



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Suffolk Constabulary's response to the funding challenge

July 2013

Contents

Suffolk Constabulary: Executive summary	3
The challenge	5
Progress in making savings: Years 1–2	5
Plans for Years 3–4	5
Looking beyond the current spending review	5
The scale of the challenge in Suffolk	5
Demand	6
How difficult is the challenge?	6
Response to the challenge	7
Changes to workforce numbers	7
Changes to the proportion of workforce on the front line	7
Collaboration	9
Managing change	10
How is the force engaging police officers, PCSOs and staff in the change programme?	10
How effective has the response been?	10
Impact of the changes on the public	11
Visibility	11
Calls for service	12
Crime	12
Victim satisfaction surveys	13
Changes to how the public can access services	13
Conclusion	14

Suffolk Constabulary: Executive summary

Suffolk Constabulary's savings requirement is smaller than that of most other forces. However, as a small low cost force, with little room for manoeuvre in terms of identifying efficiencies, closing the funding gap is not without its challenges.

The force 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.

Suffolk has embraced collaboration¹ and has been able to achieve considerable savings. Working successfully with neighbouring Norfolk Constabulary to jointly deliver a wide range of operational policing and support services, the forces have achieved excellent efficiencies while limiting the impact of funding reductions on service delivery.

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

Financial challenge

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).

This savings requirement is 14% of overall expenditure and is smaller 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. In addition, Suffolk Constabulary is also a small force and there are fewer opportunities to find the economies of scale from which larger forces benefit.

Progress in making savings

Suffolk Constabulary has planned how to save £17.3m. It has no outstanding gap.

Changes to the workforce

All forces spend most of their money on staff costs (such as wages and overtime), and so have focused on reducing this expenditure in order to cut costs.² Suffolk Constabulary is no exception.

1 HMIC defines collaboration as "all activity where two or more parties work together to achieve a common goal, which includes inter force activity and collaboration with the public and private sectors, including outsourcing and business partnering".

2 See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

The force is reducing police officer numbers through people leaving and retirement. To reduce numbers more quickly, the force used an approach of requiring officers to retire at the end of their 30 years pensionable service (in July 2012 the Police Authority revoked the Chief Constable's authority to continue this approach). The force had stopped recruitment but has now started to bring in new officers. 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 2010³ 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. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 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%; which is a smaller reduction than in most other forces.

Impact on the public

HMIC expects forces to make savings without damaging the service provided to the public. We monitor whether they are achieving this by examining crime rates and the results of the user satisfaction surveys which all forces conduct.

Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime⁴ (excluding fraud) fell by 14% in Suffolk. This is broadly in line with the figure for England and Wales at 13%. Victim satisfaction remains high at 86.0%.⁵

This performance indicates that Suffolk Constabulary has been able to make savings without a significant impact on the service it provides to the public.

Future challenges

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 with strong governance and monitoring. 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 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.

3 We use 2010 as our baseline as many forces started to make staff reductions in anticipation of the spending review.

4 Crime excluding fraud, as per the new crime classifications released in July 2013 by the Office for National Statistics.

5 ± 1.9%.

The challenge

Over the four years of the spending review Suffolk Constabulary has identified that it needs to find savings of £17.3m. This is 14% of its total expenditure⁶ (which in 2012/13 was £126.8m). The average amount to be saved by forces across England and Wales is 17%.

Progress in making savings: Years 1–2

The force successfully made 73% (£12.6m) of the total savings required by March 2015 in the first two years of the spending review period. It achieved this by:

- setting out a detailed plan to meet the required savings;
- not recruiting any new police officers;
- reducing the number of police staff it employs;
- reviewing its delivery model for local policing; and
- extensive collaboration arrangements with neighbouring Norfolk Constabulary

Plans for Years 3–4

The force has plans in place to achieve further savings of £3.7m in 2013/14, and another £1m in 2014/15. This means there will not be a funding gap.

