



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Valuing the Police: Preparedness Inspection

**West Midlands Police
July 2011**

Purpose of the review

The Police Service, along with all other parts of the public sector, is facing its biggest financial challenge in a generation. This could be seen either as an opportunity to innovate and refresh – or as a reason to continue as is and see services cut back.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has been heavily involved in monitoring the Service's reaction and preparedness for cutting crime while reducing costs. As part of this, in Spring 2011 we carried out an inspection of all 43 forces and authorities in England and Wales, to assess:

- how they are planning to meet the financial challenge; and
- what the impact will be on the service they provide to the public.

This report summarises the findings for West Midlands Police. A thematic report, *Adapting to Austerity*, which brings together findings from all 43 forces, is also available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

Findings for West Midlands Police

What is the financial challenge in the West Midlands?

West Midlands Police and West Midlands Police Authority reported that they are facing a **£126m** cash reduction to their budget over the four years of the comprehensive spending review period (2011/12–2014/15). In real terms (ie when inflation is taken into account), this equates to 16% of their gross revenue expenditure.

Are the force and authority prepared to meet this financial challenge?

The force and authority clearly demonstrated their understanding of the scale of the financial challenge facing them, and have considered a full range of options in developing a plan to meet it. This plan builds on 'Paragon', the force change programme that was established before the budgets cuts were announced. Paragon was designed to 'deliver a first class policing service and protect our communities from harm'.

The force and authority successfully expedited their Paragon change plans in order to deliver the savings required for Year One (2011/12), giving them some breathing space to plan for the rest of the comprehensive spending review (CSR) period. At the time of inspection, detailed plans for Years Two, Three and Four were still under development. However, programme and project management principles were in place, and financial targets and workforce reduction requirements had been assigned against each year of the plan. The force and authority had joint oversight of progress against these targets, and clear governance arrangements were in place.

The intention was to achieve savings across the CSR period through service improvement projects. The force and authority were also actively engaged in exploring

possibilities to collaborate with local partners and other forces. However, progress towards effective regional collaboration was slower than anticipated.

What will be the impact on the number of police officers and staff?

West Midlands Police planned to make the following changes to its workforce numbers.

	Police Officers	Police Staff	PCSO
31 March 2010 (actual)	8,627	3,667	811
31 March 2015 (proposed)	7,377	2,616	798

March 2010 figures have been used as the baseline, because most forces began a recruitment freeze in that year, and as a result workforce numbers started to fall. The proposed figures shown for March 2015 were provided to HMIC by the force in June 2011.

The force and authority's plans for the workforce will continue to be refined as the change programme progresses.

What will be the impact on service to the public?

The Chief Constable has outlined a clear picture of how West Midlands Police will function after the programme of transformation and cost reductions. He described 'a leaner, more purposeful, better connected and affordable police service with a confident future'.

The force recognised the risk that the planned changes might have an impact on the service it delivers to its communities, and was assessing this at every stage of making decisions. However, plans had not yet been fully worked through to identify how services would be re-engineered to accommodate workforce reductions and redeployment.

Both force and authority were committed to ensuring that local communities were engaged and informed about the challenges, the proposals and the implications of decisions made. They were searching for new and innovative ways to reach the public. As part of this, local public consultation on the change programme had taken place, and there was evidence that feedback from this has influenced decisions.

Does the force have targets to reduce crime and ASB?

The first job of the police is to reduce crime and keep the peace; and in 2010, Theresa May, the Home Secretary, stated that she expects forces and authorities to make financial cuts while still reducing crime and without damaging the front line.

The West Midlands *Policing Plan* includes targets for reducing crime and around ASB for the coming year.

