



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Responding to austerity

Kent Police

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How well does the force provide value for money?

Overall judgment

Kent Police has responded well to the financial challenge of the spending review. Importantly, the force is planning for the long-term by taking the necessary steps today, so it is ready to meet future funding challenges in this ongoing era of austerity.

Good

Summary

Kent Police is on track to achieve its required savings of £49.4m over this spending review period. It has plans in place to achieve further savings in 2015/16. Importantly, the force is also developing plans and options beyond this period, drawing on commercial expertise. It is preparing now, so that it will be best placed to manage further funding reductions and financial pressures in the future.

The force understands the issues facing it, and has a comprehensive and very effective programme in place to achieve the savings and the organisational change required. It continues to evaluate how local policing is provided so that it remains affordable and meets the requirements of the police and crime commissioner's police and crime plan.

The force has maintained its commitment to collaborating with others, in order to cut costs. Its joint work with Essex Police is especially noteworthy. There is strong leadership in the force and a real determination to achieve change while minimising reductions to frontline officers and improving the quality of the service to the public, which is entirely commendable.

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?

Outstanding

Good

Good

The force achieved 94 percent of its savings for the spending review a year early. Savings of £20.8m required in 2015/16 will be met from planned savings and the use of reserves.

The force's savings plans prioritise expenditure to provide visible local policing and a more victim focused service.

The force is in a position to defer any decisions to reduce police officer numbers until there is more clarity as to its funding beyond 2015.

The force has undertaken detailed scenario planning for the future and has developed options to achieve savings that are scalable to meet a variety of potential future funding challenges beyond 2016.

The force has a sophisticated workforce model, that meets its needs and will support the force's change in approach to minimise frontline officer reductions.

Collaboration with Essex Police has contributed to early achievement of the savings in this spending review period; future plans include further opportunities to work together.

Kent continues to focus on achieving non-pay savings, through collaborated procurement it has identified £3.5m of savings.

The force is committed to providing effective local policing and over the spending review the force will increase its proportion of frontline crime-fighting roles.

The force has seen an increase in recorded crime over the spending review, some of which is attributable to the change in the force's crime recording practices last year. Victim satisfaction is higher than other forces.

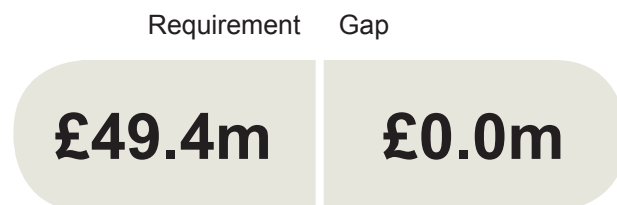
The force has a comprehensive understanding of demand and can evidence the steps it is taking to reduce the demands on its policing services.

Through the use of its 'PredPol' programme the force directs patrols to areas that will have the greatest impact in reducing crime. Its demand analysis is being used to inform decisions about changes to the way local policing is provided.

The force in numbers

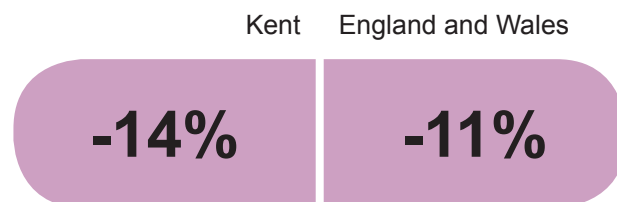
Financial position

The force's savings requirement

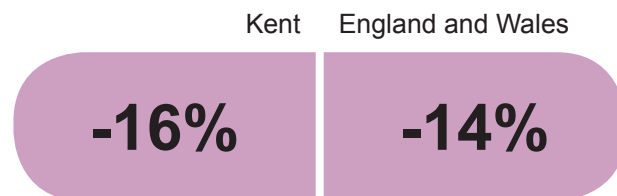


Providing policing

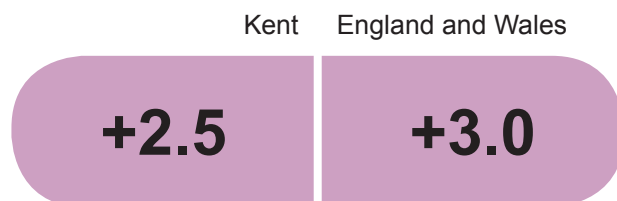
Planned change in police officer numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15



