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Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
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18th March 2021

Dear *Priti*

Response to HMICFRS report: “An inspection of the effectiveness of the Regional Organised Crime Units”

Under Section 55(5) of the Police Act 1996, as Acting Police and Crime Commissioner I am pleased to provide my formal response to HMICFRS’s report entitled “**An inspection of the effectiveness of the Regional Organised Crime Units**”.

Both the Chief Constable and I welcome the publication of HMICFRS’ report looking at effectiveness of the Regional Organised Crime Units.

I note there are some elements of the report that require a local response, however most recommendations are for the NPCC lead for Serious & Organised Crime and the Home Office to take forward. I will take further reassurance from the Chief Constable via my Board meeting in due course once the recommendations are in place given that it is for police forces themselves to implement the changes.

The HMICFRS recommendations and constabulary response are attached in Appendix 1

Yours sincerely

Ray Bisby
Acting Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
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HMICFRS recommendations and constabulary response

HMICFRS have made 6 recommendations and raised one cause of concern to further improve the effectiveness of the ROCU network:

Recommendations:

- 1) By March 2021, the Home Office should consider what changes to legislation can be made to allow the NCA to formally task ROCUs.
Force Response: This recommendation is addressed to the Home Office. The Constabulary will await further information.
- 2) By February 2023, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) lead for SOC, with the Home Office, should devise a technical solution to make exchanging sensitive intelligence between organisations more efficient, and then encourage its adoption and adherence by all relevant forces and the NCA.
Force Response: This recommendation is addressed to the NPCC lead for Serious & Organised Crime and the Home Office. The Constabulary will await further information.
- 3) By February 2022, Chief Officers responsible for SOC in each region, with the Chief Officers of the affected forces, should make sure that systems are in place for senior investigating officers (SIOs) and lead responsible officers (LROs) to work effectively together.
Force Response: The Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) falls under the command of the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU), with Bedfordshire Police as the lead force for the collaboration. Locally within Cambridgeshire Constabulary, there are processes in place within the Intelligence & Specialist Crime Department to enable effective tasking between the force and the ROCU. The Constabulary will await further direction from the Chief Officers responsible for Serious & Organised Crime in the region on any improvements to these systems.
- 4) By February 2022, the Chief Constable with the lead for SOC in each region, with the Chief Officers of the affected forces, should ensure that a chief officer is appointed with responsibility for each ROCU, as far as practicable working autonomously of force responsibilities.
Force Response: The Eastern Region Special Operations Unit has a dedicated Assistant Chief Constable who is the lead for the Regional Organised Crime Unit and other regional responsibilities.
- 5) By August 2021, the NPCC lead for ROCUs, with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) lead for counter corruption, should publish an anti-corruption strategy for ROCUs and then encourage its adoption and adherence by all relevant forces.

Force Response: This recommendation is addressed to the NPCC lead for Regional Organised Crime Units and the NPCC lead for counter corruption. The Constabulary will await further information.

- 6) By February 2022, the NPCC lead for SOC should design a national function that can make sure ROCUs operate in a co-ordinated and consistent way across England and Wales; the Home Office and other relevant interested parties should adopt the arrangements so devised and provide the necessary resources to ensure their successful operation.

Force Response: This recommendation is addressed to the NPCC lead for Serious & Organised Crime. The Constabulary will await further information.

Cause of concern:

We found that the complexity and short-term nature of ROCU funding has a significant detrimental effect on how well they operate. We also found that local interests, rather than regional and national threat, risk and harm, affected prioritisation. Feedback from across the ROCUs, from senior managers to frontline staff, consistently identified funding as their top concern. This was echoed when interviewing national leads. Business leads find it difficult to plan, staff face uncertainty about the tenure of their posts, ROCUs struggle to attract and retain talent based on fixed-term arrangements and they can't invest effectively in specialist capabilities. This is neither effective nor efficient and is a cause of concern.

By February 2022, the Home Office should lead work with the NPCC and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) to identify a sustainable funding model for ROCUs that:

- 1) provides long term clarity and certainty to the financial position of the ROCUs, to allow for future business planning and more financial stability; and
- 2) enables ROCUs to lead the response to SOC in their region.

Force Response: This recommendation is addressed to the Home Office, NPCC and the APCC. The Constabulary will await further information.