



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Wiltshire Police's response to the funding challenge

July 2013

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Wiltshire Police: Executive summary

Wiltshire Police has a smaller savings requirement than most other forces. However, as a small force it does not have the same opportunities to deliver efficiencies through economies of scale and it is already a low cost force.

The force has developed and implemented a change plan which has delivered savings, while reducing crime and increasing victim satisfaction. It is working towards greater collaboration on operational police services with other forces in the region. There is an ambitious programme of integration with the County Council.

The force prioritises engagement with staff and pays particular attention to investing in future leadership. This approach should facilitate any changes that are necessary while maintaining service delivery.

Financial challenge

Wiltshire Police has identified that it needs to save £16.7m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015).

As a proportion of its overall budget (14%) its saving requirement is below that of most other forces. However, Wiltshire does face a number of challenges which makes achieving the savings more difficult. Wiltshire Police spends less on policing than most other forces and the costs of its police officers and staff are lower than elsewhere. As a small force, it does not have the benefit of economies of scale available in larger forces to achieve efficiency savings.

Progress in making savings

Wiltshire Police has planned how it will save £16.4m of the £16.7m required by March 2015. It therefore still has £0.3m¹ to find. We would expect the force to close this small gap in the remaining 2 years and there is evidence that it has plans to do so.

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 Wiltshire Police is no exception.

It is reducing police officer numbers by limiting recruitment and holding vacancies. As a result, by the end of the spending review period, the force plans that there will be 139 fewer police officers. This means the number of police officers in the county is planned to reduce by 12% between March 2010³ and March 2015. This is a similar reduction to most other forces.

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

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

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

There is evidence that Wiltshire Police is successfully 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 increase from 87% to 92%. 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 (e.g. through retirements and resignations). As a result, by the end of the spending review period, it is planned that there will be 300 fewer police staff in the force. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 30% between March 2010 and March 2015, larger than most other forces. Wiltshire Police plans to increase the number of police community support officers (PCSOs) by 11 officers (8%) whereas most forces are planning to cut PCSO numbers.

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 victim satisfaction surveys which all forces conduct.

Over the first two years of the spending review, crime rates⁴ (excluding fraud) fell by 9%, which is less than the figure for England and Wales (13%). Victim satisfaction remains high at 86.5%⁵ which is broadly in line with other forces.

Future challenges

The force has identified current and future risks and has plans in place to manage them accordingly. Over the period of this spending review the force has shown itself to have a good track record in meeting its financial challenges while at the same time focusing on the delivery of high quality policing to people working and living in Wiltshire.

The force has assessed future savings requirements and has high level plans in place to deliver them in line with the objectives of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's) Police and Crime Plan. In particular the force is developing a strong programme of integration with Wiltshire County Council, both in terms of planning more cost effective business support services and better integrated estate for improved public access. The force continues to work hard to minimise any potential negative impact of the change programme on its communities and workforce.

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

5 \pm 2.0%.

The challenge

Over the four years of the spending review (March 2011 to March 2015), Wiltshire Police identifies that it needs to find savings of £16.7m, which equates to 14% of its total expenditure⁶ (which in 2012/13 was £116.4m). Across England and Wales a 17% reduction in total expenditure is required.

Progress in making savings: Years 1–2

The force successfully made 52% (£8.6m) of the total savings required by March 2015 in the first two years of the spending review period. It achieved this by: not recruiting any new police officers; reducing the number of police staff it employs; and restructuring how the force delivers elements of its policing by moving from a geographical policing model to a functional one where management posts have been lost.

Plans for Year 3–4

The force has plans in place to achieve further savings of £3.3m in 2013/14, and another £4.5m in 2014/15. This leaves a funding gap of £0.3m at the end of the spending review period. However, there are strong financial controls and the savings plan is well articulated and understood by staff. HMIC is confident that the force will close the remaining gap from its track record on under spends in previous years.

Looking beyond the current spending review

The force has started to consider what savings it might need to make after March 2015. Future savings plans are wide-ranging and include further changes relating to workforce modernisation and collaboration with other forces and local authorities.

The scale of the challenge in Wiltshire

Wiltshire Police faces a less difficult challenge from the spending review as the reduction it faces is lower than that of other forces. However, as a small force with already relatively low costs, there is less scope for internal efficiencies because:

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

⁶ Based on a gross expenditure baseline in 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	Wiltshire Police	England and Wales
Emergency and priority calls per 1,000 population	70	134
Victim-based crime per 1,000 population	44.3	54.5
Prosecutions (charges) per 1,000 population	7.1	10.2

This table shows that in 2012/13, Wiltshire Police received fewer emergency and priority calls from the public. It had to deal with a lower number of crimes and supported fewer prosecutions.

