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Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Response to HMICFRS Report: “An Inspection of the Police Response to the Public Disorder in July and August 2024 – Tranche 2”

<https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publication-html/police-response-to-public-disorder-in-july-and-august-2024-tranche-2/>

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Introduction

In July and August 2024, the UK experienced a period of significant public disorder, sparked by the tragic murders of three young girls in Southport. The resulting unrest affected multiple towns and cities, placing considerable strain on police forces across the country. In response, the Home Secretary commissioned His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to conduct a two-part inspection into the policing response. While the first tranche focused on mobilisation, capacity, and officer welfare, this second tranche examines the use of intelligence, the management of online threats and misinformation, and the effectiveness of investigations into disorder-related offences.

Although Thames Valley Police (TVP) was not among the most severely impacted forces, it is vital that all forces reflect on the findings to ensure they are equipped to respond effectively to future incidents. I welcome the force’s engagement with the inspection and its detailed response to the recommendations.

PCC Response:

Intelligence and Preparedness

TVP has demonstrated a clear commitment to enhancing its intelligence capabilities, including the deployment of the Maltego Monitor platform and the establishment of a dedicated Internet Intelligence Investigation (III) team. These developments are encouraging and align with the national direction of travel.

The force also recognises the need to strengthen its provision - particularly in relation to 24/7 monitoring and access to intelligence from closed or localised platforms. These are critical areas for development, especially given the pace at which disorder can escalate. I will continue to seek assurance from the Chief Constable on progress towards establishing a round-the-clock intelligence function and strengthening regional coordination.

Online Threats and Misinformation

The force’s proactive efforts to address the growing threat of misinformation - such as the expansion of the Digital Desk and the Oxfordshire social media trial - are commendable and reflect a forward-thinking approach.

Even so, the ability to respond in real time remains constrained by platform limitations, licensing restrictions, and the absence of a fully integrated monitoring structure. I support the force's ambition to strengthen its digital resilience and will advocate for the necessary investment to ensure that TVP can respond swiftly and effectively to online threats.

Investigative Readiness

TVP's approach to investigative readiness during the disorder period was proportionate and well-structured, with clear contingency planning and strong engagement with the Crown Prosecution Service. The force's ability to ring-fence investigative resources and its emphasis on pursuing the most serious offences are to be commended.

At the same time, the absence of a national framework for coordinating investigative mutual aid remains a concern. I fully support TVP's call for a formalised national protocol and will raise this issue through appropriate forums to ensure that investigative capacity is embedded within future mobilisation plans.

Community Confidence and Engagement

The force's investment in neighbourhood policing, including the uplift in officers and the development of the Neighbourhood Policing App, is a welcome step towards strengthening community confidence. These tools will be vital in identifying and responding to community tensions, particularly during periods of unrest.

The force also recognises that further work is needed to ensure local teams are consistently equipped to identify and escalate community concerns. I will continue to monitor how these processes are developed and embedded to ensure that community voices are heard and acted upon in a timely and effective manner.

Conclusion

Thames Valley Police has provided a transparent response to the HMICFRS report. The force is clearly committed to learning from national findings and enhancing its preparedness for future incidents of public disorder. While there are areas that require further development - particularly in intelligence coverage, digital response, and national coordination - I am reassured by the force's proactive stance and willingness to improve.

I will maintain oversight of the force's progress through regular performance and assurance meetings and will continue to advocate for the national support and investment required to enable effective local delivery.

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