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Suffolk Constabulary has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge finds HMIC

Suffolk Constabulary has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge. It made an early start in preparing for the spending cuts and it has a well developed change programme, strong governance and has embraced collaboration achieving considerable savings.

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

Progress in making savings

- Suffolk Constabulary has identified that it needs to save £17.3m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). The force has planned how it will save all of this amount.
- This savings requirement is 14% of overall expenditure, which is a smaller proportion than most other forces. However, Suffolk's position is not without challenge, as it is a low cost force, spending less on policing than most other forces and having fewer police officers. This limits its opportunities to make savings.
- Suffolk Constabulary is also a small force, and so has fewer opportunities than larger forces to find the economies of scale.

Workforce changes and protecting the front line

- The force is reducing police officer numbers through not replacing people when they leave. As a result, by the end of the spending review period, there will be 46 fewer police officers in Suffolk. This means the number of police officers in the county is planned to reduce by 4% between March 2010 and March 2015, which is a much smaller reduction than in most other forces.
- Suffolk Constabulary is protecting frontline posts as it makes these cuts. This is commendable. Between March 2010 and March 2015, the proportion of police officers in frontline crime-fighting roles is planned to increase from 91% to 93%. 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. The number of police staff is planned to reduce by 166 or 17% between March 2010 and March 2015 which is more than in most other forces. The force plans to decrease the number of police community support officers (PCSOs) by 2%; this is a smaller reduction than in most other forces.

Impact on the public

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 14% in Suffolk. This is broadly in line with the figure for England and Wales (13%).
- Victim satisfaction remains high at 86.0%.

Future challenges

- The extensive collaboration arrangements with Norfolk Constabulary are helping both forces to find savings and to add capacity. The force estimates that by 2015 savings from collaboration will contribute to 49% of its total savings requirement. This is commendable.
- The force is on target to deliver the savings required by 2015 and has already started to assess and plan for future savings beyond 2015.

HM Inspector of Constabulary for the Eastern Region, Zoë Billingham, said:

“Suffolk Constabulary has made a good start in meeting its financial challenge and has already made three quarters of the £17.3m total savings it needs to find by 2015. The force has developed a strong and effective change programme which will enable Suffolk to meet its financial challenge while keeping a sound focus on reducing crime and keeping its communities safe.

“Through its exemplary work with Norfolk Constabulary, Suffolk has embraced collaboration. The two forces are delivering a wide range of operational policing and support services together. They have achieved excellent efficiencies in doing so.

“Crime continues to fall in Suffolk and overall crime rates are lower than in other forces.

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

The full report for Suffolk Constabulary, 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 $\pm 1.9\%$
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.