

18 July 2013

Cambridgeshire Constabulary has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge, finds HMIC

Cambridgeshire Constabulary has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge. It has demonstrated strong performance with a greater reduction in crime than most other forces. The force has taken decisive steps to reduce its costs and is developing plans to achieve further savings by working jointly with neighbouring forces.

In a report published today, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has found:

Progress in making savings

- Cambridgeshire Constabulary has identified that it needs to save £16.5m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). The force has planned how it will save the £16.5m and therefore has no outstanding funding gap.
- This savings requirement is 12% of its overall budget, and is a much smaller proportionate reduction than that faced by most other forces.
- Cambridgeshire's position is not without challenge as it has a below average spend on policing per head of population compared with other forces in England and Wales, so it will be harder to drive out further savings.

Workforce changes and protecting the front line

- The force is reducing police officer numbers and holding vacancies. As a result, by the end of the spending review period, there will be 124 fewer police officers in Cambridgeshire Constabulary. This means the number of police officers is planned to reduce by 8% between March 2010 and March 2015, which is a smaller reduction than in most other forces.
- Cambridgeshire Constabulary is protecting frontline posts as it makes these cuts. This is commendable. Between March 2010 and March 2015, the proportion of police officers in frontline crime-fighting roles is planned to increase from 90% to 92%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.
- The force has also made some police staff redundant and not replaced others as they have left. By 2015 it is planned there will be 280 fewer police staff in Cambridgeshire Constabulary. The number of police staff will reduce by 26% between March 2010 and March 2015. This is a bigger reduction than that planned by most other forces.

Impact on the public

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 18%, which is more than the figure for England and Wales (13%).
- Victim satisfaction is 86.6%, which is higher than in most forces.

Future challenges

- Some of the forces planned savings depended on widening the collaboration with Hertfordshire Constabulary and Bedfordshire Police to include business support services (such as finance and human resources). This is now no longer going ahead. Consequently there was a degree of uncertainty at the time of the inspection as to the impact this would have on Cambridgeshire's longer term savings plans.
- The force has now started to develop its collaboration plans with Bedfordshire and there has been rapid progress. Understandably, there is still some work to do.

HM Inspector of Constabulary for the Eastern Region, Zoë Billingham, said:

“Cambridge Constabulary faces a smaller savings requirement than most other forces, but this is not without its challenge. It already has low policing costs and does not have the benefit of economies of scale available to larger forces.

“The force has made good progress in meeting the financial challenge to date. It has also demonstrated strong performance with a greater reduction in crime than most other forces.

“The force has undertaken significant change and restructuring to reduce its costs. With another round of savings due in 2015/16 the force's future change plans relied on savings through even wider collaboration with Bedfordshire Police and Hertfordshire Constabulary. This will now not proceed as originally planned.

“The force has started to develop its collaboration plans for making savings in business support services with Bedfordshire Police alone. There has been rapid progress, but understandably, there is still some work to do.

“HMIC will continue to monitor the force for the remainder of the spending review period.”

The full report for Cambridgeshire Constabulary, along with the national thematic review, can be found at www.hmic.gov.uk

Notes to Editors:

1. The thematic report 'Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge' can be found at www.hmic.gov.uk
2. Victim satisfaction for this force has a confidence interval of $\pm 1.4\%$
3. HMIC's July 2012 report 'Policing in austerity: One year on' and July 2011 report 'Adapting to Austerity' along with supporting materials can be found at www.hmic.gov.uk
4. In October 2010, the government announced that the central funding provided to the police service would reduce by 20% in the four years between March 2011 and March 2015.
5. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is an independent inspectorate, inspecting policing in the public interest, and rigorously examines the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces to tackle crime and terrorism, improve criminal justice and raise confidence. HMIC inspects all 43 police forces in England and Wales together with other major policing bodies.
6. For further information, HMIC's press office can be contacted during office hours from 8:30am – 5:30pm Monday – Friday on 0203 513 0600.
7. HMIC's out-of-hours press office line for urgent media enquiries is 07836 217 729.