

Durham Police Authority

Transition to police and crime commissioners

About this review

On 15 November 2012 the first elections outside London for police and crime commissioners (PCCs) will be held across England and Wales. PCCs will hold chief constables to account for policing in their force area on behalf of the public. New police and crime panels will scrutinise the actions and decisions of each PCC and make sure information is available for the public, enabling them to hold the PCC to account. Police authorities will cease to exist.

During early summer 2012,¹ Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) assessed how police authorities are preparing for this change. We examined their transition plans and visited every authority to ask:

- Is the police authority ensuring business as usual until November 2012?
- Has the police authority got a plan for managing the transition to PCCs?
- Are arrangements in place to secure a seamless handover to PCCs?
- Are other stakeholders properly involved in the transition process?

This report summarises what we found in Durham. A thematic report, *Preparing for Police and Crime Commissioners*, is available from www.hmic.gov.uk

Findings

Summary

Durham Police Authority has already put in place detailed plans for managing the handover to PCCs. Police authority members are to be commended for their continuing commitment and professionalism. These include making sure staff have the skills to support the new role and involving partners in key decisions.

The police authority remains fully committed to ensuring business as usual and has identified the key decisions that need to be made between now and November. It has already begun to develop some options for how the PCC will operate. Similarly, plans around the make-up of the police and crime panel are also still works in progress.

¹ Meetings with police authorities took place between April and June.

Ensuring business as usual until November 2012

The authority is committed to ensuring that business as usual is maintained until November. The committee cycle of meetings (which provides structure for how the authority monitors the force) will remain in place, with a strong focus on the force reducing crime and ASB, and on the continued delivery of service improvement and financial savings.

The authority has identified the key decisions that have to be made in the next few months. These include determining budget plans for the next financial year.

Plans for managing the transition to PCCs

Durham has a clear transition plan, which is being managed through an established transition board. This board includes representatives from the police authority, force and other key stakeholders, providing a good balance of knowledge, skills and experience. Partners have been kept informed through various (and well-attended) meetings and events.

Key risks to the transition plan have been identified and actions taken to mitigate these, again overseen by the transition board. A contingency fund has been set aside to ensure any costs associated with transition are properly identified and managed.

Arrangements to secure a seamless handover to PCCs

Durham Police Authority is developing an information pack for the incoming PCC. This will include details of the authority's current plans, strategies and budget, as well as those areas of business that will need to be progressed and resolved by the PCC.

Plans are also being developed for the PCC's early days in post. These include setting up meetings with key individuals and local leaders, which will help the new PCC to better understand the policing issues across the county.

The authority is also developing plans to ensure staff have the suitable skills in light of the PCC's likely needs. This is important to ensure the PCC is able to work effectively from day one. HMIC will follow the progress of this work through the summer. Plans for briefing prospective PCC candidates are transparent and are shared with staff to ensure a consistent approach.

How stakeholders are involved in the transition process

The police authority has placed a strong emphasis on engaging with other partners and the public throughout the transition process. (These partners include those who have an interest in reducing crime, community safety and the new policing landscape, criminal justice agencies and the voluntary sector.)

Next steps

HMIC will continue to monitor the transition to PCCs, with a focus on the arrangements that will enable PCCs to work effectively from day one.