

## Open Letter from Chief Constable Mike Veale - A Force to be reckoned with

Dear all,

Wiltshire Police is a force that is 'punching above its weight.'

First and foremost, we are here to keep you all safe and do all that we are able to protect you. We are a small force serving a diverse population across a varied geography with large rural communities and urban areas with our fair share of associated issues.

Our officers and staff face the same challenges as every other police force across the country. Every day they are out on the frontline putting their selves at risk in order to protect you and your families - not to mention the vast amount of work that goes on behind the scenes.

You may not feel you see officers as much as you used to, we are in the position of having to work with fewer officers than we have had for decades. These men and women who have sworn to protect and uphold the law continue to do so in times of significantly reduced resources, increased national security threat and against a backdrop of a seemingly relentless criticism and negativity towards the service. Despite this, policing is one of the most trusted and well regarded professions which enjoys a huge amount of confidence from our communities.

Our numbers have been reduced but the demand on officers, staff and volunteers continues to exponentially grow with the increasing pressure of cybercrime, mental health, rises in reported sexual offences and historic child abuse cases. The decline in social care and other front line services accurately described by the Chief Inspector of Hospitals today means that we are dealing with more people in crisis and who are more vulnerable than ever before.

This is a huge and significant responsibility which I did not experience when I joined the service some 32 years ago. Realistically my force cannot be expected to deal with all the ills of society, which is how it feels on occasion. But we are transforming the way we deliver the service and finding ways to improve how we work with social services, local councils and other services to better share the load. This will also free up officers and staff and mean a better response to victims of crime.

Our change to a new Community Policing Model alongside investment in technology means that officers and staff are more mobile and will spend more time in their communities rather than being stuck behind a desk in a police station. We are working with the resources we have and being innovative in how best we use them and will endeavour to ensure our neighbourhoods are not adversely affected.

The truth is that we no longer have the communities we had in yesteryear, our communities now extend into cyber space. You are more likely to be hacked and attacked through your laptop via the internet than you are being attacked on the streets of Wiltshire and Swindon, so we have to adapt and evolve our service to meet these new and emerging challenges.

HMIC have recently carried out inspections and Wiltshire Police is graded as '**good**' across the board.

While you may think a '**good**' grading should be the 'norm', the reality is that we have achieved this frankly marvellous result under unprecedented pressure and the worst amount of funding of all forces bar two. These high standards have been delivered during a period of intense organisational change making these results even more impressive.

To be able to work through such challenges and still provide an independently assessed, high quality of service is testament to the outstanding efforts of the staff, officers and Special Constables who work here. I include in this praise the local groups who assist the force regularly such as Wiltshire Search and Rescue (WILSAR) who provide invaluable support in searching for missing people.

Obviously it would be remiss not to make reference to the support from the Police and Crime Commissioner; frankly he 'gets it', and does all that he can to help us deliver an effective service whilst rightly holding me to account.

The HMIC report has praised us for our '*effectiveness in preventing crime, tackling anti-social behaviour and keeping people safe.*' The way we work has been described as one that '*ensures that police resources are deployed appropriately, providing a prompt and professional service to the victim.....*' At the end of the day, what do you; the people of Wiltshire actually want from us?

- You want to know that we will come to you when you call us in an emergency situation.
- You want to know that we will do everything in our power to keep you safe.
- You want to know that we will carry out effective investigations and bring offenders to justice.
- And you want to know that we will do all of this with a huge amount of kindness, compassion, empathy and courage.

We will continue to focus on the most vulnerable in our communities, we will provide residents and businesses with information to help keep them safe and prevent crime.

We will target those who threaten the safety of everyone in our county; we will prosecute criminals, pursue those who are 'wanted' and take down organised crime groups.

There is always some room for improvement, times are changing and we won't get left behind. So we will find new ways of simplifying processes and procedures, we will continue to work with partners to provide a victim focused approach recognising what we have all known for a long time - sometimes situations require professionals other than police officers or police staff.

This report caps off a year of good results for Wiltshire Police. We have received an overall '**good**' grading in each of the inspection areas, which is a fantastic achievement. This pleasing report is the last HMIC report following a twelve month cycle of inspection from the inspectorates. The result of all inspections have been equally astounding, we are a top performing force with the endorsement from the organisation charged with the responsibility to comprehensively and independently examine how we deliver the service.

We have been graded as good in terms of our efficiency, good in the way we work with partners, good in relation to the trust and confidence we have within our communities, outstanding in relation to the way we treat our colleagues and some wonderful commentary from HMIC in relation to our approach to leadership and innovation.

Do not think for one minute I make these assertions with complacency, no my aspirations are far more ambitious for next year, despite the shrinking budgets, to maintain our position

across the board and where possible achieve outstanding in relation to the service we provide to our communities. My personal philosophy is to aim high! The truth of the matter is that Wiltshire Police are a **good**, effective force. I make no apology for 'blowing the force trumpet'.

I am incredibly proud of my force which is made up of officers, staff and volunteers with unwavering dedication, commitment and enthusiasm.

They are the people who don't get to see their families for days on end, or get to put their kids to bed, they work extended hours in all weathers, they are the people who run into the face of danger when the instinct is to run away, the people who deal with the scene of a fatal road collision, the people who find the offender and stop them from committing more crimes against children, the people who have to find a way to tell parents that their child is very seriously injured, or worse. This is just a snapshot of an element of officer's and staff work but they do all this and an unfathomable amount more for you.

I hope that you will help buck the negative trend towards policing and take any opportunity, however small, to show your gratitude to all the emergency services who help keep you safe. Tell me about your experiences, shake the hand of the next officer, PCSO or police staff member you see, tell these hard working people that you appreciate them.

Wiltshire Police is not just a **good** force; it's a force with ambition, drive and determination.

Mike Veale  
**Chief Constable**  
**Wiltshire Police**