



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Sussex Police's response to the funding challenge

July 2013

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Sussex Police: Executive summary

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 period of 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.

Financial challenge

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). 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

Progress in making savings

Sussex Police has plans to achieve £52.7m savings, £2m¹ 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.

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 Sussex Police is no exception.

In the early years of the spending review, 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 is planned that there will be 350 fewer police officers in Sussex. This means the

¹ The amounts to save may not add to the total due to rounding.

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

number of police officers in the county is planned to reduce by 11% between March 2010³ and March 2015, which is broadly in line with the reduction in most other forces. The force has also made savings through collaboration⁴ 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 police officers in frontline crime-fighting roles is planned to slightly increase from 89% to 90%; but this compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%. Sussex's lower figure is disappointing. Furthermore, over the same period, the proportion of the 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 not replaced others as they have left. As a result by March 2015 it is planned that there will be 230 fewer police staff in Sussex Police. The number of police staff is planned to reduce by 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 protect the number of PCSO funded by the force.

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 crime⁵ (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%⁶, which is broadly in line with the figure for England and Wales.

Future challenges

Sussex Police has made progress in meeting its financial challenge. It has developed a detailed change programme and HMIC has observed lots of activity in terms of cost reduction initiatives. However, senior leaders struggle to articulate how the range of sometimes seemingly disjointed activities, will result in an efficient and effective organisation that is well placed to meet the challenges of the next spending review period.

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

4 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".

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

6 ± 1.3%.

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.

The challenge

Over the four years of the spending review, Sussex Police has identified that it needs to find savings of £50.7m. This is 16% of its total expenditure⁷ (which in 2012/13 was £292.8m). 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 62% (£31.5m) of the total savings required by March 2015 in the first two years of the spending review period. These were achieved by the first phase of Sussex's change programme which comprised a number of work streams to deliver efficiencies and improved effectiveness. These include local policing, working with Surrey, working with others, support functions and how technology can be used to support service delivery.

Plans for Year 3–4

The force has plans in place to achieve further savings of £12.2m in 2013/14, and another £9.0m in 2014/15. This means that they will over achieve on their spending reductions.

Looking beyond the current spending review

The force has started to consider what savings it might need to make in the next spending review period (after March 2015).

The challenge for Sussex Police in preparing for future funding pressures will be much greater if the existing savings plans are not achieved or they take longer to deliver.

The scale of the challenge in Sussex

Sussex Police faces a particular challenge because:

- it spends less per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales;
- it has a lower number of police officers per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales; and
- the cost of police officers and staff per head of population is lower than most other forces in England and Wales.

⁷ Based on a gross expenditure baseline of 2010/11.

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	Sussex Police	England and Wales
Emergency and priority calls per 1,000 population	111	134
Victim-based crime per 1,000 population	49.0	54.5
Prosecutions (charges) per 1,000 population	9.3	10.2

This table shows that in 2012/13, Sussex Police received fewer emergency and priority calls from the public than most other forces. In addition, it dealt with fewer crimes per head of population and supported fewer prosecutions.

How difficult is the challenge?

Sussex Police faces a more difficult challenge to save money than other forces. As a force with an already low spend on policing as well as low pay costs, it is more difficult to find further savings.

Response to the challenge

Over 80% of a police budget (on average) is spent on staff costs.⁸ 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.

Sussex Police is no exception. It made an early start on this in 2010, when it slowed its recruitment of new police officers and police staff, and reduced the number of police staff. The force plans to make 64% of its savings from its pay budget. This is lower than most other forces and an indicator that the force is striving to protect its crime-fighting capacity by bearing down on what it spends on goods and services in addition to pay. However, with further savings to find this position is likely to change.

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 Wales⁹.

	31 March 2010 (baseline)	31 March 2015	Change	Sussex change %	Change for England and Wales %
Police Officers	3,213	2,863	-350	-11%	-11%
Police Staff	2,155	1,925	-230	-11%	-16%
PCSOs	377	369	-8	-2%	-17%
Total	5,745	5,157	-588	-10%	-13%
Specials	240	500*	+260	+108%	+60%

*This figure was correct at the time of inspection, but has since been revised to 450.

Overall, the table shows that Sussex Police plans to lose fewer police staff and PCSOs than in other forces and that the number of police officers they plan to lose is in line with most other forces. It also plans to significantly increase the number of volunteers in the special constabulary.