Looking beyond the current spending review

Suffolk Constabulary has started to consider what savings it might need to make after March 2015. The force's medium-term financial plan looks further forward to 2016/2017 and the force has started to assess the scale and impact on service of further budget cuts beyond 2015.

The scale of the challenge in Suffolk

Although as a proportion of its overall spending, the savings requirement of 14% is less than the average for England and Wales, Suffolk Constabulary still faces a challenge because:

- it already spends less on policing per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales;
- it has fewer police officers per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales;

⁶ Based on a baseline gross expenditure in 2010/11.

- the cost of police officers per head of population is less than most other forces in England and Wales; and
- it spends more on PCSOs and police staff per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales.

Demand

Forces face different levels of demand for the service they provide to the public. This section looks at three of the key indicators of demand to provide an overall impression of the challenges each force faces:

- the number of calls the force receives from the public;
- the number of crimes the force deals with; and
- the number of prosecutions (suspects charged with offences) the force brings.

12 months to March 2013	Suffolk Constabulary	England and Wales
Emergency and priority calls per 1,000 population	111	134
Victim-based crime per 1,000 population	46.7	54.5
Prosecutions (charges) per 1,000 population	8.7	10.2

This table shows that, in 2012/13, Suffolk Constabulary received fewer emergency and priority calls from the public compared to other forces. It deals with fewer crimes per head of population than other forces and supports fewer prosecutions than elsewhere.

How difficult is the challenge?

Although Suffolk Constabulary has a smaller savings requirement than other force, it still faces a moderate challenge. It is a small force, it does not have the economies of scale of larger forces, it already spends less on policing; and with low staff and low non-pay costs it will be harder to achieve further savings.

Response to the challenge

Over 80% of a police budget (on average) is spent on staff costs.⁷ It is therefore not surprising that forces across England and Wales, plan to achieve much of their savings by reducing the number of police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs) and police staff employed.

Suffolk Constabulary is no exception. It made an early start on this in 2010 when it reduced the number of police staff and officers followed by a freeze on recruitment. The force plans to make 80% of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is higher than most other forces, showing the force might not have made as much progress as some forces in bearing down on non-staff costs such as the costs of goods and services.

Changes to workforce numbers

The following table shows the force's planned changes to workforce numbers over the spending review period, and compares these to the change for England and Wales⁸.

	31 March 2010 (baseline)	31 March 2015	Change	Suffolk change %	Change for England and Wales %
Police Officers	1,246	1,200	-46	-4%	-11%
Police Staff	971	805	-166	-17%	-16%
PCSOs	173	169	-4	-2%	-17%
Total	2,390	2,174	-216	-9%	-13%
Specials	328	350	+22	+7%	+60%

Overall, the table shows that Suffolk Constabulary plans to lose considerably fewer police officers and PCSOs than in other forces; police staff numbers are reducing broadly in line with most other forces.

