



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

**Valuing the Police:  
Preparedness Inspection**

**Bedfordshire Police  
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 Bedfordshire Police. 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 Bedfordshire Police

### What is the financial challenge in Bedfordshire?

Bedfordshire Police and Bedfordshire Police Authority reported that they are facing a **£19m** cash reduction to their budget over the four years of the comprehensive spending review period (2011/12–14/15). In real terms (ie when inflation is taken into account), this equates to 15% of their gross revenue expenditure.

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

The force and the authority understood the financial, operational and performance challenges of the comprehensive spending review (CSR) period. They were helped in this by a history of highly effective collaboration and successful delivery against efficiency plans.

Bedfordshire is a small force that has struggled with performance in recent years. The authority has now set ambitious objectives for the force, namely to meet the financial challenge and to raise the level of policing performance.

When HMIC inspected the force in March 2011 it was developing its CSR programme, building on an earlier change programme, the force and authority aimed to fight crime and protect the public.

The CSR programme comprised five workstreams including extended collaboration, the development of a new policing model and a review of support services (back office). While individual workstreams were generally progressing well, there was no overarching programme plan in place, although the force had recently appointed a project manager to address this.

Further collaboration with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Constabularies is at the heart of Bedfordshire's CSR programme. It was envisaged that savings from extended collaboration would deliver most of the savings that Bedfordshire needs to achieve for years three and four of the CSR period. While the detail was still being worked through there was a clear commitment on the part of the force and the authority to work collaboratively with Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire Constabularies across a range of areas, including protective services (for example, tackling major crime and serious organised crime), operational support (for example, roads policing and firearms) and organisational support (back office) functions.

### **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. Early estimates by Bedfordshire Police suggested overall reductions of 150 officers and 18 staff. As the level of detail for 2013/14 and 2014/15 was still being considered, figures were provided for March 2013, as the following table shows.

	<b>Police Officers</b>	<b>Police Staff</b>	<b>PCSO</b>
<b>31 March 2010 (actual)</b>	1,246	880	116
<b>31 March 2013 (proposed)</b>	1,152	790	128

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 force and authority are committed to maintaining both frontline services and the delivery of policing at a local level. Bedfordshire Police Authority carried out an innovative online public budget survey to get the views of where local communities felt savings should be made. The results showed that there was broad support for their plans and this consultation provided them with clear information on what the people of Bedfordshire want. Most people agreed that, if the police kept crime down and were there when needed, they were not concerned about how the force structured itself. As a result, the force and authority made a conscious decision to consult only with partners (such as local authorities) rather than the public on specific structural 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.

Bedfordshire's *Policing Plan* aims to reduce crime and tackle ASB in the coming year.

