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

South Wales Police responded early in the spending review period with a comprehensive change programme which reduced costs and restructured the organisation to better fight crime. Good progress has been made by the force, and the majority of savings required have already been delivered.

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

Progress in making savings

- South Wales Police has identified that it needs to save £33.6m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). The force has planned how it will save £33.5m of the £33.6m and it needs to find a further £0.1m of savings. The force is predicting that it will save over £1m more than it needs to this year to achieve a balanced budget by 2015.
- As a proportion of its overall budget (12%) this savings requirement is less than that of most other forces - although the force faces a moderate challenge because the amount of money it receives is comparatively high given the size of the population in South Wales. However, it has more officers per head of population than most other forces and so a comparatively high pay bill. The amount it spends on each officer and staff member is also higher than most other forces.

Workforce changes and protecting the front line

- South Wales Police has reduced police officer numbers by requiring police officers to retire as soon as they have completed their full 30 years pensionable service, using medical retirements where appropriate and limiting recruitment. As a result, by the end of the spending review period, it is planned that there will be 303 fewer police officers in South Wales. This means the number of police officers in South Wales will reduce by 10% between March 2010 and March 2015 which is a similar reduction to that required by most other forces.
- South Wales Police did not provide HMIC with planned numbers of frontline police officers for 2014/2015. At the time of the inspection, the detail was still being developed. Between March 2010 and March 2013, the proportion of police officers in frontline crime-fighting roles decreased from 89% to 87%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 91%. However, we saw evidence of the force's commitment to visible local policing.
- 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, there will be 245 fewer police staff in South Wales Police. This means the number of police staff will reduce by 14% between March 2010 and March 2015; this is a smaller reduction than in most other forces. The force is receiving additional funding from the Welsh Government to increase the number of

community support officers (CSO) by 171. This is an increase of 51% when most other forces are cutting CSO numbers.

Impact on the public

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 10% in South Wales, which is a smaller reduction than the figure for England and Wales (13%).
- Victim satisfaction remains high at 86.2%– this is higher than other forces.

Future challenges

- Although savings plans still show a small funding gap at the end of this spending review period, the force anticipates exceeding its targets for savings in 2013/14.
- The force has good leadership capability and capacity to face future challenges.

HM Inspector of Constabulary for the Wales and Western Region, Dru Sharpling, said:

“South Wales Police faces a smaller financial challenge compared to other forces but it polices a complex environment. Policing the capital city of Wales presents particular challenges.

“The force is making good progress towards delivering its savings requirement. It has already saved 72% of the total savings needed, largely through restructuring and reducing the size of its workforce. South Wales Police has used technology well to support the efficiency of frontline officers and approaches to change through innovation and strong staff engagement.

“We are satisfied that the force is making savings without reducing the service to the public and is putting itself in a strong position to manage future changes in funding.

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

The full report for South Wales 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 $\pm 1.0\%$
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.