



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Valuing the Police: Preparedness Inspection

**Kent 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 Kent 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 Kent Police

What is the financial challenge in Kent?

Kent Police and Kent Police Authority reported that they are facing a **£44.6m** cash reduction to their budget over the four years of the comprehensive spending review period (2011/12–14/15). In real terms (ie when inflation is taken into account), this equates to 12% of their gross revenue expenditure.

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

The force and authority had already been planning how to make savings before the comprehensive spending review announcement in the Autumn 2010. As a result, they understood the financial and organisational challenge ahead. While their funding gap is £44.6m, they aim to make £50m of savings, in order to provide a financial cushion against unexpected costs.

The force and authority work closely together and have applied a considered, thoughtful and evidence-based approach to the development of a new operational policing model, which is designed to prioritise neighbourhood policing. There has been a comprehensive review of the public's demand for policing services, with a view to matching staffing levels with that demand and increasing police officer availability at key times. The delivery of protective services (the police response to the most serious crimes and threats, eg tackling serious and organised crime) will be in collaboration with Essex Police. Although the force plans an overall reduction in police officer numbers, the reconfiguration of the policing model will increase the number of police officer posts in neighbourhood policing by more than 450, while at the same time making the role of these officers more comprehensive. Plans to reconfigure the back office support services were in development.

Senior officers used programme management techniques to assess progress. While the plans were not yet finalised at the time of inspection, HMIC is confident that the force and authority will deliver against their plans. This is because of the evidence-based approach that has been taken, the competence of the team overseeing delivery, and the force's good track record in delivering efficiencies, for example, through collaboration.

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

Kent have planned that their workforce will change as follows:

	Police Officers	Police Staff	PCSO
31 March 2010 (actual)	3,787	2,673	387
31 March 2015 (proposed)	3,274	1,858	364

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.

What will be the impact on service to the public?

The force and authority were engaging with their local communities about the proposed changes and the cuts to funding. Public feedback had influenced their targets. They also assessed demand from the public in order to inform their new operational model and were reviewing shift patterns to make them more efficient.

The new policing model was not in place at the time of inspection so it was not possible to assess the impact, if any, to the service the public receives. However, HMIC has concluded that the force and authority are taking the appropriate steps to safeguard service delivery.

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.

Kent's *Policing Plan* includes targets to reduce crime and objectives around ASB in the coming year.

