

# Responding to Austerity: progress report

Gwent Police

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## Part 1: About the progress report

In the October 2010 spending review, the government announced that central funding to the police service in England and Wales would be reduced in real terms by 20 percent in the four years from March 2011 to March 2015.<sup>1</sup>

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC)'s Valuing the Police Programme has tracked how forces have planned to make savings to meet this budget requirement. We published findings on this in July 2011, June 2012 and July 2013.<sup>2</sup>

The *Policing in Austerity: Meeting the Challenge*<sup>3</sup> report, published in July 2014, in the final year of the spending review, looked at how forces have managed the considerable challenges to make savings so far. In order to consider this, HMIC asked three questions:

- To what extent is the force taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?
- To what extent has the force an affordable way of providing policing?
- To what extent is the force efficient?

HMIC made a judgment as to the extent to which each force provides value for money in the context of current spending constraints. We rated each force in one of the following categories:

- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; or
- inadequate.

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<sup>1</sup> *Spending Review 2010*, HM Treasury, 2010. Available from [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/203826/Spending\\_review\\_2010.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/203826/Spending_review_2010.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *Adapting to Austerity: A Review of Police Force and Authority Preparedness for the 2011/12–14/15 CSR Period*, HMIC, July 2011; *Policing in Austerity: One Year On*, HMIC, June 2012; *Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge*, HMIC, July 2013. All available from [www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic](http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic)

<sup>3</sup> *Policing in Austerity: Meeting the Challenge*, HMIC, July 2014. Available from [www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/publication/policing-in-austerity-meeting-the-challenge/](http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/publication/policing-in-austerity-meeting-the-challenge/)

Judgment is made against how well the force achieves value for money; it is not an assessment of the overall effectiveness of policing. In applying the categories HMIC considers whether:

- the way the force is achieving value for money is good, or exceeds this standard sufficiently to be judged as outstanding;
- the force requires improvement in the way it achieves value for money, and/or there are some weaknesses; or
- the force's provision of value for money is inadequate because it is considerably lower than is expected.

HMIC judged Gwent Police as requiring improvement in its response to the spending review in the following three areas:

- To what extent is the force taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?
- To what extent has the force an affordable way of providing policing?
- To what extent is the force efficient?

We said that we would continue to monitor progress closely and revisit the force to assess its progress towards:

- having a better understanding of demand;
- the force response to crime;
- improving levels of victim satisfaction;
- the development and implementation of an affordable and sustainable new operating model; and
- development of plans to facilitate savings for 2016 and beyond.

## Part 2: Findings for Gwent Police

### 2.1 Summary

**Gwent Police has made good progress since the original inspection in May 2014. The force can now demonstrate how it will have a secure financial position for the short and long term and has developed a new operating model to match resources better to demand and deliver effective policing services.**

At the time of the revisit in October 2014, HMIC found that the force's budget plans had clearer financial governance measures through the 'Staying Ahead 8' programme board and the police and crime commissioner's strategy and performance board. This, together with the steps the force is taking to address victim satisfaction and match resources to demand provides HMIC with greater confidence that the force is taking the necessary measures to meet the financial challenges ahead, while seeking to improve delivery of services to the public.

In spring 2014, the force carried out an initial assessment of demand and at the time of the revisit informed HMIC that this process would be repeated in November 2014, to develop its understanding further.

In line with a better understanding of demand, the force has made good progress in developing an operating model, designed to protect the front line, improve victim satisfaction and enhance delivery of services to the public. The model is affordable in the medium term and scalable for the future. At the time of the revisit, the force had still to move from developing its plans to implementing the considerable change required by the end of April 2015.

Issues in relation to victim satisfaction remain (in particular, keeping victims informed and the force response to crime performance identified in the original inspection); these issues relate to increases in the key crime categories of overall crime; victim-based crime and violence against the person. However, the force outlined plans to address these issues through the introduction of a victims' hub; the implementation of the Gwent CARE's initiative to enhance victim contact experience; a review of the force control room to deal with matters at the first point of contact; and putting local supervisors into the control room to deal with complaints at the first point of contact.

HMIC remains concerned that the force has a considerable amount of adjustment to implement in a short period of time, while maintaining performance in a changing environment. The early progress the force has made is encouraging and provides some reassurance of its ability to deliver the changes required.