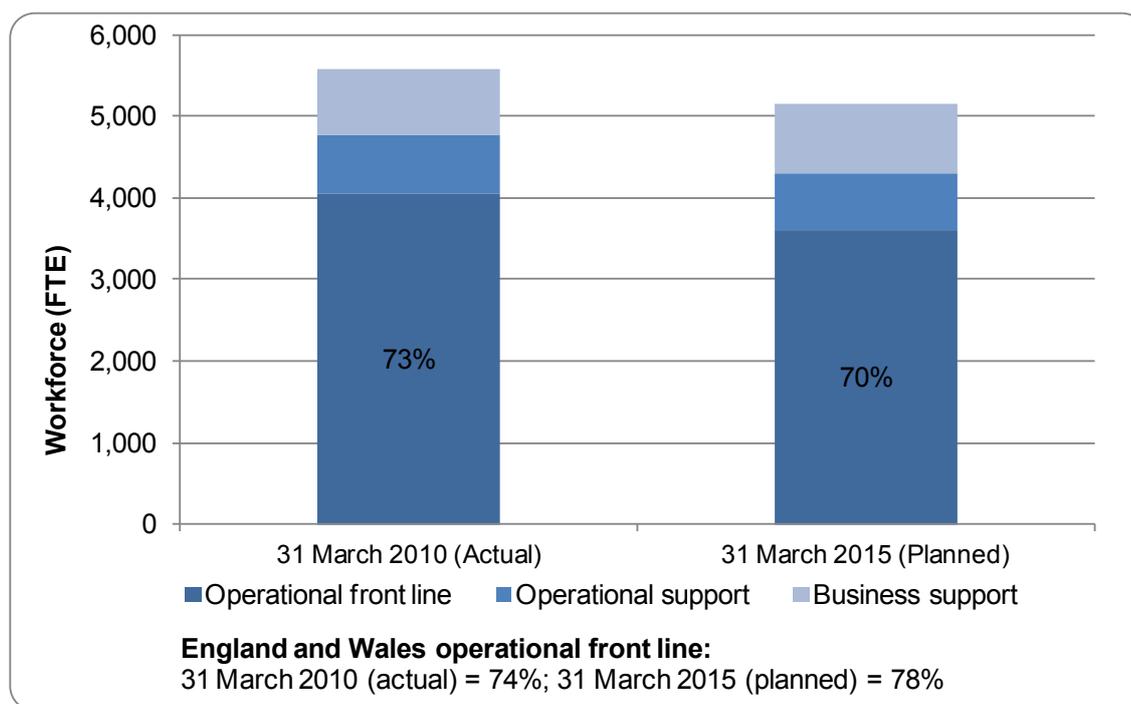
⁸ See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

⁹ 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.

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.

The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile in Sussex Police.¹⁰



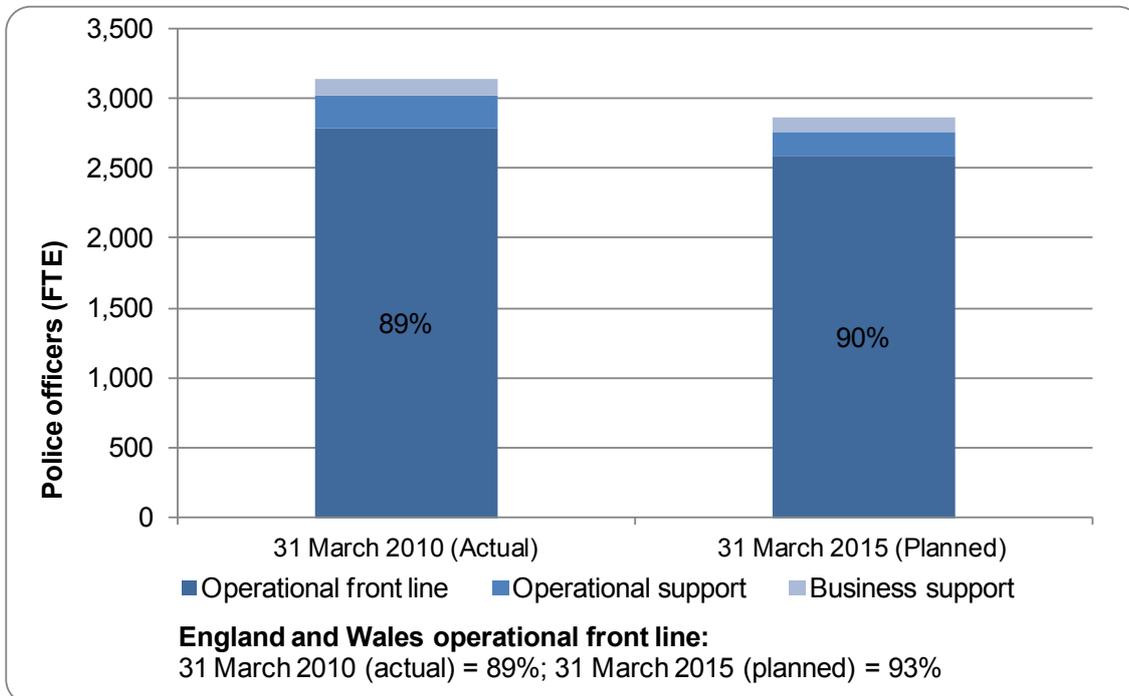
The **number** of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the force’s total workforce) working on Sussex Police’s front line is planned to reduce by 11% between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 4,061 to 3,616).

Disappointingly, over the same period, the **proportion** of Sussex Police’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 reports that the reason for this reduction is that when the 2010 figures were collected, the force had over-recruited police officers and could not afford them. The force has now redesigned its structure and processes, which allowed them to reduce officer posts to an affordable level. Were these additional officers not counted in the baseline figures the force would be maintaining the proportion of its workforce in frontline roles at 70%. This is still considerably below the figure for England and Wales which is 78%

¹⁰ 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.

The **number** of Sussex’s police officers in frontline roles will reduce by 7% from 2,786 in March 2010 to 2,584 in March 2015, as the chart below shows. The **proportion** of Sussex’s police officers on the front line is planned to slightly increase from 89% to 90%. This compares unfavourably to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.



Collaboration

HMIC monitors a force’s progress on collaboration because it offers the opportunity to deliver efficient, effective policing and helps achieve savings.

Sussex Police have identified Surrey Police as their preferred partner. The two forces collaborate in areas of major crime investigation, forensics, firearms and procurement. Plans are in place for further collaboration with Surrey in surveillance, police dogs and hi-tech crime.

The two forces are developing a joint contact management strategy (describing how the forces will respond to public initiated contact by telephone and other means) (to align their policies and procedures, and are considering a single command structure using the same computer system, but still operating from two bases, one in each force. The two forces are now reviewing jointly human resources, finance and ICT with a view to potential future collaboration in these areas. Plans for this next phase of collaboration will be developed by autumn 2013.

The Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), who was elected in November 2012, is very supportive of the collaborative arrangement. Working closely with the Surrey PCC she brings valuable impetus in moving collaboration forwards.

The force was unable to provide 2014/15 expenditure on collaboration to HMIC. However, collaboration is expected to contribute to 7% of the forces savings requirement which is the same as that a line with the 7% for England and Wales.

Now that collaboration has been prioritised (under the governance of the PCC), HMIC would expect the contribution that collaboration makes to the force's savings requirement to increase in the future.

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.

There are improved governance arrangements in place to oversee Sussex Police's change management programme; 'Serving Sussex 2015'. A number of 'flagship' projects, led by a chief officer, are designed to deliver savings and maintain or improve services. These projects include:

- future workspace, reviewing the buildings and premises used with the aim of reducing costs;
- mobile policing, using technology and reducing bureaucracy;
- online service provision;
- QUEST resourcing (to improve the way staff work, cutting out wasteful processes);
- moving to one site to handle all calls from the public;
- working with Surrey, collaborating resources;
- smarter systems programme, using more efficient technology;
- custody modernisation, reviewing the current PFI contract;
- support services transformation, improving services and reducing costs; and
- workforce development, to recruit, develop and retain staff.

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

Sussex Police is committed to helping officers and staff understand the need for change and how they can contribute individually. Staff have a clear understanding of the need to meet the financial challenge while trying to improve the service to the public.

There are reasonably good relationships with staff associations and Unison (the main police staff trade union) who feel they had been involved in and updated on planned change. 'Change workshops' for those affected by the changes have helped inform staff about what is happening within the force and why. Following a recent staff survey the chief constable has provided greater clarity about how policing will be delivered across Sussex in 2015.

How effective has the response been?

Sussex Police has made some progress in meeting its financial challenge and has developed a detailed change programme which will enable them to reduce costs. Chief officers are keen to focus on service improvement as well as reducing cost and this is evident in their approach to change. However, there needs to be greater clarity on how the various strands of activity within the change programme will deliver an organisation that is fit to meet the challenges of the next financial period.

HMIC is concerned that in restructuring its workforce Sussex Police plans to have a lower proportion of police officers and workforce in frontline crime fighting roles by 2014/15 than most other forces in England and Wales. This is a material concern. Any opportunities to redress the balance as the force implements its remaining change plans should be taken.