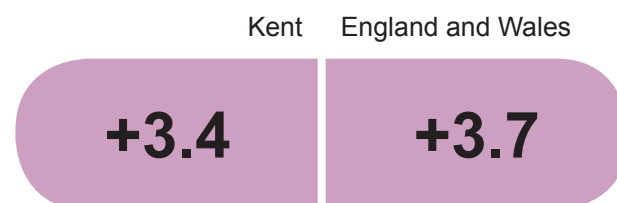
Planned change in total workforce numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15



Planned proportion of police officers on the front line 2014/15 vs 2010/11 (percentage points)



Planned proportion of total workforce on the front line 2014/15 vs 2010/11 (percentage points)





Efficiency

Police officer cost per head of population
2013/14

Kent	England and Wales
£96.2	£117.7

Workforce cost per head of population
2013/14

Kent	England and Wales
£141.1	£168.1

Change in recorded crime
2010/11 – 2013/14

Kent	England and Wales
5%	-14%

Victim satisfaction 2013/14*

Kent	England and Wales
86.8%	85.2%

*Confidence intervals: $\pm 1.2\%$ for Kent; $\pm 0.2\%$ for England and Wales.

Introduction

In October 2010, the Government announced that central funding to the Police Service in England and Wales would reduce by 20 percent 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, our fourth year.

Our inspection focused on how well the force is achieving value for money. To answer this question we looked at three areas:

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

During our inspection 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, where possible, 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.

This provides the findings for Kent Police.

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

HMIC looked at the savings plans that forces have developed in order to meet the financial challenge of the spending review, and for the year after 2015/16. It is also important that forces look to the future beyond 2016 in their planning, so we also explored how they are starting to prepare for further financial challenges.

Financial challenge

Kent Police has identified that it needs to save £49.4m over the four years of the spending review (i.e., between March 2011 and March 2015). As a proportion of its overall budget, this savings requirement of 15 percent is lower than the 18 percent figure for England and Wales.

The scale of the challenge

Although Kent has a smaller savings requirement than most other forces it does nonetheless face challenges in identifying efficiencies as it is already a low cost force. Kent Police:

- spends less per head of population on policing than most other forces in England and Wales;
- has non-staff costs which are amongst the lowest nationally; and
- has fewer police staff and PCSOs per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales.

Savings plans for 2014/15 and 2015/16

The force made an early start in planning for the consequences of the current spending review. As a result the force had already saved £46.4m or 94 percent of its required savings as it entered the last year of the spending review, with strong plans in place to meet its entire savings requirement.

In 2013/14 the force achieved additional savings of £7.7m largely by holding officer and staff vacancies and by making reductions in non-pay costs. The additional savings have been added to force reserves which will be used to fund further innovation as well as to support some of the one-off costs involved in reducing the size of its overall workforce.

In 2014/15 the force has a savings requirement of £3.0m and it has plans in place to achieve £0.5m savings and will use reserves to meet the remaining £2.5m savings required. The force has plans in place to achieve £11.3m of the £20.8m savings required in 2015/16 and will use reserves to meet the remaining £9.5m savings required.

Although the force recognises that it may need to reduce police officer numbers in the future, the force has taken a decision to use reserves to be in a position to defer any such decisions until there is more clarity as to force funding beyond 2015/16.

Outlook for 2016 and beyond

Although the financial position is less clear beyond 2016 the force has started detailed scenario planning with its partner Deloitte. The force estimates that it may have to achieve £15m year on year beyond the £20.8m savings required by the end of 2015/16. The force has developed a menu of options to achieve savings that are scalable to meet a range of potential future funding challenges.

The force's current medium-term financial planning is based on its worst-case scenario. It hopes to be able to revise these plans to show smaller cost reductions in the future.

