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

Humberside Police's change programme and savings plans have met the needs of the force to date and while some gaps exist in its future plans, the extent and use of the reserves is available to close the gap. The force is well on track to achieve the required savings. But the approach taken has not been enough to ensure improved and sustained performance.

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

Progress in making savings

- Humberside Police has identified that it needs to save £31.9m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). The force has planned how it will save £28.5m and it therefore still has £3.4m to find. However, the force has a number of initiatives it can implement to deliver additional savings and has built up reserves to help with any shortfall. The force has demonstrated a good track record for delivering savings, but while we have seen innovation in some areas, the force hasn't embraced the level of change seen elsewhere.
- As a proportion of its overall budget this savings requirement of 15% is lower than that of most other forces. However, HMIC considers that Humberside Police faces a particularly difficult challenge. This is because it has reduced its size and costs to a great extent already. The amount of money it spends on policing is lower than most other forces; it has a lower number of police officers; and the amount it spends on each officer is lower than most other forces. It does however spend a higher amount on staff than most other 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 plans to have 444 fewer police officers. This means the number of police officers is planned to reduce by 22% between March 2010 and March 2015; this is a greater reduction than in most other forces.
- Humberside Police is successfully protecting frontline posts as it makes these cuts. Between March 2010 and March 2015, the proportion of police officers in frontline crime-fighting is planned to increase from 88% to 92%. 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 (e.g. through retirements and resignations). As a result, by the end of the spending review period, it plans to have 168 fewer police staff. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 10% between March 2010 and March 2015; this is a smaller reduction than in most other forces. Humberside Police plans to reduce the number of police community support officers (PCSOs) by eight officers or 2%, which is a smaller reduction than in most other forces.

- However, the outstanding funding gap may mean that the force will need to make more workforce reductions than it is currently planning.

Impact on the public

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 17%, which is higher than the figure for England and Wales (13%). However, despite this reduction crimes per head of population remain higher than in most other forces.
- Victim satisfaction remains high at 85.9%, which is higher than other forces.

Future challenges

- Humberside Police has a good track record for achieving savings and has approached the savings review with some innovations. It still has £3.4m to find by March 2015 and the force has some options as to how this will be achieved. While the force is on track to meet their funding challenge the force has not embraced the levels of change or delivered the savings seen elsewhere.
- The new Chief Constable recognises that as the force prepares for future savings requirements it will need to undertake a more fundamental review of its structures and way staff work to achieve savings, while delivering the ambitions of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and sustained performance improvement.

HM Inspector of Constabulary for the Northern Region, Roger Baker, said:

“While the savings requirement is smaller than for other forces, Humberside Police still faces a difficult challenge. The amount of money it receives is lower than in most other forces and its costs are already low.

“Humberside Police has specific plans to deliver much of its savings requirement but has an outstanding gap of £3.4m to find by March 2015. The force has options to close this gap including the use of reserves. While we have seen some innovation in Humberside’s approach, the force hasn’t embraced the level of change or achieved the savings seen elsewhere, and the force still has relatively high crime rates compared to other forces’ areas.

“HMIC supports the new Chief Constable in her development and delivery of a clear vision for the structure, style and direction of the force over the next five years, which will achieve savings and deliver performance improvement.

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

The full report for Humberside 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 $\pm 1.2\%$
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.