



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Valuing the Police: Preparedness Inspection

**Wiltshire 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 Wiltshire 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 Wiltshire Police

What is the financial challenge in Wiltshire?

Wiltshire Police and Wiltshire Police Authority reported that they are facing a £14.1m cash reduction to their budget over the four years of the comprehensive spending review period (2011/12–14/15). In real terms (ie when inflation is taken into account), this equates to 10% of their gross revenue expenditure.

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

The force and authority clearly understood the scale of the challenge facing them. They were already planning for reduced funding in 2009, and made savings of £3.2m (which balanced their 2010/11 budget). They had assumed that the cuts to funding would be around £15m and planned accordingly; the actual savings needed over the next four years are slightly less, putting them in a good position.

Wiltshire Police has a good record of being able to change and restructure effectively. In 2009 the force launched a three-year programme to reduce on-going revenue costs by £5.6m by the end of 2012/13. This is the basis of their cost reduction plan for the comprehensive spending review. It aims to reengineer and restructure the force, maintain – and in some areas improve – service delivery, and reduce costs as a result.

The force's skilled staff applied good programme management and have made use of HMIC's value for money profiles to identify potential saving opportunities, for example by reducing vehicle costs. They have identified risks to the programme and are managing them, using a clear and comprehensive project management framework.

The authority was collaborating in the South West Police Authority Joint Committee, established in January 2010 (although cost savings from this to date have been limited). More successfully, the force has operated shared special branch and major investigation teams with Avon and Somerset Constabulary since January 2011. The force was also planning to share its procurement function with other forces, and was working with local authority partners to develop further joint working and share costs.

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

Wiltshire Police planned to make the following changes to its workforce numbers.

	Police Officers	Police Staff	PCSO
31 March 2010 (actual)	1,181	1,013	137
31 March 2015 (proposed)	1,056	827	137

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 force intended to protect service delivery while making savings, so that the public should notice very little difference. They have worked to protect operational policing, and maintain the overall number of response and neighbourhood officer posts. At the same time, the force planned to change shift patterns and how it deploys officers on the streets, to allow them to work more flexibly across local force areas.

Significant efforts have been made to update and consult the public and partner agencies about the planned changes. Feedback from public consultation was being used well to shape the financial plan. Specifically, Wiltshire Police consulted the public on the possibility of increasing call response time from 30 seconds to one minute, if the number of staff in the control room were to fall. The response to this was supportive, especially as the force aims to use more advanced IT systems to improve the effectiveness of the remaining staff.

Does the force have targets to cut crime while cutting cost?

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.

Wiltshire's *Policing Plan* includes objectives to reduce ASB and violent crime over the coming year.