Summary



Outstanding

- Early planning has resulted in the force achieving 94 percent of its required savings for the spending review a year early. It has plans in place to achieve the £20.8m required in 2015/16 through planned savings which it will begin to achieve this year.
- The force's savings plans prioritise expenditure to provide visible local policing and a more victim-focused service, supported by earmarked reserves.
- The force has developed a menu of options to achieve savings that are scalable to meet a variety of potential future funding challenges beyond 2016.
- The force is in a position to defer any decisions to reduce police officer numbers until there is more clarity around its funding beyond 2015.
- The force is considering the longer-term financial outlook and exploring what this means for policing Kent. It is making the necessary decisions today so that it can be best placed to continue to provide effective policing in the future.

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

HMIC looks at how the force is structured to provide policing. We ask if this is affordable as the force responds to their financial challenge. We look at what the force is doing to reduce its costs, how it is protecting officers and staff engaged in fighting crime and keeping communities safe, and how it is making the required changes through its change programme.

How the force provides policing

In 2011, Kent introduced a new operating model for local policing, reducing from six policing areas to three divisions, with more officers based in and working from neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood officers were also given a wider remit and the force launched a 'borderless' response to make sure that the nearest and most suitable officers attend an incident. Reports of non-urgent crimes were dealt with differently through an appointment system. Some services, such as custody were centralised as part of the changes brought into effect at that time.

This model for local policing has evolved and the force is now modifying the model further, informed by its analysis of demand, risk, harm and threat. The changes are designed to ensure that the force is better able to meet future financial challenges. Neighbourhood and response officers have been brought together into single local policing teams, one based in each district. Community safety units (CSUs) are already established in each district. They act as the link between a range of local partners and co-ordinate activity to address long-term problems. Within the new policing model, these CSUs will be enhanced by the addition of a sergeant and four constables who will form a dedicated community policing team. The fact that the force has been able to increase staffing within the CSUs within a wider programme of savings demonstrates its commitment to visible neighbourhood policing.

Collaboration

HMIC monitors forces' progress on collaboration because it offers the opportunity to provide efficient, effective policing and help achieve savings.

The force has a well-developed and nationally recognised programme of collaboration, primarily with Essex Police. The Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate (SCD), which tackles serious and organised criminality across the counties, has been in existence for four years. As well as enhancing operational effectiveness and resilience, the SCD continues to achieve savings year on year. More recently, the two forces established a joint Support Services Directorate which encompasses business support and asset management functions and are a significant contributor to achieving savings and efficiencies overall.

The force has identified further opportunities to achieve greater savings by streamlining processes and looking to increase the efficiency of existing collaborations. The implementation of a new web-based IT system, Athena, is due to be implemented across Kent and Essex in 2015 and will replace a number of different IT systems (custody, case preparation, intelligence and crime recording) across Kent and Essex. The forces anticipate that this will yield both financial and operational benefits.

Kent Fire and Rescue Service and Kent Police now have a co-located control room at the police headquarters site. There are plans to integrate the two organisations' command and control computer systems and the force is holding discussions with the fire service about the potential to extend this collaboration further.

In 2014/15 the force expects to spend 26 percent of its net revenue expenditure on collaboration, which is significantly higher than the 11 percent figure for England and Wales. Collaboration is expected to contribute 27 percent of the force's savings requirement, which is higher than the 10 percent figure for England and Wales.

Managing change

Reductions in police budgets have led to a shrinking workforce. HMIC expects forces to look at longer-term transformation which can help maintain or improve the service they offer to the public and prepare for future funding reductions.

The force's overall activity supports the implementation of the police and crime commissioner's police and crime plan. Current savings plan prioritise expenditure in neighbourhood policing teams, increasing their ability to focus on long term resolution of crime and anti social behaviour problems, capability, supported by special constables who provide visible local policing.

The force has recognised that it needs to improve levels of supervision in local policing and is increasing the number of sergeants. It is taking steps to develop the skills of those seeking promotion to equip them for this role. The force makes good use of special constables and the police and crime commissioner has made funds available to further enhance this.

