

Avon and Somerset Police Authority

Transition to police and crime commissioners

About this review

On 15 November 2012 the first elections outside London for police and crime commissioners (PCCs) will be held across England and Wales. PCCs will hold chief constables to account for policing in their force area on behalf of the public. New police and crime panels will scrutinise the actions and decisions of each PCC and make sure information is available for the public, enabling them to hold the PCC to account. Police authorities will cease to exist.

During early summer 2012,¹ Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) assessed how police authorities are preparing for this change. We examined their transition plans and visited every authority to ask:

- Is the police authority ensuring business as usual until November 2012?
- Has the police authority got a plan for managing the transition to PCCs?
- Are arrangements in place to secure a seamless handover to PCCs?
- Are other stakeholders properly involved in the transition process?

This report summarises what we found in Avon and Somerset. A thematic report, *Preparing for Police and Crime Commissioners*, is available from www.hmic.gov.uk

Findings

Summary

Avon and Somerset Police Authority has been planning for an elected PCC for some time. It has established a transition board in June 2011, to oversee the plans that they have put in place, and progress has been made. The authority is working closely with the constabulary on the transition arrangements, and the chief constable is one of the transition board members.

Police authority members are to be commended for their continuing commitment and professionalism.

¹ Meetings with police authorities took place between April and June.

The authority has conducted extensive engagement with key partners through a partners practitioners group, and is committed to ensuring that a business as usual approach takes place alongside the transition plans for PCCs. The chief executive of the police authority has been leading on national guidance to help shape the police and crime plans, and the authority is preparing handover ('legacy') reports so that any incoming PCC can see what the authority has achieved, and what remains to be done.

The elections for PCCs come at the same time as voting will take place for the first mayor of Bristol. The authority has built this extra dimension into its plans.

Ensuring business as usual until November 2012

The authority remains focused on delivering business as usual, and is continuing to make key decisions, for example: the constabulary's collaboration on firearms training (rather than choosing to put such decisions off until the PCC is in post). The way the authority maintains its governance and oversight functions of the force changed to a 'lead member' model in June. This allows a more dynamic decision-making process and provides options for the PCC to consider when deciding how to scrutinise the force in the future.

Plans for managing the transition to PCCs

Avon and Somerset Police Authority has a clear project plan for managing its transition arrangements. This is divided into different workstreams, each of which is driven by a member of the police authority. Regular transition board meetings take place, and the board membership includes the chief executive and chair of the authority as well as the chief constable. A register of all transition risks is reviewed at each transition board meeting.

Partners are informed of transition progress through the partners practitioners group. Police authority members work closely with the police area returning officer (PARO) for the elections and have set aside a small transition budget to cover any costs.

Arrangements to secure a seamless handover to PCCs

It is important that the incoming PCC is able to work effectively from day one. It will be for them to decide how they wish to run their office, hold the constabulary to account and engage with the public to identify local priorities. The new 'lead member' model for governance from June 2012, and handover ('legacy') reports for all the current police authority committees and working groups, will provide the PCC with options for how they might like to work, and other helpful information. Activities within the transition plan include supporting the PCC as they take up office in their first week, month, and 100 days.

How stakeholders are involved in the transition process

The police authority and transition team have engaged with all the community safety offices in each of the ten local authorities. The police authority has provided presentations to its partners at the strategic leaders and chief executive group, and formed a partners practitioners group so that they can continue to update the members of the transition arrangements and involve them in the plans. In the coming months the police authority is planning to work with key partners to produce a comprehensive police and crime strategic assessment. This will help shape the draft police and crime plan which the PCC will need to set out shortly after taking up office.

Bristol City Council is working closely with the police authority as the host for the police and crime panel arrangements. The police authority has a dedicated website for prospective PCCs, which contains candidate briefings that have been jointly developed with partners. The authority intends to maintain its presence at a number of events over the summer, in order to inform communities and raise awareness of the PCC.

Next steps

HMIC will continue to monitor the transition to PCCs, with a focus on the arrangements that will enable PCCs to work effectively from day one.