



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Valuing the Police: Preparedness Inspection

**South Wales 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 South Wales 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 South Wales Police

What is the financial challenge in South Wales?

South Wales Police and South Wales Police Authority reported that they are facing a **£31.5m** cash reduction to their budget over the four years of the comprehensive spending review period (2011/12–2014/15). In real terms (ie when inflation is taken into account), this equates to 10% of their gross revenue expenditure.

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

The force and authority had already been working on a major change programme for the last two years. They clearly understood the scale of the challenge facing them, and have considered a full range of options in developing a detailed and well-costed plan to address it.

The force intended to make savings by using a combination of redesigning their business, and making processes more efficient. Their plan included a reduction in police officer and police staff numbers, and changes to shift working.

The force and authority estimated that the measures they have outlined in the plan will more than address the funding gap. They were also considering collaborating with other Welsh forces, in order to achieve economies of scale (although their plan did not directly rely on savings from this method).

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

South Wales Police planned to make the following changes to its workforce numbers.

	Police Officers	Police Staff	PCSO
31 March 2010 (actual)	3,148	1,810	335
31 March 2015 (proposed)	2,753	1,590	325

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.

The force and authority's plans for the workforce will continue to be refined as the change programme progresses.

What will be the impact on service to the public?

The force and authority have a clear vision for policing South Wales over the next four years, which is: 'To be the best at understanding and responding to our communities' needs.' The authority was resolute in its view that performance must be improved or maintained throughout challenging financial circumstances. The force aimed to minimise the impact of the cuts on the public and stakeholders, and has put in place a comprehensive strategy to explain the implications of the changes to their local communities.

They understood how each of their chosen methods of making financial cuts would affect service delivery over the four-year period. Local public consultation has taken place and there was evidence that this has influenced the content of the plan.

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.

South Wales' *Policing Plan* includes objectives around ASB and to reduce crime in the coming year.