Inevitably, much of the force's savings come from workforce reductions. Kent Police has a robust approach to managing workforce reductions to ensure that the required savings are achieved. Up to now the force has sought to make its entire savings by the beginning of the year in which they need to be achieved. In future, any reductions in police officer numbers will be made as late as possible so as to minimise frontline reductions, allowing the force additional time to develop alternative savings options. HMIC is particularly impressed with the rigor of the force's workforce modelling. It has developed a more sophisticated

approach, moving from a historical to more predictive model that includes scenario planning and is directly linked to financial planning. This is enabling the force to better identify and manage critical posts.

The force uses a business analysis approach known as 'lean' to help achieve greater efficiencies and savings. The way in which staff work is examined in detail to identify and strip out duplication, inefficiencies and unnecessary activity. Steps are also being taken to identify where officers are working below their optimum capacity in order to use their time more efficiently.

The planned investment in technology, the use of a 'lean' business approach and the work the force is doing to reduce demand is contributing to its efficiency and effectiveness. The force is sensibly deferring decisions to reduce its officer and PCSO numbers further until it has greater clarity on the scale of future funding reductions.

The force identified that the main elements of its change programme during the current spending review are:

- changing the way local policing is provided;
- improved arrangements with other forces for providing specialist policing functions;
- better alignment of resources to demand;
- introducing borderless deployment of resources in the force area; and
- using IT to streamline ways of working and reducing bureaucracy.

The force identifies that the main elements of its change programme as it responds to future financial pressures will include:

- improved call management;
- use of predictive technology;
- improved IT;
- collaboration with another part of the public sector; and
- the development of mobile data applications to improve productivity and operational effectiveness.

How is the force supporting its workforce to manage change and effective service provision?

The chief constable has demonstrated strong leadership in taking personal responsibility in overseeing the required cultural change as the force moves from a target driven organisation to one focused on quality of service. This is a positive step, but one which represents a significant change in culture for the force. This will inevitably take some time to embed fully. The workforce recognises this personal commitment as a positive step in continuing to support change. Chief officer strategic meetings are now held at local police stations once a month where staff are invited to attend and contribute. This approach has improved the visibility of the chief officer team who use the opportunity to spend time on patrol with local officers.

Most of the staff HMIC spoke to were positive about the changes that the force was planning to make to its operating model. They welcomed the fact that the new way of working would give them a broader range of experience. However, staff also acknowledged that unless the force took steps to reduce demand, then problems affecting service provision would continue.

The force has invested significantly in training supervisors in advance of introducing the new policing model. Staff had mixed views about the effectiveness of the training that was designed to equip them for their new roles.

The force has just carried out its first comprehensive staff survey for a number of years. Although the results of the survey were not available at the time of the inspection, there was a strong expectation among staff that the chief constable would act positively upon the results.

How is the force achieving the savings?

Because around 80 percent of a police budget (on average) is spent on staff costs, it is not surprising that 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.

However, we do expect forces to also bear down on their other costs (non-pay) such as the equipment they buy, the accommodation and vehicles they use and the contracts they enter for services such as cleaning. The force plans to make 22 percent of its savings from non-pay, this is lower than the 29 percent figure for England and Wales.

Kent Police is developing a more strategic approach to achieving non-pay savings. Its

review of estates is a typical example of this. Two of the large police stations in Kent (Medway and North Kent) are managed as part of a private finance initiative (PFI) arrangement. The force has been exploring how to make better use of these buildings through the relocation of some departments, including a number of Kent and Essex collaborated functions. This is helping the force to get better value from their PFI contracts and enabling it to consider selling some of its other buildings. Kent and Essex Police are reviewing options to centralise some of their training provision, which would achieve further savings.

Kent and Essex have a joint procurement department. There are plans to achieve savings of £3.5m by April 2016 through better procurement.

As with other forces most of the savings comes from reducing the workforce. Kent Police 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 78 percent of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is higher than the figure for other forces of 71 percent.

The following table shows the constabulary's planned changes to workforce numbers over the spending review period, and compares these to the change for England and Wales.

Please note, these figures are rounded.

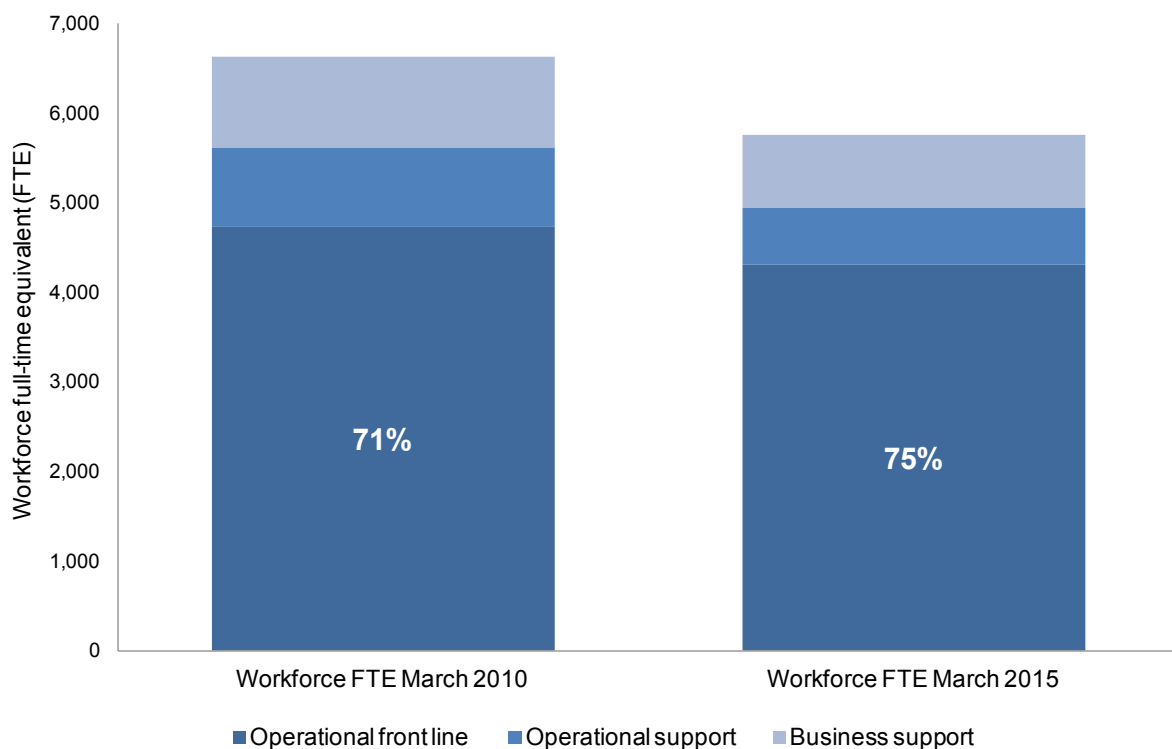
	31 March 2010 (baseline)	31 March 2015	Change	Force change %	Change for England and Wales %
Police officers	3,787	3,271	-516	-14%	-11%
Police staff	2,673	2,107	-566	-21%	-17%
PCSOs	387	370	-17	-4%	-22%
Total	6,847	5,748	-1,099	-16%	-14%
Specials	310	330	20	6%	44%

Over the spending review Kent Police plan to lose a slightly higher number of police officers and police staff but a smaller number of PCSOs than other forces. The overall workforce reduction at 16 percent is slightly higher than the 14 percent figure for other forces.

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 frontline crime-fighting roles.

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.

The following chart shows the planned change in the workforce frontline profile in Kent Police.



