Dear Mr Jenkin,

Following my letter of 30 October, responding to issues raised by your constituent James Patrick about police whistleblowing, I am writing to update you on my plans to strengthen protection for police whistleblowers.

Firstly I would like to thank you, and the members of the PASC, for your work in highlighting the important issues of police whistleblowing and the integrity of police recorded crime statistics. The PASC inquiry was invaluable in bringing relevant information to light. As you know I commissioned HMIC to inspect forces’ recording of crime statistics. The inspectorate’s final report ‘Crime Recording: making the victim count’ is published today and confirms our shared concern that there have been utterly unacceptable failings in the way police forces have recorded crime.

On police whistleblowing, as I announced in July, I have commissioned the College of Policing to produce a single national policy for police forces on whistleblowing, to set out best practice and ensure consistency of approach across all forces. From April 2015, we will also require forces to publish information on the number of conduct matters reported to them by officers and staff, and the action taken as a result.

It is essential that police officers have confidence that reporting wrongdoing will not result in detrimental treatment by their force or colleagues. So today I have launched a public consultation on measures to protect police whistleblowers from unfair disciplinary action and from reprisals or vexatious allegations which may arise at a later date. The consultation proposes changes to the police regulations which will:

- Make it clear that disciplinary action should not be taken against police officers for taking the necessary steps to report wrongdoing or poor practice in their force;
• Ensure proper consideration is given to whether a whistleblower may have been subject to vexatious or unfair allegations, disciplinary or performance proceedings at a later date, as a result of their previous whistleblowing; and

• Deter reprisals by other police officers against whistleblowers by making it clear that reprisals should be taken seriously and treated as misconduct.

Today’s consultation includes wider changes to the police disciplinary system, which will bring more independence and fairness to the process and assist further in preventing unfair disciplinary action against whistleblowers:

• To introduce greater independence into the way police disciplinary hearings are conducted and ensure judgements are legally sound, I am consulting on the introduction of legally qualified chairs to conduct police disciplinary hearings.

• To improve transparency and justice in the police disciplinary system and ensure that proceedings are both visible and open to public scrutiny, I am consulting on holding police disciplinary hearings and appeals in public.

I intend to implement these protections for police whistleblowers and changes to the disciplinary system before the end of this Parliament.

I will be launching a second consultation in the next few weeks, proposing longer term reforms to strengthen protections for police whistleblowers and improve the police disciplinary and complaints systems.

I will write to you again with more details at the time of the second consultation.

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP