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Office of the
**Police & Crime
Commissioner**
West Yorkshire

My Reference: OPCC/MBW/JED

Your Reference:

23 January 2015

The Rt. Hon Theresa May MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DP

Dear Home Secretary

Provisional Police Grant Report 2015/16

Further to your announcement in December 2014 regarding the police funding settlement, I am now formally responding.

Whilst recognising your comments on the progress the police service has made in relation to reduction in crime, re-design of services, and collaboration, I feel I must stress that the police service in West Yorkshire is now reaching a point where opportunities for efficiency savings are severely limited, and that further, sustained cuts will detrimentally impact on service delivery. West Yorkshire has already lost over 1800 posts in this CSR period, and a further reduction of 506 is planned for 2015/16. This will put the communities of West Yorkshire, whom I have pledged to keep safer and feel safer, at some significant risk, with the inevitable pressure on frontline services.

I recognise the Home Office efforts to reduce the effect of the 1.1% reduction in the Home Office DEL on Police services for 2015/16, however I am concerned that the Chancellor's Autumn Statement to Parliament on 3 December 2014 (and associated OBR economic and fiscal outlook report), although making no announcement specifically relating to Police, would indicate that unprotected DELs, including the Home Office, will fall from a total £147.1bn in 2014-15 to £85.6bn in 2019-20. This is expressed in real terms at 2014-15 prices and equates to a real terms cut over the five years of 41.8%. This will clearly have a severe impact on the Police Service in the medium term as it remains unprotected in Government priorities.

As we have discussed previously, I am very concerned that the decision to cut all PCC's grants by the same percentage through the use of damping was repeated. This means that West Yorkshire Police will face cash cuts of over 23% to the budget in this Spending Review period, in comparison with others who will see a much lesser reduction. I cannot see how

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this is fair to those areas which have demonstrably higher needs and which have never received their full funding formula allocation. I regard the review of the funding formula as the most significant thing that needs to take place as soon as possible in addressing the fairness of resources allocation in redressing this unfairness.

I am extremely disappointed that the top-slicing for various initiatives has been increased by over 96% to £176.8m in 2015/16 (excluding PFI and Ordnance survey) which represents an annual reduction of £7.25m in West Yorkshire's core grant. This has been taken without any consultation with PCCs, and I am concerned that this level of investment has been determined without full details of the proposals being presented i.e. full business cases. Local investment is scrutinised very closely, and I would expect the same level of scrutiny to be available to those contributing to national bodies or initiatives.

Whilst there were initial plans to top slice £71.3m nationally for the National Police Co-ordination centre and the proposed National ICT provision, I note that the decision has been made to charge police forces directly. Whilst this does afford a degree of local control however, it still represents an additional reduction to local funding.

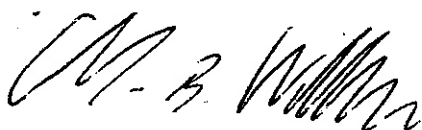
With regard to the precept, the DCLG confirmed the council tax referendum principles the day after the provisional police grant report was produced, with a 2% increase triggering a referendum. Whilst the timing of the announcement was helpful, I feel that the announcement of the referendum principles undermines the democratic mandate of directly elected PCCs, as the cost of the referendum itself would be prohibitive for it to be a realistic option. I would also like to request that the previous referendum principle, where the lowest precept forces were allowed to increase the precept by the higher of a set percentage or by £5, be considered in future as this allowed PCCs an element of choice and flexibility if capping is to continue in the next parliament.

Finally, whilst I acknowledge that future years funding allocations will be dependent upon the outcome of the general election and subsequent spending reviews, I would request that indicative allocations for 2015/16 onwards are published as soon as possible. The lack of capital allocation for 2015/16 which is usually received in December has been unhelpful in setting the budget.

Given that we're facing unprecedented cuts, it is vital that we are able to make service delivery plans for the medium/long term. By necessity these are not small changes, and clarity around the levels of savings required would assist greatly with this process in determining the scale of the challenge required.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultation.

Yours sincerely



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