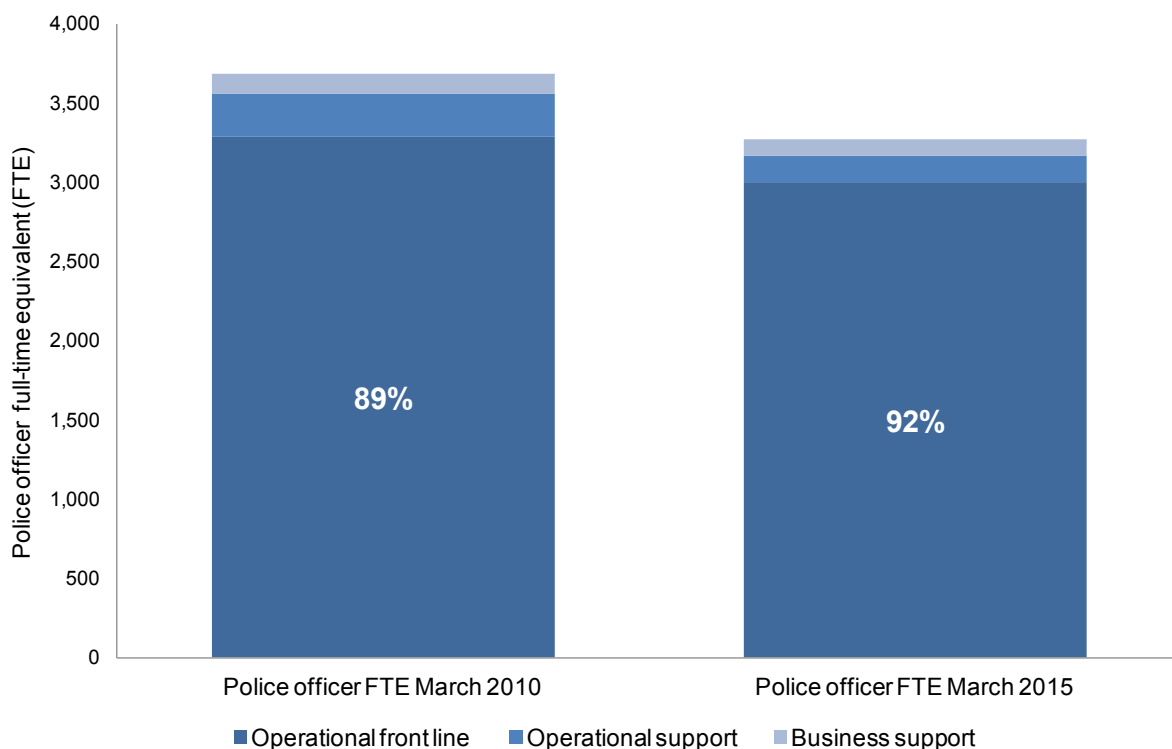
Note: England and Wales reports an increase in the proportion of workforce on the front line from 74 percent in March 2010 to 78 percent in March 2015.

The number of officers, PCSOs and staff working on Kent’s front line is projected to reduce by 427 between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 4,728 to 4,301).

Over the same period, the proportion of Kent’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is projected to increase from 71 percent to 75 percent. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74 percent to 78 percent. As Kent Police collaborates on business support services with Essex Police and shares staff, there is an impact on these workforce proportions, which makes direct comparison with other forces difficult.

The number of Kent's police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 284 from 3,283 in March 2010 to 2,999 by March 2015, as the following chart shows. The proportion of officers remaining on the front line is projected to increase from 89 percent to 92 percent. This is in line with an overall increase across England and Wales from 89 percent to 92 percent and shows Kent Police is seeking to protect frontline crime-fighting roles as it makes these cuts.

The following chart shows the planned change in police officers' frontline profile.



Note: England and Wales reports an increase in the proportion of police officers on the front line from 89 percent in March 2010 to 92 percent in March 2015.

Summary



Good

- The force has a sophisticated workforce model, which is aligned to meeting its current requirements, and will support the force’s change in approach as it minimises frontline officer reductions.
- The force’s collaboration with Essex Police is mature and has contributed to it being able to achieve the savings early in this spending review. This includes the notable collaboration on support services. The force has identified further opportunities within its future plans.
- Kent continues to focus on achieving non-pay savings. Through joint procurement it has identified £3.5m of savings.
- The force is committed to providing effective local policing and is focusing its restructuring and workforce reductions to protect the front line. Over the spending review the force will increase its proportion of frontline crime-fighting roles.

To what extent is the force efficient?

