

Kent 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 Kent. A thematic report, *Preparing for Police and Crime Commissioners*, is available from www.hmic.gov.uk

Findings

Summary

Kent Police Authority has already put in place sound plans for managing the handover to PCCs. These include ensuring partners (for example local authorities and criminal justice representatives) are involved in the transition and making the public aware of what the changes will mean to them.

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. The authority has already developed options for how the PCC might hold the force to account under the new arrangements. Options for how the PCC might operate in practical terms from day one are at a much earlier stage of development.

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

Police authority members are to be commended for their continuing commitment and professionalism.

Ensuring business as usual until November 2012

Police authority members are fully committed to ensuring that business as usual is maintained until November. This will be done through the existing internal committee structure and level of oversight, up to the handover to the PCC. They are to be commended for this, particularly as it has involved taking on additional responsibilities as a result of some members leaving the authority in recent months.

Key decisions that have to be made in the next few months have been clearly identified. These include decisions relating to the buildings owned by the authority as well as those related to the review of a new policing model introduced in Kent in November 2011.

Plans for managing the transition to PCCs

Kent Police Authority has a clear transition plan which is being managed through a working group, chaired by the chief executive. The force and authority are working closely together to take forward the transition plan; for example with a secondment from the force to the authority secretariat specifically to assist with transition work.

Partners have been kept well informed through a separate strategic transition board, on which force representatives also sit. This board is used for sharing information and consulting on important decisions. Key risks have been identified with evidence of action taken to mitigate these. Clear links have been made between the risks and how these might affect the handover process.

Arrangements to secure a seamless handover to PCCs

It is important that the incoming PCC is able to work effectively from day one. It will be for them to decide how they wish to run their office, hold the force to account and engage with the public to identify local priorities.

A range of options have been developed for the incoming PCC to consider in relation to how they might hold the force to account. These options have been discussed with the force and with partners. Options for how governance and day-to-day decision making might work are being developed, but this is still at an early stage. Plans for briefing prospective PCC candidates have been developed and shared with staff in order to ensure a consistent approach.

HMIC will follow the progress of this work through the summer.

How stakeholders are involved in the transition process

Kent Police Authority has developed a communication plan for transition that places a strong emphasis on engaging with other partners. This includes those who have an interest in crime, community safety and the new policing landscape such as local authorities, 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.