



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

## **Valuing the Police: Preparedness Inspection**

**Avon and Somerset Constabulary  
July 2011**

## Purpose of the review

The Police Service, along with all other parts of the public sector, is facing its biggest financial challenge in a generation. This could be seen either as an opportunity to innovate and refresh – or as a reason to continue as is and see services cut back.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has been heavily involved in monitoring the Service's reaction and preparedness for cutting crime while reducing costs. As part of this, in Spring 2011 we carried out an inspection of all 43 forces and authorities in England and Wales, to assess:

- how they are planning to meet the financial challenge; and
- what the impact will be on the service they provide to the public.

This report summarises the findings for Avon and Somerset Constabulary. A thematic report, *Adapting to Austerity*, which brings together findings from all 43 forces, is also available from [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk).

## Findings for Avon and Somerset Constabulary

### What is the financial challenge in Avon and Somerset?

Avon and Somerset Constabulary and Avon and Somerset Police Authority reported that they are facing a **£38.1m** cash reduction to their budget over the four years of the comprehensive spending review period (2011/12–2014/15). In real terms (ie when inflation is taken into account), this equates to 11% of their gross revenue expenditure.

### Are the force and authority prepared to meet this financial challenge?

The constabulary and authority clearly understood the scale of the challenge facing them, and have considered a full range of options in developing a plan to address it. This work was being delivered through a series of reviews, and formed part of their wider strategy to build an organisation fit for the future.

HMIC found a detailed plan in place for year one of the comprehensive spending review period (2011/12), helped by good programme management techniques, and clear oversight by both the constabulary and authority. Annual timescales and savings milestones were in place for the rest of the period. The next stage of the review process (anticipated in June 2011) will determine how these savings will be made.

## What will be the impact on the number of police officers and staff?

HMIC asked forces and authorities to provide data on proposed changes to their workforce between March 2010 and March 2015. However, Avon and Somerset Constabulary were unable to provide this level of detail for March 2015, as the following table shows.

	Police Officers	Police Staff	PCSO
31 March 2010 (actual)	3,302	1,872	430
31 March 2012 (proposed)	3,174	1,604	438

March 2010 figures have been used as the baseline, because most forces began a recruitment freeze in that year, and as a result workforce numbers started to fall.

The force and authority's plans for the workforce will continue to be refined as the change programme progresses.

## What will be the impact on service to the public?

The constabulary and authority have a clear vision for policing over the next four years, which prioritises local policing, visibility and service delivery to the public. They recognised that the changes they will have to make to meet the financial challenge will have an impact on service delivery, and were constantly monitoring this risk.

The constabulary was working with the National Policing Improvement Agency to understand how best to manage demand from the public and to make officers more available and efficient. Plans were in place to maximise the use of special constables and volunteers, and the constabulary and authority were exploring ways to provide a better service to the public by collaborating with other forces.

A joint authority and force communications strategy kept staff and the public informed of the potential changes.

## Does the force have targets to reduce crime and ASB?

The first job of the police is to reduce crime and keep the peace; and in 2010, Theresa May, the Home Secretary, stated that she expects forces and authorities to make financial cuts while still reducing crime and without damaging the front line.

Avon and Somerset's *Policing Plan* includes objectives to reduce crime and to ensure that anti-social behaviour (ASB) does not increase in the coming year.