HMIC looks at how the force understands the demands that it faces and how it allocates both financial resources and staff to meet these demands. We look at how these decisions are leading to effective results for the public, in particular that police are visible and that they attend promptly when called, that they are fighting crime and keeping communities safe, and that victims are satisfied with the service they receive.

How well does the force understand and manage demand?

The force has a comprehensive understanding of its demand, risk, harm and threat, which draws on extensive police and partner agency data. It also reflects the views of the local community through the force's Kent Crime and Victimization Survey. Recent changes made by the force to its recording processes have improved the accuracy of its crime data. This is helping the force to have a more accurate picture of crime across the force area.

The force has established a demand reduction board that meets monthly to examine opportunities to reduce demand without affecting the quality of service. Reducing demand, both internally and with partners, is critical to the force's success in tackling the financial challenges it will face in the next spending round of 2015 and beyond. The force is identifying the most regular sources of repeat demand and is taking steps to reduce it.

The force is committed to understanding its demand. It will be able to afford the resourcing requirements for providing local policing within Kent by tackling and reducing unnecessary demand. Until recently the force attended all reports of crime, even in those cases where the victim expressly did not want the police to attend. Changes have been made to the force's policy on attending crimes already and since March the initial investigation of a small number of specific crime types are being dealt over the phone (unless the victim is identified as being vulnerable, in which case the police will attend). An early evaluation has shown that significant police time is being saved. A full evaluation is planned and this will rightly include an assessment of the public's satisfaction, or dissatisfaction, with the changes.

How efficiently does the force allocate its resources?

There are 13 policing districts in Kent, which follow local authority boundaries. The force uses a sophisticated demand model using three years' data to determine the number of officers needed per shift. It is able to accommodate additional requirements to police specific events. Resources are allocated to the policing districts on an analysis of demand, threat, harm and risk.

The force control room sends the nearest response officer to an incident, irrespective of any internal force boundaries. This approach is generally well understood by staff although problems caused by officers being on a range of radio channels need resolving.

With the change to the local policing model, district commanders will assume responsibility for the response team (officers who respond to emergency calls). It is intended that this will give district commanders a larger number of officers and staff to deploy. And it is envisaged that because response officers will be working in a specific area, accountable to local commanders, they will have a better understanding of the issues in their locality, and will be better placed to provide a good policing service.

The force uses a computer programme known as 'PredPol' to help analyse a range of data to identify very specific problem locations where preventative patrolling is likely to have most impact. Officers are directed to patrol these areas where they are given the discretion to 'police what they find'. This approach is generally effective although the force needs to consider how the tool can be used to best effect across the county.

The force is working with a variety of public agencies including the NHS and those in the criminal justice system to improve services to people with mental health problems through better joint working. For example, the force is piloting mental health professionals working alongside frontline officers to help respond to calls involving mental health concerns. The force has also introduced Live Link, which enables victims, witnesses and police officers to give evidence via a video link rather than having to attend court in person. As well as supporting victims, this approach is providing benefits in freeing up both court and officer time.

Assessments of how the workforce spends its time are a regular feature of lean reviews. As well as internal reviews, the force has extended this approach to involve partners, for example in a recent multi-agency review of rape investigations to improve the quality of service for victims.

The force plans to increase its spending on new technology with the introduction of body-worn cameras and hand-held tablet computers. It is also piloting digital case files and has increased its capacity to analyse mobile phones seized as a result of criminal investigations. This is reducing delays and costs.

How does the force respond and keep its communities safe?

The challenge for forces is not just to save money and reduce their workforce numbers, but also to ensure the choices they make do not have a negative impact on the service they provide to their communities. HMIC looked for evidence that keeping the communities safe is at the heart of the force's decision.

Calls for service

HMIC examined whether Kent Police was taking longer to respond to calls for help, as a result of 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.

We found that over the four years from 2010 to present, Kent had continued to monitor response times against previous targets 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.

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The following table compares the force's performance in 2010/11 to 2013/14.

Calls for service	2010/11	2013/14
Percentage of urban emergency calls on target	93.0	77.2
Percentage of rural emergency calls on target	88.0	76.5
Percentage of priority calls on target	77.0	63.8

Over the spending review, the force's response to both emergency and priority calls has declined. HMIC is concerned by the decline in the force's response to emergencies.