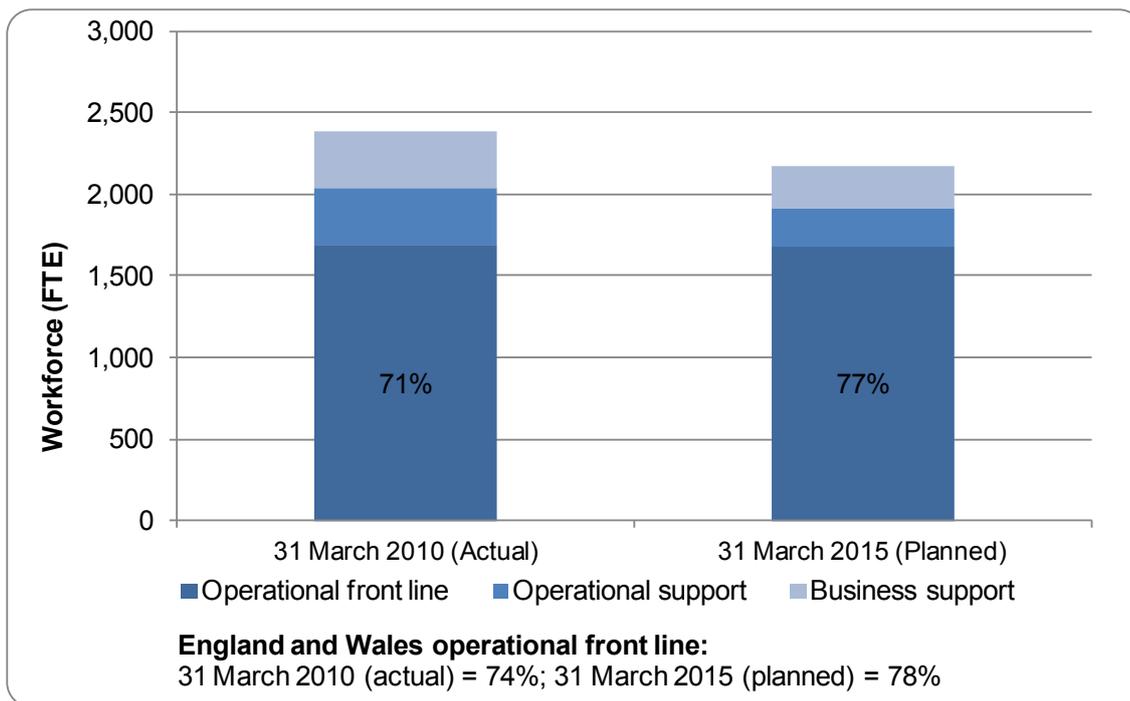
Changes to the proportion of workforce on the front line

HMIC defines the people who work on the police front line as: *“those who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law”*. It is important that as forces reconfigure their structures and reduce workforce **numbers**, they focus on maintaining (or if possible increasing) the **proportion** of people in these crime-fighting roles.

⁷ See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

⁸ Workforce figures for March 2010 show the actual number of people working for the force in permanent posts on the 31 March in that year. People on long-term absences (such as maternity leave) are included in these 'actual' figures, but vacant posts are not. Workforce projections for March 2015 are for budgeted posts, so the actual number of people who will be working for the force at that point in reality may be different, because some posts will be vacant or filled by temporary staff. Forces' projections may also exclude people who will be on long-term absences. The difference between actual workforce numbers and projected numbers should therefore be taken as an approximate expected change.

The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile in Suffolk Constabulary.⁹

