



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Valuing the Police: Preparedness Inspection

**Devon and Cornwall 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 Devon and Cornwall Constabulary. A thematic report, *Adapting to Austerity*, which brings together findings from all 43 forces, is also available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

Findings for Devon and Cornwall Constabulary

What is the financial challenge in Devon and Cornwall?

Devon and Cornwall Constabulary and Devon and Cornwall Police Authority reported that they are facing a **£49.6m** 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 14% of their gross revenue expenditure.

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

The force and authority showed a clear understanding of the financial challenge facing them, and have considered a range of options in developing an ambitious change programme to address it. This comprises six workstreams, each with a named individual and committee to oversee it (an arrangement that reflects the force and authority's clear governance frameworks).

At the time of inspection, an overarching strategy was in place for the whole of the comprehensive spending review period. However, work to identify the savings that could be made at each stage was not yet complete (with £10.8m of savings still to be found), and the six workstreams were all at different stages of development. A number of key force and authority decisions and meetings were due to take place in Spring/early Summer 2011, including an assessment of how best to meet the remaining £10.8m saving gap.

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

Devon and Cornwall Constabulary planned to make the following changes to its workforce numbers.

	Police Officers	Police Staff	PCSO
31 March 2010 (actual)	3,556	2,071	363
31 March 2015 (proposed)	2,810	1,680	356

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 proposed figures shown for March 2015 were provided to HMIC by the force in June 2011.

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?

At the same time as reducing resources and introducing new ways of working, the force and authority planned to maintain and in some areas enhance performance; for instance, they intended to increase the number of officers visible to the public. The force has taken a leading role in bringing together local partners to consider the impact of reduced funding on the service they deliver to the public.

As part of a review of Enquiry Office Services during 2010, the force and authority carried out extensive consultation and community engagement to collect the views of the public. There is evidence that the feedback they received helped shape decisions about the number of Station Enquiry Offices and the service they provide to the public.

The authority has introduced innovative ways to engage with the public, and the focus of the change programme's communication strategy is on providing information to the public about the decisions on where savings would be made.

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.

Devon and Cornwall's *Policing Plan* includes targets to reduce violence with injury crimes and a target around ASB. It also states that the force will maintain its position as one of the ten forces across England and Wales with the lowest level of crime overall in the coming year.