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 in 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. HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the force had affected the visibility of the police in the Kent area.

In 2014, Kent Police allocated 59 percent of its police officers to visible roles. This is 6.0 percentage points higher than the number allocated in 2010, and higher than the 56 figure for England and Wales in 2014.

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs, who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, Kent Police allocated 62 percent of these staff to visible roles. This is 5.3 percentage points higher than it allocated in 2010, and higher than the 60 percent figure for England and Wales.

HMIC conducted a survey¹ 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 Kent, 8 percent said that they have seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago; this compares to 12 percent of respondents in England and Wales.

Furthermore, 82 percent of respondents in Kent said they felt safe from crime where they lived, compared to 84 percent of respondents in England and Wales. Finally, 6 percent said they felt safer from crime than they did two years ago, compared to 9 percent of respondents in England and Wales.

Crime

In 2010, the Home Secretary set a clear priority for the police service to reduce crime. Between 2010/11 and 2013/14 (which includes the first three years of the spending review), recorded crime in Kent rose (excluding fraud) by 5 percent, compared with a 14 percent reduction in England and Wales. Over this period, victim-based crime (that is, crimes where there is a direct victim – an individual, a group, or an organisation) also rose by 5 percent, compared with a 14 percent reduction in England and Wales.

Looking just at the last 12 months recorded crime (excluding fraud) increased by 11 percent in comparison to a reduction of 1 percent for England and Wales.

The force attributes a significant proportion of the increase in crime to changes that it has made to its crime recording processes to make them more accurate.

By looking at how many crimes occur per head of population, we get an indication of how safe it is for the public in that police area.

¹ Sample sizes for each force were chosen to produce a confidence interval of no more than ± 6 percent and for England and Wales, no more than ± 1 percent. Forces' differences to the England and Wales value may not be statistically significant.

The table below shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Kent (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to March 2014	Rate per 1,000 population	England and Wales rate per 1,000 population
Crimes (excluding fraud)	62.3	61.1
Victim-based crime	57.2	54.3
Sexual offences	1.3	1.1
Burglary	8.0	7.8
Violence against the person	14.7	11.1
ASB incidents	29.3	37.2

It is important that crimes are investigated effectively and the perpetrator brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to identify who has committed a crime, it can be described as detected. Kent Police's detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2014 was 25 percent. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales' detection rate of 26 percent.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in the Kent Police area. 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 provision 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 2014, 86.8 percent (\pm 1.2 percent) of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Kent Police. This is higher than the England and Wales figure of 85.2 percent (\pm 0.2 percent).

Changes to how the public can access services

Earlier in the spending review Kent Police considered whether it might need to close some police station front counters. However, it identified subsequently that by rationalising opening hours it could continue to provide access to services for communities and provide sufficient savings limiting the need to close any further front counters.

Over the spending review the number of front counters will reduce from 23 to 22, however, the force is opening four shared-service sites providing greater opportunities for access.

This includes the 'Safety Shop' at Bluewater shopping centre which receives around 10,000 visitors each month, most of whom are Kent residents.

In April 2014, the force launched 'Track my crime', a computer database where victims of crime can log in and find out how their cases are progressing and access updates on the investigation.

Kent also has six mobile police stations, which are used to variable effect across the force area. Local communities are able to bid for them to attend events they are hosting.

Summary

Good

- The force has seen an increase in recorded crime over the spending review, some of which is attributable to the change in the force's crime recording practices last year. Victim satisfaction has increased and is higher than other forces. The force should review its arrangements for attending emergency calls as the service to the public has deteriorated over the last four years.
- The force has a comprehensive understanding of demand and can evidence the steps it is taking to reduce the demands on its policing services.
- Through the use of the 'PredPol' programme, the force directs patrols to areas that will have the greatest impact in reducing crime. Its demand analysis is being used to inform decisions about changes to the way local policing is provided.

Our judgments

HMIC uses four categories for making judgments, two are positive and two are negative. The categories are:

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

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.