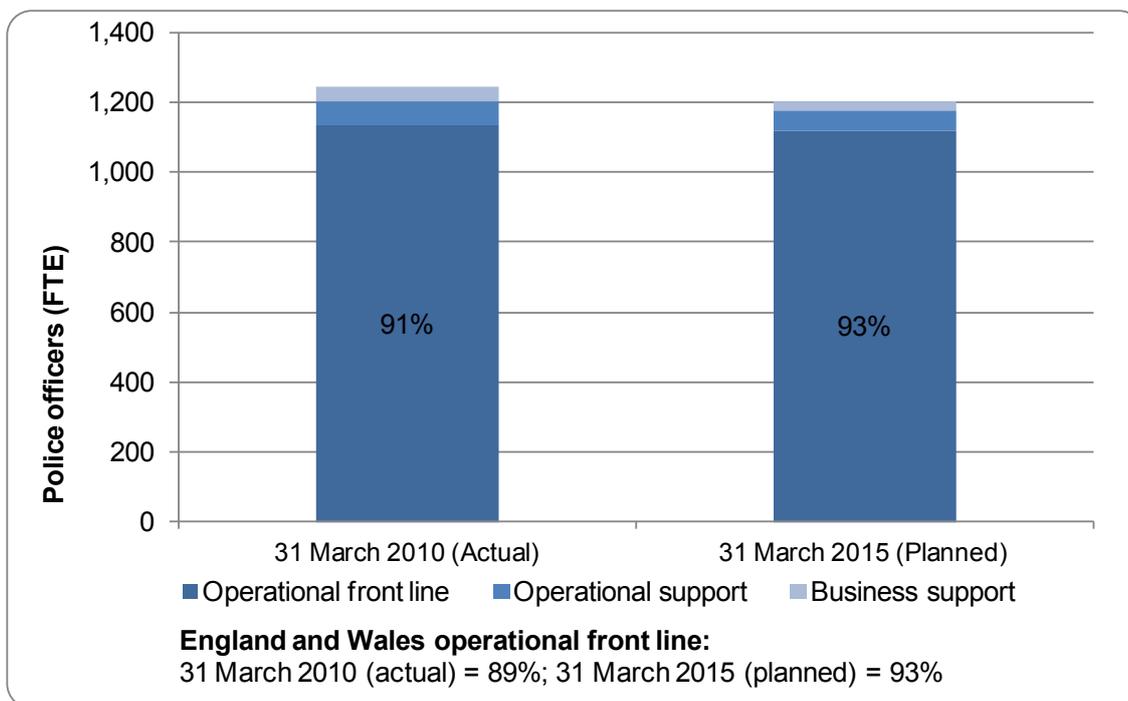


The **number** of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. the force’s total workforce) working on Suffolk Constabulary’s front line is planned to remain almost the same between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 1,685 to 1,680).

Over the same period, the **proportion** of Suffolk Constabulary’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is planned to increase from 71% to 77%. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74% to 78%.

The **number** of Suffolk’s police officers in front line roles will reduce by 1% from 1,133 in March 2010 to 1,121 in March 2015, as the chart on the next page shows. The **proportion** of Suffolk’s police officers on the front line is planned to increase from 91% to 93%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.

⁹ From 2010 Gwent, the Metropolitan Police Service, Wiltshire and North Wales police forces chose to code those officers and staff who are on long-term absence from duty due to maternity/paternity leave, career break, full-time education or suspension, and those on long-term leave, to their normal working role. This has the effect of inflating their workforce and frontline figures by up to 1% compared to other forces.



Collaboration

HMIC monitors forces' progress on collaboration because it offers the opportunity to deliver efficient, effective policing and help achieve savings.

Suffolk Constabulary is working extremely well with Norfolk Constabulary. The two forces have been working together since 2009, in one of the earliest police collaborations in the country and it remains exemplary. The Police and Crime Commissioner, elected in November 2012, is playing a strong role in the success of the collaboration.

The extensive programme of collaboration is already delivering significant savings and adding resilience. Collaborating units include major crime, professional standards, human resources and finance. Suffolk Constabulary continues to explore scope for wider collaboration with Norfolk and places the force in a strong position to minimise the impact of further budget cuts on policing services in the county.

The force has also entered into wider collaboration with its partners across the eastern region to form a unit to target those involved in serious and organised crime.

Largely as a result of the collaboration with Norfolk, in 2014/15 the force expects to spend 31% of its total expenditure on collaboration, which is considerably higher than the 11% figure for England and Wales. Overall, collaboration is expected to contribute to 49% of the forces savings requirement, which is considerably higher than the 7% figure for England and Wales.

Managing change

Reductions in police budgets have inevitably led to a shrinking workforce. HMIC expects forces also to have an eye within their change programmes on the longer term transformation which can help maintain or improve the service they offer to the public and prepare for future funding reductions.

The joint collaboration programme between Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies has become the force's change programme. The force is achieving its savings by reducing its workforce through collaboration and managing its estate better. The joint change programme is working well and is well managed.

The two forces are actively looking at the cost and usage of police buildings, and developing an Estates Management Strategy to make the best use of both forces' buildings. They are also exploring opportunities for sharing buildings with other public sector partners.

