



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

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

**Dorset 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 Dorset 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 Dorset Police

### What is the financial challenge in Dorset?

Dorset Police and Dorset Police Authority reported that they are facing a **£18.1m** 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 11% of their gross revenue expenditure.

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

Dorset Police and Authority have already been focused for two years on reducing costs and re-engineering their business. Over that period, the force began a review of the expenditure across the whole organisation.

They understood the scale of the comprehensive spending review challenge facing them and have developed a detailed cost-reduction plan – overseen by chief officers – which identifies where and when savings are to be realised. The force's preparedness to meet its financial challenge has also been assessed by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) and the Office of Government and Commerce (OGC).

The force and authority clearly recognised that general savings and efficiencies alone would not be enough to address their funding shortfall, and were working to make the largest possible savings from within their estate and process management. While they were also reviewing staff and officer reductions, they worked on a firm principle of making savings from 'bricks before people'.

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

Dorset Police planned to make the following changes to its workforce numbers.

	Police Officers	Police Staff	PCSO
31 March 2010 (actual)	1,486	1,077	164
31 March 2015 (proposed)	1,324	748	162

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?

The force and authority have a clear vision for policing over the next four years and were focused on maintaining service delivery and protecting the public from harm. They were seeking to improve the way they work with local partners (such as the local authority), with the aim of being more effective at reducing crime and persuading the public to report anti-social behavior.

Neighbourhood policing remained a priority for the force, and the number of staff and police officers on Safer Neighbourhood Teams was expected to remain unchanged. The force was also set to adopt a new shift pattern, which will increase the number of police officers available to the public at any one time.

Dorset Police knows its communities well and, with the authority, has kept the public informed of their plan to meet the financial challenge. They have not, however, directly consulted with the public during the development of their plans for fear of raising concerns unnecessarily.

## 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.

Dorset's *Policing Plan* includes objectives to reduce crime, with a specific target to reduce most serious violence, and objectives around ASB in the coming year.