How difficult is the challenge?

Although Wiltshire Police faces a smaller financial requirement than other forces, this is not without challenge. As a small force it doesn't benefit from economies of scale and it already has low costs so it will be more difficult to find further efficiencies.

Response to the challenge

Forces deliver their response to the savings requirement through a change programme. Because over 80% of a police budget (on average) is spent on staff costs⁷, it is not surprising that the change programmes of forces across England and Wales plan to achieve most of their savings by reducing the number of police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs) and police staff employed.

Wiltshire Police has reduced police officers and police staff but has increased the number of PCSOs. 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 79% of its spending review savings from its pay budget. This is a higher proportion than in most other forces.

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 Wales.⁸

	31 March 2010 (baseline)	31 March 2015	Change	Wiltshire change %	Change for England and Wales %
Police Officers	1,181	1,042	-139	-12%	- 11%
Police Staff	1,013	713	-300	-30%	- 16%
PCSOs	126	137	+11	+8%	- 17%
Total	2,320	1,892	-428	-18%	- 13%
Specials	250	300	+50	+20%	+60%

Overall, the table shows that Wiltshire Police plans to lose a similar proportion of officers to that in other forces. However, staff numbers are planned to decrease considerably more than in other forces and the number of PCSOs will increase.

In the Police and Crime Plan, the PCC commits to a minimum of 1,062 police officers and a minimum of 141 PCSOs. The plan also states that the PCC will provide funding so that the chief constable may recruit regularly so as to maintain these minimum numbers. The force and the PCC will need to work together to develop affordable workforce plans that support the ambitions of the Police and Crime Plan.

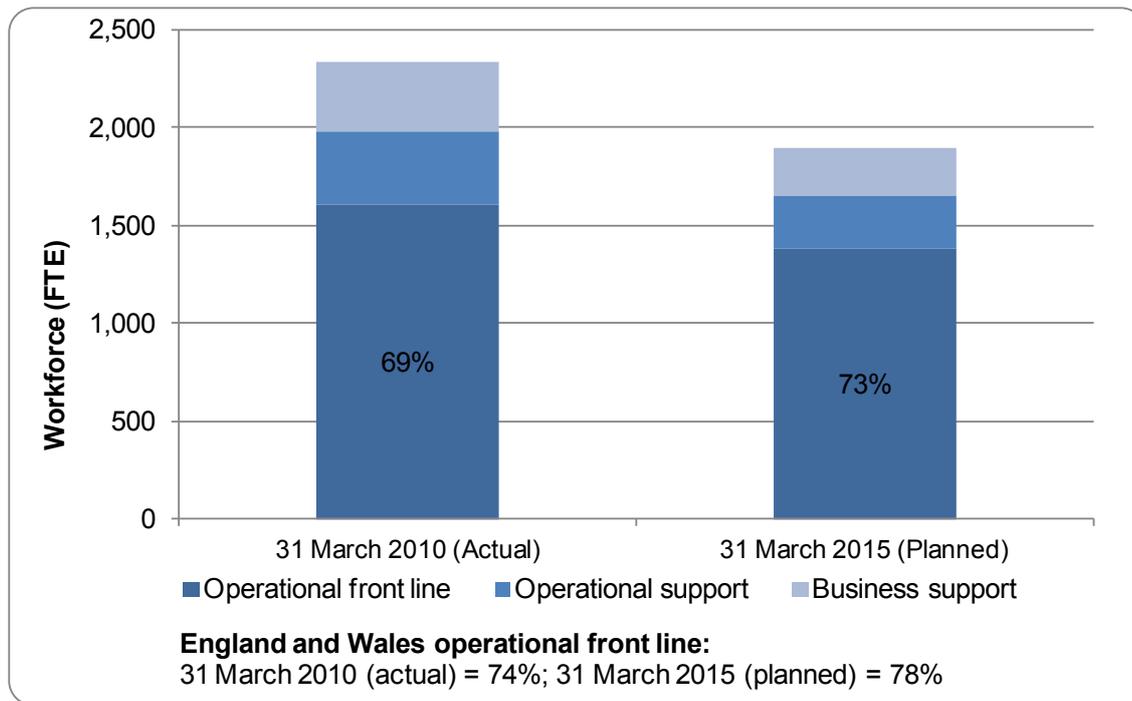
⁷ See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

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.