Suffolk Constabulary has recognised that the change required to meet future funding challenges offers the opportunity to transform the way the force operates. It has recently set up a continuous improvement board in order to better respond to the challenge and improve leadership and performance.

How is the force engaging police officers, PCSOs and staff in the change programme?

HMIC found that staff understood the need for change and are aware of the force's response to meeting the funding gap. Staff associations have been consulted and informed appropriately. Although staff directly effected by change are engaged and consulted those HMIC spoke with felt informed rather than involved in the development of those plans.

The force has not undertaken a staff survey since 2009.

Some police staff told us they feel under valued especially those concerned about the impact of work to align processes within collaborated units.

Engagement and visible leadership from the chief officer team has improved since the appointment of the new chief constable, who has agreed to a new staff post with responsibility for internal communication. A joint intranet site aimed at staff in collaborated posts is currently being developed.

As the force continues to progress collaboration and change it should consider how best to engage and communicate with staff on the challenges that lie ahead.

How effective has the response been?

Suffolk Constabulary has made very good progress in meeting its financial challenge.

Impact of the changes on the public

The challenge for forces is not just to save money and reduce their workforce numbers, but to ensure the choices they make in deciding how to achieve this do not have a negative impact on the service they provide to their communities. HMIC therefore looked for evidence that the force had kept a consideration of the effect on the public at the heart of their choices.

Visibility

The work done by police officers and staff in visible roles (such as officers who respond to 999 calls, deal with serious road traffic collisions or patrol in neighbourhoods) represents only a part of the policing picture. Chief constables need to allocate resources to many other functions in order to protect the public, such as counter terrorism, serious and organised crime, and child protection (to name just three).

That being said, research shows that the public value seeing visible police officers on patrol in the streets, and that those who see police in uniform at least once a week are more likely to have confidence in their local force.¹⁰ HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the force had affected the visibility of the police on the streets of Suffolk.

In March 2013, Suffolk Constabulary allocated 62% of its police officers to visible roles. This is two percentage points lower than it allocated in 2010, but is still higher than the figure for most other forces (which was 54% across England and Wales).

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, Suffolk Constabulary allocates 66% to visible roles. This is three percentage points lower than it allocated in 2010 but also remains higher than the 59% figure for England and Wales.

HMIC conducted a survey¹¹ of the public across England and Wales to assess whether the public had noticed any difference in the way their area is being policed. Of those people surveyed in Suffolk, 12%¹² said that they have seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago; this is broadly in line with the 13% average across all survey respondents in England and Wales.

Of those people surveyed, 70%¹³ said they felt either as safe or safer in the areas where they live compared with two years ago. This is broadly in line with the figure for most other forces (which is 75%).

10 See *Demanding Times*, HMIC, London, 2011. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

11 A YouGov survey was carried out during a four-week period during March 2013. Satisfaction and confidence surveys are also carried out at a national level by the Crime Survey of England and Wales. These use larger sample sizes and are carried out quarterly over a rolling-year period. Some forces also carry out their own surveys of the general public. More information can be found at www.crimesurvey.co.uk, www.hmic.gov.uk or from force websites.

12 ± 5%

13 ± 5%

Calls for service

HMIC examined whether police forces were taking longer to respond to calls for help, as a result of its workforce reductions and other changes designed to save money. Forces are not required to set response times or targets and are free to determine their own arrangements for monitoring attendance to calls so information between forces is not comparable.

In the three years from 2010¹⁴, Suffolk Constabulary had maintained the same target response time of attendance within 15 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' (also known as grade 1) and within 60 minutes for calls classed as 'priority' (also known as grade 2).

The Constabulary has met its target response time for 'emergency' calls 91% of the time in both 2010/11 and in 2011/12 and 90% of the time in 2012/13. For 'priority' calls, it met the target 96% of the time in 2010/11, 95% of the time in 2011/12 and 94% of the time in 2012/2013.

Suffolk Constabulary has maintained the level of response performance over the spending review.