## **2.2 To what extent is the force taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?**

HMIC's inspection of Gwent Police's response to austerity in May 2014 found that the force had made all the savings that are required to the end of 2013/14 and had plans to achieve savings in 2014/15 with the use of funding reserves. However, there was a gap in 2015/16 of £4.1m. While the force intended to use some funding reserves, there were no plans to find the additional, recurring savings, other than through the loss of staff.

The plans for dealing with savings beyond 2016 were underdeveloped and it was not clear how the force would balance budgets in the future.

At that time, HMIC was concerned that the approach to future savings by not replacing staff as they leave, without a thorough understanding of current and future demand, could mean that the force might not maintain effective levels of service in Gwent.

When HMIC revisited the force in October 2014 it had developed the budget plan further. While elements of this plan are at an early stage, they were underpinned by prudent assumptions and the force was confident that the necessary savings can be achieved. The force outlined clearer financial governance measures in place through the 'Staying Ahead 8' programme board and the PCC's strategy and performance board.

Following the revisit, it is clear that the force has a more detailed grasp of its financial position. This, together with the projected underspend for this financial year, and its ability to use financial reserves for any shortfall, provides HMIC with greater confidence that the force has a coherent financial plan to deliver the required savings beyond 2016.

Gwent Police has made all the savings it needs up to the end of 2013/14 and has plans to achieve the savings required in 2014/15, supported by the use of reserves.

A clearer plan has now been developed through the 'Staying Ahead 8' programme which involves reductions in a number of key areas, rather than an over-reliance on staff leaving the organisation. While elements of the programme are at an early stage, they are underpinned by robust and prudent assumptions that provide an element of flexibility to phase these savings, and do what needs to be done, to achieve them.

Between 2015/16 and 2018/19 the force plans to save £9.8m from police officer and police staff budgets (£6.3m and £3.5m respectively); £6.4m from non-staff budgets (equating to 30 percent); and a further £2.3m from an anticipated 5 percent increase in council tax precepts over the period. Achieving this level of savings ensures that the force closes any funding gap by 2018/19.

The current financial plan assumes that there will be a precept increase of 5 percent over the next three years with this years' precept now agreed at 3.99 percent. Should this assumption change this will present a risk to the force, which it intends to mitigate by the use of force reserves to meet the shortfall. The PCC is consulting with the community on the plans for the proposed precept increase.

## **2.3 To what extent has the force an affordable way of providing policing?**

HMIC's inspection of Gwent Police's response to austerity in May 2014 found some areas of progress in the force's approach to affordable provision of policing. The force continued to make good use of collaboration with other Welsh forces and local partners to get better value for money.

The inspection also found the increased proportion of police officers on the front line and the force's intention to carry out work on demand and workforce modelling were encouraging developments. It was hoped that this would allow the force to develop a strategy for matching resources to demand in the future.

However, at that time, HMIC was concerned that the force's change plans were mainly based on reducing the workforce by not replacing staff as they left the organisation. While this may have made most of the savings needed, the force could not evaluate the impact of the job losses on the service or be confident that it would result in a model that could provide effective policing in Gwent.

It was imperative that the force developed a structure that would be sustainable and affordable in the future, and which would protect vital crime-fighting roles.

HMIC's revisit in October 2014 found that the force had made good progress in developing an operating model, designed to protect the front line and improve victim satisfaction, which is affordable in the medium term and scalable for the future.

The new operating model will see the force move from a five local policing unit (LPU) structure to two geographic areas, east and west, each led by a superintendent, with a staffing model that has been informed by the demand work conducted under Operation Veritas. The plan includes features such as an increase in targeted community support officer hours, a system of structured vacancy management through the force's resource board and a focus to match resources to demand profiles. It will also take into account processes, systems, skills and behaviours to ensure it has the right workforce mix.

This includes staff within the new operating model becoming 'omnicompetent' and removing the need to hand over investigations.

The force's 'Staying Ahead 8' programme has identified that there are other substantial programmes of work necessary to transform the operating model. One particular area is the quality of supervision that will be challenging when the force is increasing the areas of responsibility for sergeants, while reducing their numbers.

The programme has also implemented a formal review process to ensure the necessary work streams are bringing out the required outcomes. The first formal review of the new operating model will be undertaken six months after implementation, but the project structure has also included processes to manage this on a day-to-day basis.

At the time of the revisit, the force had to move from planning to implementing considerable change in a short period of time.

## **2.4 To what extent is the force efficient?**

HMIC's inspection of Gwent Police's response to austerity in May 2014 found that the force had a limited understanding of the demand the force faced. It had not carried out any comprehensive demand analysis since 2009. Without this understanding, the force could not be confident that it was using its resources in the most efficient way.

