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Hampshire Constabulary has made very good progress in meeting its financial challenge, finds HMIC

Hampshire Constabulary has made very good progress in meeting its financial challenge. The force has developed a detailed change programme which will allow it to reduce costs while continuing to fight crime.

In a report published today, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has found:

Progress in making savings

- Hampshire Constabulary has identified that it needs to save £54.2m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). The force has planned how it will save £49.6m, however it still has £4.5m to find.
- The force's savings requirement is 16% of its overall budget, which is a similar proportionate reduction to that faced by most other forces. The force still faces a difficult challenge because it spends less on policing than most other forces and has a low pay bill, so it has had to work hard to identify more efficiency in order to squeeze its costs down even further.

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 451 fewer police officers. This means the number of police officers is planned to reduce by 12% between March 2010 and March 2015; this is a similar reduction to most other forces.
- There is evidence that the force is successfully protecting frontline posts as it makes these cuts. This is commendable. Between March 2010 and March 2015, the proportion of police officers in frontline, crime-fighting roles is planned to increase from 87% to 95%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.
- The force has also made some police staff redundant and not replaced others as they have left (for example through retirements and resignations); and as a result by the end of the spending review period it is planned that there will be 358 fewer police staff. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 15% between March 2010 and March 2015; this is fewer than in most other forces.

Impact on the public

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) in the force fell by 18%. This is a good outcome and is considerably greater than the 13% reduction recorded across England and Wales.
- Victim satisfaction was at 83.4% which is slightly lower than the figure for England and Wales.

Future challenges

- The force has started to consider what savings it might need to make after March 2015 and is planning for up to 2017.
- Hampshire's response to the funding challenge to date is very strong. This means that the force will be in a sound position to be able to make the further savings required after March 2015, while maintaining its high level of service to the public.

HM Inspector of Constabulary for the Eastern Region, Zoë Billingham, said:

"Hampshire Constabulary has a more difficult financial challenge compared to many other forces as it is already an efficient and low cost force. It has responded very strongly to the challenges of the spending review: reconfiguring its workforce; embracing technology to support frontline officers and collaborating with other forces and local partners.

"The Constabulary has a strong track record in delivering savings and has managed its change plan and engaged its staff effectively. It plans to place 95% of its officers in frontline roles by March 2015, which is higher than most other forces.

"Crime has fallen in Hampshire at a greater rate than most other forces. The combination of robust planning, a good track record in delivering savings, a strong commitment to innovation and partnership working and high levels of crime reduction gives HMIC confidence that Hampshire has positioned itself well to manage further reductions.

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

The full report for Hampshire Constabulary, 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 $\pm 0.9\%$
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.