

18 July 2013

Dorset Police has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge, finds HMIC

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has found that Dorset Police has a clear understanding of the financial challenge and has well established and effective financial forecasting and management processes in place.

In a report published today, HMIC has found:

Progress in making savings

- Dorset Police has identified that it needs to save £22.5m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). The force has planned how it will save all of the £22.5m it needs by 2015.
- While, as a proportion of its overall budget (16%) this financial requirement is broadly in line with most other forces, Dorset Police still faces a challenge to deliver savings. This is because it already spends less on policing per head of population than most other forces, it has a lower number of staff so has a comparatively lower pay bill and the amount it spends on each officer and staff member is also lower than most other forces.
- The force therefore has less scope to make savings than some forces.

Workforce changes and protecting the front line

- The force is reducing police officer numbers by limiting recruitment and holding vacancies. As a result, by the end of the spending review period, it is planned that there will be 310 fewer police officers.
- There is strong evidence that Dorset Police is protecting frontline posts as it makes these cuts. Between March 2010 and March 2015, the proportion of police officers in frontline, crime-fighting roles is planned to increase from 89% to 97%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.
- The force has made a number of police staff redundant, used a voluntary severance scheme and not replaced vacancies as they arose (e.g. through retirements and resignations); and as a result, by the end of the spending review period, it is planned that there will be 281 fewer police staff. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 26% between March 2010 and March 2015; again this is a considerably greater reduction than that seen in most other forces. Dorset Police also plans to decrease the number of police community support officers (PCSOs) by 5%; which is a smaller reduction than most other forces.

Impact on the public

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 12%, which is broadly in line with the figure for England and Wales (13%).
- Victim satisfaction at 82.0% is lower than other forces.

Future challenges

- Dorset Police is cutting both police officer and police staff numbers by a considerably greater proportion than most other forces to make its savings, although in doing so has protected police officers in frontline roles.
- With significant loss of staff over the period of this spending review, future funding reductions will make it more difficult for Dorset Police to continue to protect frontline roles.

HM Inspector of Constabulary for the Wales and Western Region, Dru Sharpling, said:

“Dorset Police faces a smaller financial reduction than many other forces, it still has challenges in finding the savings it needs. It already spends less on policing, has fewer staff and lower costs per officer and staff member than other forces, so it has less scope to make savings.”

“The force has made a good start and has plans that will cut spending by over £22m by 2015. The force is already ahead of its target in making savings. However, this comes at the cost of some of the biggest reductions in police officer numbers in England and Wales. There is a concern that further funding reductions will lead to further staff cuts and the force will find it harder to maintain service delivery.”

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

The full report for Dorset Police, 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 $\pm 1.6\%$
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.