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 Wiltshire Police.⁹

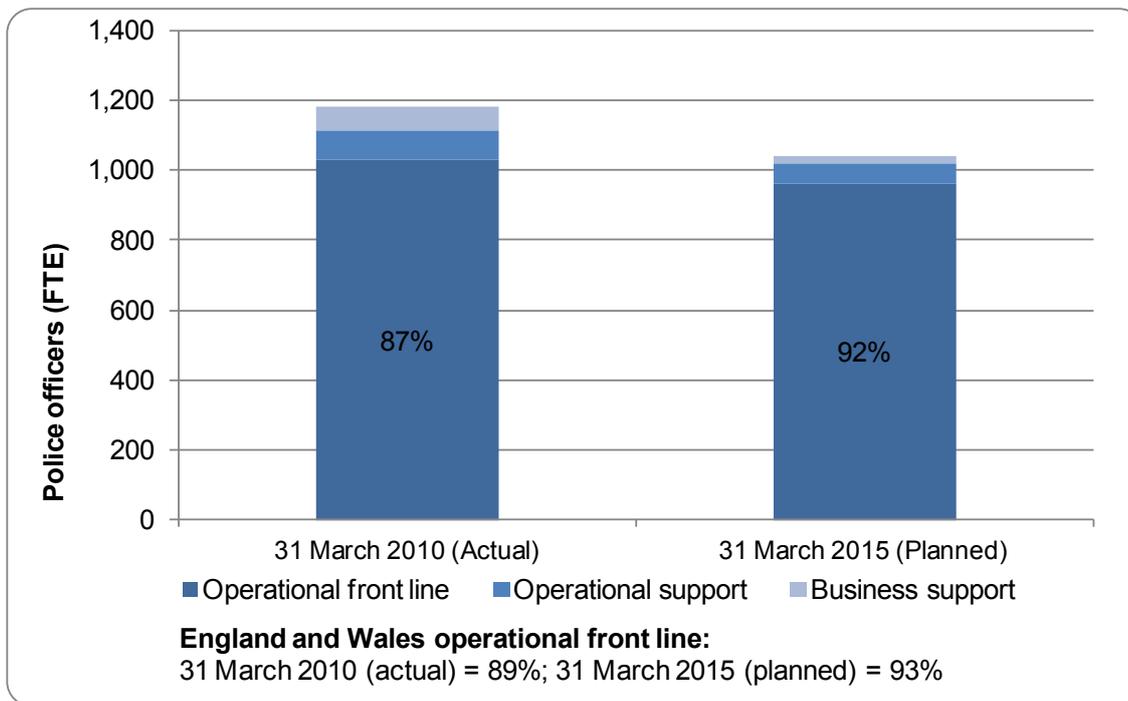


The **number** of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the force’s total workforce) working on Wiltshire’s front line is planned to reduce by 14% between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 1,608 to 1,383).

Over the same period, the **proportion** of Wiltshire’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is projected to increase from 69% to 73%. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74% to 78%.

The **number** of Wiltshire’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 7% from 1,028 in March 2010 to 961 by March 2015, as the chart on the next page shows. The **proportion** of those remaining on the front line is planned to increase from 87% to 92%. 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 force's progress on collaboration¹⁰ because it offers the opportunity to deliver efficient, effective policing and help achieve savings.

HMIC found that the force has actively pursued collaborative opportunities at a local, regional and national level which has resulted in a number of policing services being delivered in collaboration with other forces or organisations. Examples include a regional force intelligence and organised crime group and special branch collaboration with Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

The PCC's manifesto clearly states an intention for closer collaboration between the police and local councils. Upon election, the PCC confirmed his intention to develop such collaboration and commissioned a work programme to explore opportunities for integration with Wiltshire Council in a number of business support areas. The force is working towards these plans and will need to ensure: that it has a good understanding of its current costs; and that future service requirements and effective governance arrangements are developed, so that both partners can deliver and demonstrate value for money for the taxpayer.

In 2014/15 the force expects to spend 19% of its total expenditure on collaboration, which is higher than the 11% figure for England and Wales. Overall, collaboration is expected contribute to 15% of the forces savings requirement, which is higher than the 7% figure for England and Wales.

¹⁰ 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".

Managing change

Reductions in police budgets have inevitably led to a shrinking workforce. HMIC expects forces 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. Wiltshire Police has moved to a new operating model. It analysed the busiest times in relation to response, crime investigation, neighbourhood and custody services and simplified shift patterns so that police officers and staff are working when they are most needed.

Clear accountability and performance management systems are in place, which provide effective management and scrutiny of spending and performance. Chief officer oversight of the change management programme is clear and is linked to the budget setting process, on-going budget monitoring and workforce planning.

The force understands the impact of the savings plans against the impact of individual project plans and has structures in place to ensure interdependencies are identified and managed appropriately. The force has a mature and embedded risk management process.

