



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Valuing the Police: Preparedness Inspection

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

Findings for Gwent Police

What is the financial challenge in Gwent?

Gwent Police and Gwent Police Authority reported that they are facing a **£24.1m** cash reduction to their budget over the four years of the comprehensive spending review period (2011/12 –2014/15). In real terms (ie when inflation is taken into account), this equates to 16% of their gross revenue expenditure.

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

The force and authority understood the financial challenge ahead of them, and have committed to meeting it. They have developed a clear financial plan which shows a measured approach to the cuts, and which details a range of budget reductions and efficiencies over the four years of the comprehensive spending review (CSR).

This strategy builds on Gwent Police's established 'Staying Ahead' programme, which has been making savings since 2007. This history of making efficiencies means that Gwent Police has been well placed to identify further low-risk savings to be delivered in 2011/12.

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

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

	Police Officers	Police Staff	PCSO
31 March 2010 (actual)	1,437	810	143
31 March 2015 (proposed)	1,270	674	146

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?

Gwent Police and Authority have made a firm commitment to protecting visible policing at a neighbourhood level. In the short-term, this means high levels of resources within neighbourhood policing have been maintained across the force, coupled with a focus on protecting the public from harm.

Effective consultation arrangements were in place to inform decisions over the next four years. A measured and intentionally low-key approach to communicating the results of the CSR has been taken. This includes providing key messages to community forums and partners on the size of the cuts and plans to address them.

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.

Gwent's *Policing Plan* includes objectives to reduce burglary, metal thefts and ASB over the coming year.

