Sir Philip Rutnam  
Permanent Secretary  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
London, SW1P 4DF

18 June 2019

Dear Sir Philip,

RE: Treasury Minute response – Financial sustainability of police forces in England and Wales 2018

Thank you for the response to the Committee’s report on Financial sustainability of police forces in England and Wales 2018. I read your response with interest.

I was pleased to see that you accepted three of the Committee’s recommendations. I am grateful for the commitments made by the Department, in particular actions to strengthen your monitoring of forces’ financial sustainability, the evidence base to inform funding decisions, as well as your agreement that changes to the funding formula are required. I was also pleased to read the letter from Sir Thomas Winsor (16 January) which set out insights drawn from the first set of Force Management Statements.

I recognise the uncertainties surrounding the timing of the Comprehensive Spending Review and the impact this has on some of the work you are proposing that would meet the Committee’s concerns. Given this, the Committee has asked the NAO to monitor progress against all the Committee’s recommendations. Furthermore, I would be grateful if you could write to the Committee addressing the following issues:

• In relation to recommendation 1, which you have not accepted, we would expect to see further progress in understanding all the demands forces face drawing on the insights set out by Sir Thomas Winsor following analysis of the first set of Force Management Statements. As you set out in your response, I would be grateful for an update on your understanding of the national picture of demand once the second set of FMSs has been issued by the Inspectorate. (I am copying this letter to Sir Thomas Winsor, accordingly.)

• While I welcome the Department’s work to develop a diagnostic tool to monitor forces’ financial sustainability (recommendation 2), you have made no commitment about when you will start to use this tool in practice. I would welcome a firm commitment from the Department on when monitoring forces’ financial sustainability will become business as usual.
• I am pleased to see you agree that a review of the funding formula is required, subject to a full public consultation (recommendation 3). I would be grateful for an update on plans to review the funding formula, once the Comprehensive Spending Review is announced and underway.

• While I welcome your response that the Department is always looking to improve the running of its programmes (recommendation 4), you have not set out what you will do differently. We know from our ongoing scrutiny of the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme, for example, that there remains much to do to improve your delivery record and better engage users.

• In relation to recommendation 5, which you have not agreed with, I would remind you that we heard in the evidence session that forces do not feel that they are properly supported in delivering Policing Vision 2025 and want to see more serious commitment from the Department in delivering the vision. I would like to receive assurance that, in the absence of its own long-term plan for policing, the Department’s approach strengthens the ability of the policing sector to plan investments and programmes of work over the longer term and supports forces’ financial sustainability.

I would be grateful if you write to update me on the above-mentioned issues within 6 months’ time, or following the Comprehensive Spending Review, whichever is sooner. In addition to Sir Thomas Winsor, I am copying this letter to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Meg Hillier MP
CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Cc: Sir Thomas Winsor
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