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

The force has worked hard to engage and communicate with all staff through a range of approaches. It identifies areas to address through the employee engagement survey which it plans to repeat each year. Focus groups interviewed during the inspection were aware of the financial challenge facing the force and stated they recognised the need for change. They explained that they had been properly consulted as part of the change programme and had been able to express their views and concerns.

Some police staff members highlighted the need for clearer messages regarding the progress of the county council collaboration and expressed concerns regarding capability and capacity in light of reduced resources.

Staff associations and Unison (the main police staff union) reported opportunities to communicate directly with the chief officer group in respect of members' views and concerns. Unison was positive regarding the force's commitment to provide redeployment opportunities to staff where appropriate.

How effective has the response been?

Wiltshire Police will deliver its planned savings by 2014/15. Although the force faces less of a challenge than others, it has chief officer oversight of the change management programme, which is linked to the budget setting process, on-going budget monitoring and workforce planning.

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 has 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 on 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 Wiltshire.

In March 2013, Wiltshire Police allocated 59% of its police officers to visible roles. This is seven percentage points more than it allocated in 2010, and 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, Wiltshire Police allocated 64% to visible roles. This is seven percentage points higher than it allocated in 2010 and greater 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 Wiltshire, 8%¹³ 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, 77%¹⁴ 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%.

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 ± 5%

14 ± 5%

Calls for service

HMIC examined whether Wiltshire Police was 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 2010, the force had maintained the same target response time of within 15 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' (also known as grade 1) in an urban setting and within 20 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' in a rural setting. Over the same period, calls classed as a 'priority' (also known as grade 2) had a target response time of within 60 minutes.

The force met its target response time for urban 'emergency' calls 93% of the time in 2010/11 and 94% of the time in both 2011/12 and in 2012/2013. The force also met its target response time for rural 'emergency' calls 88% of the time in 2010/11 and 90% of the time in 2011/12 and 87% of the time in 2012/13.

For 'priority' calls, on average the force met its target 84% of the time in 2010/11, 87% of the time in 2011/12 and 88% of the time in 2012/13.

Over the spending review period Wiltshire has broadly maintained its response to 'emergency' and 'priority' calls.

Crime

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

Between 2010/11 and 2012/13 (the first two years of the spending review) Wiltshire Police reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 9% compared to 13% in England and Wales. Although the force has reduced crime, this was among the lowest reductions seen over the period. Over this same period, victim-based crime (that is, crimes where there is a direct victim – an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 10% 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 Wiltshire (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to March 2013	Rate per 1,000 population in Wiltshire	England and Wales rate per 1,000 population
Crimes (excluding fraud)	48.3	61.4
Victim-based crime	44.3	54.5
Burglary	6.5	8.2
Violence against the person	9.1	10.6
Anti-social behaviour incidents	36.9	40.7

The force has less crime and victim-based crime than other forces in England and Wales.

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

The force's sanction detection rate¹⁵ (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 Wiltshire. 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, 86.5%¹⁶ of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Wiltshire Police. This is broadly in line with other forces in England and Wales where the figure is 84.6%.¹⁷

Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. Wiltshire Police is planning to shut one front counter¹⁸ and one police station between 2010 and 2015, but will open one new shared access point¹⁹.

The force is making more use of the internet and social media to communicate with the public and developing different mechanisms for the public to contact the police. Wiltshire Police is:

- continuing to improve its online services, and its social media channels;
- encouraging neighbourhood officers to use Twitter to help keep communities informed about policing in their area; and
- Creating a virtual local notice board using social media publicising all public sector information, described a 'village green notice board'.

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 $\pm 2.0\%$.

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

During our inspection the force had developed and was delivering a savings plan which met the spending challenge and maintained effective policing. There is a firm commitment to balance the delivery of savings with improvements in service delivery, especially at a local level.

The force has reconfigured how it delivers services, changing local structures to better meet demand. Technology has played an important part enabling police officers to spend more time in communities. The force told us that officers who patrol and respond to calls for service (response officers) now spend 77% of their time out of the station.

HMIC understands that the force is investing in its future leadership. This involves a mix of training, improved performance appraisal and more regular feedback to improve individual development. It has also devoted considerable effort to staff engagement and is identifying workforce priorities through a staff survey.

The force has assessed future savings requirements and has high level plans in place which include further changes - in particular in collaboration with other forces and local authority. The force plans to have a 'campus' in every community area where the public can access a range of local services. It also plans to drive significant savings from integrating business support functions with the county council.

Wiltshire Police is confident that these plans put them in a good position to manage future funding reductions while maintaining service delivery to the people of Wiltshire.

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 Wiltshire Police.