is effective and provides assurance of scrutiny in this area. I am pleased that all vetting refusals involving those with protected characteristics are automatically considered by the Panel, even if an appeal is not submitted by the applicant. I can also report that a review has been undertaken regarding membership of the Panel and as per the HMICFRS identified area for improvement, the HR representatives have been removed.

I also want to provide reassurance that my office has been monitoring the responses to the recommendations identified in the thematic vetting inspection report as well as receiving regular updates at my Strategy and Performance Board on vetting performance, which is the forum at which I hold the Chief Constable to account.

I also note that the positive work of the Counter Corruption Unit was highlighted, in particular the three matrices used to monitor members of the workforce who may pose a corruption risk, with specific praise afforded to the use of Operation Lotus.

Despite the positive inspection report and minimal areas for improvement which have now been implemented, I was disappointed that the work and investment Gwent Police has undertaken in this key area of business, only resulted in an ‘adequate’ grading.

I am determined to ensure, as is the Chief Constable, that there is a positive culture in Gwent Police that values and respects communities and the workforce and that there is a robust approach to ensuring a high level of professional standards in the effective delivery of the policing service in Gwent.

I am confident that the Chief Constable has an excellent understanding of this area and will continue with the improvements already made on organisational culture. I know she shares my views that there is no place for those who do not conduct themselves in the way expected of serving officers or police staff. She continues to have my full support in the implementation of this work.

Yours sincerely,

Signature of Jeff Cuthbert, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

**Jeff Cuthbert B.Sc., MCIPD**

**Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent**