

Thames Valley Police Authority

Transition to police and crime commissioners

About this review

On 15 November 2012 the first elections outside London for police and crime commissioners (PCCs) will be held across England and Wales. PCCs will hold chief constables to account for policing in their force area on behalf of the public. New police and crime panels will scrutinise the actions and decisions of each PCC and make sure information is available for the public, enabling them to hold the PCC to account. Police authorities will cease to exist.

During early summer 2012,¹ Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary assessed how police authorities are preparing for this change. We examined their transition plans and visited every authority to ask:

- Is the police authority ensuring business as usual until November 2012?
- Has the police authority got a plan for managing the transition to PCCs?
- Are arrangements in place to secure a seamless handover to PCCs?
- Are other stakeholders properly involved in the transition process?

This report summarises what we found in Thames Valley. A thematic report, *Preparing for Police and Crime Commissioners*, is available from www.hmic.gov.uk

Findings

Summary

Thames Valley Police Authority has sound planning arrangements for the transition to PCCs. The authority has a mature approach to assessing and managing the transition process. The commitment of authority members to ensuring effective governance through to transition is very strong, and key decisions have been identified. Engagement with partners (for example local authorities and criminal justice representatives) is also good and they are involved in the transition arrangements.

The authority and the force need to develop an initial framework of governance arrangements for how the PCC could operate from day one and this is being addressed under the transition plan. Police authority members are to be commended for their continuing commitment and professionalism.

¹ Meetings with police authorities took place between April and June.

Ensuring business as usual until November 2012

Police authority members are committed to ensuring that business as usual is maintained through to the introduction of the PCC in November. The authority is continuing with a full programme of governance. The committees have good attendance and engagement of members ensuring they fulfil their scrutiny and challenge of the force where appropriate.

Plans for managing the transition to PCCs

Thames Valley Police Authority has put in place appropriate arrangements to manage the transition to PCCs through the Resources Committee and the Transition Panel, which meet on alternate months. In addition there are other supporting processes to ensure good governance. Authority members and officers, the force and other stakeholders are appropriately represented at all transition meetings.

The authority has a joint transition plan with the force which covers all authority and force tasks. The plan has clear ownership and accountability with its delivery being supported by strong project management from both the authority and the force. Key risks have been identified with evidence of action taken to mitigate them.

The authority has an engagement plan in place for PCC candidates which appears open and fair to everyone. A prospectus for potential candidates which explains how Thames Valley Police operates has been published.

Arrangements to secure a seamless handover to PCCs

It is important that the incoming PCC is able to work effectively from day one. It will be for them to decide how they wish to run their office, hold the force to account and engage with the public to identify local priorities. The authority and the force need to agree initial framework arrangements for the PCC which outline options for how the PCC's governance and accountability arrangements will work in practice. These options will need to ensure accountability of the force to the public through the PCC. The authority is also working to develop proposals for how the PCC will commission work by other agencies and organisations for which the PCC holds a budget.

How stakeholders are involved in the transition process

The authority has a clear communications strategy in place to ensure information on PCCs and transition arrangements is provided to a wide audience. Partner agencies are engaged and are jointly working on plans for post election. The authority and force meet regularly with local councils and other stakeholders.

Next steps

HMIC will continue to monitor the transition to PCCs, with a focus on the arrangements that will enable them to work effectively from day one.