Since the previous inspection, the force has taken significant steps to understand better its demand. It has learned from forces highlighted by HMIC as having good or interesting practice, and in May 2014 carried out a full analysis of demand, through 'Operation Veritas'.

The force understands how this initial assessment can be built upon and improved (for example, by using partner data) and in November 2014 it intended to repeat the analysis through Operation Veritas II, in order to consolidate understanding and make the additional adjustments required. Demand profiling has been taken to LPU level to facilitate understanding of crime and anti-social behaviour profiles that have been used to help shape the new operating model for the force.

In the 12 months up to March 2014, the force saw an increase in reported crime of 4.9 percent, which it states, but cannot show conclusively, was largely caused by the push for ethical recording. HMIC expects that at some point the force will need to identify, following the change in crime-recording practices, what levels of crime are considered accurate, to enable changes in trends to be visible. Both the PCC and the chief constable have set clear standards for the force, moving the focus away from targets and towards providing quality of service to the public. This has meant a firm and direct move towards more ethical crime recording. However, the chief constable has made it clear in messages to the force that there needs to be a closer



focus and grip on reducing crime and how this is managed. The police and crime plan identifies the prevention and reduction in crime as a key priorities and the force delivery plan describes the high-level approaches towards achieving these aims.

The force is responding to an increase in crime through a number of interventions, including a new approach to integrated offender management (IOM), which is supported by the PCC strategic commissioning board. The force has introduced Operation Resolute to target high crime areas and problematic offenders to reduce levels of all crime, including violent crime.

Achieving a better understanding of local profiles is a key priority for the force and much focus has been given at chief officer level to ensure that crime is recorded ethically.

Internal performance management arrangements have been enhanced, including a detailed programme of force level meetings and unit level visits from chief officers, in addition to the existing force level monitoring arrangements and weekly performance reviews by the chief officer team. There is further scrutiny by the PCC through his strategy and performance board, together with attendance from representatives from the office of the police and crime commissioner (OPCC) at force meetings. The revisit review of force documents found the quality of more recent minutes from these meetings had notably improved, with clearer levels of detail and accountability.

Public satisfaction with the police remains a challenge in Gwent. Victims of crime in Gwent are more dissatisfied with the way they are dealt with than in England and Wales as a whole. The force has established a 'Service That Works' Board to provide oversight and governance to aspects of service provision that directly have an impact on the level and quality of delivery of services to the public. This board is chaired by the chief constable. There is also a local public confidence survey in place, which reports quarterly to this board.

At the time of the revisit, the force informed HMIC that the recent Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) results indicated that public confidence in relation to the police dealing with community priorities had improved within Gwent from 55.2 percent to 59.1 percent. The force acknowledges however, that issues around victim satisfaction remain and approaches such as the multi-agency victims' hub, the revised operating model and the planned force-wide CARE's initiative are intended to provide a clear framework for staff, setting out what is the required standard of victim contact.

The victims' hub is intended to bring together a range of agencies and partner organisations to provide enhanced support to victims and enable Gwent Police to work more effectively and efficiently with victims of crime. Work in the control room to resolve calls and report crimes at the first point of contact, and the introduction of 'victim contracts' to work to agreed contact timescales are initiatives aimed at further improving delivery of services to the public.

HMIC found the quality of supervision and leadership at sergeant and middle manager level were issues for the force but these were recognised at chief officer level. The chief constable personally delivers presentations to both police officers and police staff at inspector rank (or equivalent) and above, to provide clarity regarding his standards and expectations.

The deputy chief constable has also delivered a number of seminars for supervisors in relation to standards and expectations. The force is looking to collaborate with South Wales Police on supervisor training provision because this will become even more crucial as the levels of supervision are reduced in line with the savings plan and new operating model.

## Part 3: Next steps

In 2013 the Home Secretary commissioned HMIC to conduct a new annual programme of all-force assessments, known as PEEL (police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy). The first interim assessment was published on 27 November 2014.

As part of this new annual assessment programme HMIC will continue to consider the extent to which police forces provide value for money, in the context of an overall inspection of police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy.

HMIC will revisit Gwent Police in summer 2015 on a date to be determined to undertake a diagnostic inspection. This inspection will use external expertise, with the aim of identifying measures to assist the senior leadership of Gwent Police to improve the service it delivers.