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Shabana Mahmood
Home Secretary

29th October 2025

Dear Home Secretary,

I am writing regarding the forthcoming appointment of the next Chief Inspector of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

First, I would like to pay tribute to Sir Andy Cooke QPM DL for his exemplary career in public service. Throughout his tenure, Sir Andy has shown great integrity and professionalism, and I will always be grateful for our shared commitment to improving public confidence in policing.

As Sir Andy steps down, this transition presents an important opportunity to build on his legacy while also refreshing the leadership of HMICFRS. The Inspectorate holds one of the most consequential and sensitive mandates in British public life: to provide independent and authoritative scrutiny of how police and fire services serve the public.

The Chief Inspector must not only command respect but also embody the independence and openness upon which public confidence depends. It is essential that this appointment reflects the growing public concern and interest in how our forces operate. The new Chief Inspector must inspire trust, show independence of thought and offer genuine scrutiny to each and every force.

In that context, I believe you have a great opportunity to show bold and decisive leadership and to appoint someone who represents the public rather than another chief constable or former inspector. There is precedent for this, and a candidate with proven experience of driving reform in large, public or private, organisations would be of significant value at this time of challenge and omnipresent change.

It is vital that this appointment does not simply perpetuate a closed circle of senior policing figures. At a time of heightened community tensions and growing public scepticism towards policing, the leadership of HMICFRS must visibly demonstrate independence both from the police it inspects and to avoid the perception of an old boys' club that recycles familiar faces and marks its own homework. Oversight must never appear self-selecting or self-referential.



Continuing to draw from a narrow field of candidates risks creating an impression of insularity and undermines the openness and transparency the public expects from such an important public body. A broader search would yield new ideas, enhance accountability and ensure the Inspectorate remains dynamic, outward-facing and reflective of the communities it serves.

Public confidence in policing is at a crossroads. Communities are looking for reassurance that the system of accountability is robust, transparent and independent of institutional loyalties. The next Chief Inspector must not only have professional acumen but also the ability to communicate fairness, impartiality and moral authority to a sceptical public. That is the only way to rebuild and sustain legitimacy in the long term and effectively hold our police and fire services to account.

With that in mind, could you please outline the process and procedure for the forthcoming appointment, including whether the Home Office intends to consider suitably qualified candidates from outside policing, and how you plan to ensure the selection process is fair and open to genuine competition?

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Matthews', with a long, sweeping underline.

Rupert Matthews
Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland