

18 July 2013

## **Sussex Police has made progress in meeting its financial challenge, but has more to do, finds HMIC**

*Sussex Police has made progress in meeting its financial challenge. However, the force is not managing to protect its frontline crime fighting capability as effectively as it should.*

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

### **Progress in making savings**

- Sussex Police has identified that it needs to save £50.7m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). The force has plans to achieve £52.7m savings, £2m greater than required and so is in a good place to respond to further reductions. The force is currently on track to achieve these savings.
- This savings requirement is 16% of its overall budget and is broadly in line other forces. HMIC considers that Sussex Police faces a difficult challenge. This is because the force's spending on policing is below that of most other forces; it has a lower number of staff and so has a comparatively lower pay bill. The cost of police officers and staff per head of population is also lower than most other forces in England and Wales. Consequently, the force has to work harder than many forces to identify further efficiencies and drive down its costs.

### **Workforce changes and protecting the front line**

- The force is reducing police officer numbers by limiting recruitment and holding vacancies. As a result, by the end of the spending review period, it plans to have 350 fewer police officers. This means the number of police officers in Sussex is planned to reduce by 11% between March 2010 and March 2015, which is broadly in line with the reduction in most other forces. The force has also made savings through collaboration with Surrey Police and restructuring the way it delivers policing to the public in Sussex.
- Sussex Police has not been very successful in protecting frontline posts as it makes these cuts. Between March 2010 and March 2015, the proportion of the force's total workforce allocated to frontline roles is planned to reduce from 73% to 70%. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74% to 78%.
- The force has made some police staff redundant and has not replaced others as they have left. As a result, by the end of the spending review, the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 230 or 11% between March 2010 and March 2015. This is a much smaller reduction than that planned by most other forces.
- The loss of external partner funding for eight police community support officers (PCSOs) will see current numbers reduce by 2%, which is a smaller reduction than that planned by most other forces. Sussex Police remains committed to protecting the number of PCSO funded by the force.

## Impact on the public

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 6% in Sussex. This is considerably less than the 13% reduction recorded across England and Wales as a whole. While this is a lower level of crime reduction the force crime rates remain low amongst those forces which are regarded as similar.
- Victim satisfaction is high at 84.9%, which is broadly in line with the figure for England and Wales.

## Future challenges

- The force's workforce projections will see fewer staff and officers on the frontline than other forces. As Sussex implements the remainder of its change plans this should be addressed to ensure it has enough staff in frontline crime fighting roles to maintain service to the public.
- The force is looking beyond the current spending review and developing plans to deliver future savings. Extended collaboration with Surrey Police is an important part of Sussex's future plans, which is commendable.

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

*"Sussex Police faces a more difficult financial challenge than many other forces. It has lower costs than most forces, so it has had to work hard to identify additional efficiencies in order to reduce its costs further. The force has developed a change programme that will enable it to save £52.7m, which is £2m more than its savings requirement of £50.7m*

*"However, the force is not managing to protect its frontline crime fighting capability as effectively as it should. It is one of only three forces in England and Wales that is planning to decrease the overall proportion of its workforce in frontline roles over the spending review.*

*"It is commendable that despite all the changes it has made a high proportion of Sussex residents feel as safe or safer than they did two years ago. However, there are early indications that the service to the public might be starting to diminish. Over the last two years Sussex has reduced crime at a substantially lower rate than most other forces. In addition there has been a significant decline in the number of emergency and priority calls the force gets to on time.*

*"HMIC will continue to monitor the force for the remainder of the spending review period."*

The full report for Sussex Police, along with the national thematic review, can be found at [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://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](http://www.hmic.gov.uk)
2. Victim satisfaction for this force has a confidence interval of  $\pm 1.3\%$
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](http://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.