Impact of the changes on the public

The challenge for forces is not just to save money and reduce 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 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 values 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.¹¹ HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the force had affected the visibility of the police on the streets of Sussex.

In March 2013, Sussex Police allocated 60% of its police officers to visible roles. This is three percentage points higher than it allocated in 2010, and is 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, Sussex Police allocated 64% to visible roles. This is three percentage points higher than it allocated in 2010 and is higher than the 59% figure for England and Wales.

HMIC conducted a survey¹² 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 Sussex, 8%¹³ said that they have seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago; this is broadly in line¹⁴ with the 13% average across all survey respondents in England and Wales.

Of those people surveyed, 81%¹⁵ said they felt either as safe or safer in the areas where they live compared with two years ago. This is commendable. It is a higher figure than for most other forces which is 75%.

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

12 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.

13 $\pm 5\%$.

14 Due to confidence intervals a force which is $\pm 5\%$ of the average across all respondents is considered broadly in line.

15 $\pm 5\%$.

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.

Sussex Police has maintained the same target response times of attendance over the spending review period, i.e. within 15 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' (known as Grade 1); and within 60 minutes for calls classed as 'priority' (known as Grade 2).

During that time, the force met its target response time for 'emergency' calls 85% of the time in 2010/11, 81% of the time in 2011/12 and 73% of the time in 2012/13.

In respect of 'priority' calls, the force met its target 74% of the time in 2010/11, 72% of the time in 2011/12 and 66% of the time in 2012/13.

Therefore, since 2010/11 there has been a significant decline in the number of emergency and priority calls dealt with within the force's set target time. The force acknowledges this decline and is putting in place measures to improve how emergency and priority calls are responded to and managed.

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 Sussex Police reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 6%. This compares unfavourably with the 13% reduction seen across England and Wales, and is one of the lowest reductions seen over the period. Over the same period victim based crime (crimes where there is a direct victim – an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 5% compared with 12% in England and Wales. However while this figure is lower than other reductions, the force still has low levels of crime compared to other most similar forces.

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 Sussex (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to March 2013	Rate per 1,000 population in Sussex	England and Wales rate per 1,000 population
Crimes (excluding fraud)	54.8	61.4
Victim based crime	49.0	54.5
Burglary	6.1	8.2
Violence against the person	9.4	10.6
Anti-social behaviour incidents	37.7	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. Sussex's sanction detection¹⁶ rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2013 is 26.5%. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales rate of 27.0%

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in Sussex. 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, 84.9%¹⁷ of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Sussex Police. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales figure of 84.6%¹⁸.

Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. Sussex Police is planning to close six front counters¹⁹ (based on demand) between 2010 and 2015, although six of the buildings will be retained and provide a presence in the community and the seventh will be replaced by a shared access point²⁰. Overall, Sussex is also planning to open two shared access points in the same period. The force's approach is to seek to maintain or improve service delivery and provide alternative provision with, where possible, partners to deliver best value.

The force is making more use of the internet and social media to communicate with the public and is developing different mechanisms for the public to contact the police. As more and more people become accustomed to engaging with large commercial and public organisations in different ways, the force too is planning to offer the public different ways to contact them. Sussex Police have started a number of projects to help with this including:

- the Future Workplace project, which includes a review of the entire police estate. There will be changes in the way officers and staff operate, as they will be provided with improved technology to remain out on the streets. There will also be shared buildings with partners; while
- online crime reporting, and the ability to track progress of cases online, is already available for many crime types.

16 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.

17 $\pm 1.3\%$.

18 $\pm 0.2\%$.

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

20 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

Although Sussex's savings requirement is lower than other forces, in HMIC's assessment the force faces a difficult financial challenge.

The force has gone through a period of significant change and restructuring. It is well on track to deliver the required savings for spending review. However, this is at some cost. The low proportion of staff planned to be in frontline roles in 2015 is a material concern. There is a danger that the service provided to the public of Sussex will diminish if officers and staff are not available when they are needed. There are early indicators of this happening already; for example, the slide in the force achieving its own targets to respond to emergency calls over the last two years. In addition, although crime rates within the county remain low, the force achieved smaller reductions in crime over the last two years than most other forces.

Sussex Police will undoubtedly deliver the savings required over the spending review. It now needs to ensure that it is well placed to respond to future funding reductions by exploring enhanced collaboration, reviewing its workforce plans to maximise staff and officers in frontline roles, and taking steps to check the early signs of a slide in performance.

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 Sussex Police.