Crime

In 2010 the Home Secretary, Theresa May, set a clear priority for the police service to reduce crime.

During the first two years of the spending review Suffolk Constabulary reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 14%, compared to 13% in England and Wales. Victim-based crime (that is, crimes where there is a direct victim – an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 15% compared with 12% in England and Wales.

By looking at how many crimes occur per head of population, we can see how safe it is for the public in that police area. The table below shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Suffolk (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to March 2013	Rate per 1,000 population in Suffolk	England and Wales rate per 1,000 population
Crimes (excluding fraud)	53.4	61.4
Victim based crime	46.7	54.5
Burglary	6.7	8.2
Violence against the person	9.9	10.6
Anti-social behaviour incidents	31.8	40.7

It is important that crimes are effectively investigated and the perpetrator identified and brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to say who has committed a crime, it can be described as detected.

¹⁴ We use 2010/11 as a baseline to show response times prior to the spending review period.

Suffolk Constabulary's sanction detection¹⁵ rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2013 is 25.4%. This is below the England and Wales sanction detection rate of 27.0%.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in Suffolk. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to www.hmic.gov.uk/crime-and-policing-comparator.

Victim satisfaction surveys

An important measure of the impact of changes to service delivery for the public is how satisfied victims are with the overall service they receive when they seek police assistance.

In the 12 months to March 2013, 86.0%¹⁶ of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Suffolk Constabulary. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales figure of 84.6%.¹⁷

Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. Suffolk Constabulary is planning to close five front counters¹⁸ and open one police station between 2010 and 2015. However, it is also planning to open five shared access points¹⁹ (some of which are operated in conjunction with the fire service to reduce costs).

15 A sanction detection is a 'solved crime' where a suspect has been identified and notified as being responsible for committing that crime and what the full implications of this are, and has received an official sanction. Official sanctions include charges, cautions, penalty notices, offences taken into consideration (TICs) and cannabis warnings.

16 \pm 1.9%.

17 \pm 0.2%.

18 A police building open to the general public to obtain face-to-face access to police services.

19 A non-police building open to the general public to obtain face-to-face access to police services. For example, shared facilities with council services (e.g. libraries or offices), the fire service or other partners.

Conclusion

Suffolk Constabulary understands the scale of the current financial challenges and has started to look ahead beyond 2015 to assess the likely future cuts in budgets. It has in place detailed plans designed to deliver the required savings by the end of this current spending review.

The force has made a good start and already delivered nearly three quarters of the savings needed in the first two years of this period.

The extensive and mature collaborative arrangements with Norfolk Constabulary have made a significant contribution to Suffolk's ability to deliver these savings at the same time as maintaining good performance. Crime continues to fall and satisfaction with policing in the county remains high. The collaboration also means that the force is in a better position to meet future challenges.

Throughout the spending review Suffolk has maintained a focus on crime reduction and victim satisfaction, which is commendable.

The force has well developed plans to continue to deliver a sound service to the public of Suffolk. This has put it in a good position to face further budget reductions after March 2015

In October 2010, the Government announced that central funding to the Police Service in England and Wales would reduce by 20% in the four years between March 2011 and March 2015.

HMIC's Valuing the Police Programme has tracked how forces are planning to make savings to meet this budget demand each year since summer 2011. This report identifies what we found in this third year.

Our inspection focused on three questions:

1. How is the force responding to the budget reduction?
2. What is the impact for the workforce and the public?
3. How is the force managing current and future risks?

To answer these questions, we collected data and plans from forces, surveyed the public to see if they had noticed any changes in the service they receive from the police as a result of the cuts, and conducted in-force inspections. We also interviewed the Chief Constable, Police and Crime Commissioner and the chief officer leads for finance, change, human resources and performance in each force, and held focus groups with staff and other officers.

National findings and patterns across all 43 forces are given in our thematic report, *Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge*, which is available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

This report provides the findings for Suffolk Constabulary.