

PEEL: Police efficiency 2015

An inspection of Suffolk Constabulary



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Overview – How efficient is the force at keeping people safe and reducing crime?

Overall judgment¹



Good

HMIC found that Suffolk Constabulary is adequately prepared to face its future financial challenges. The constabulary is improving its understanding of the demand on its services. It realises that its current workforce model needs to change to ensure that it can continue to provide an effective service to the public – meeting future demands within a reduced budget. In last year's value for money inspection, which considered how forces had met the challenge of the first spending review period, Suffolk was judged to be good.

Summary

HMIC judges Suffolk Constabulary to be good. The constabulary is continuing to improve its understanding of the current demand for policing services across the county.

However, it needs to do more to gain a sufficiently comprehensive picture of current and likely future demand, so that it can plan effectively.

Suffolk Constabulary's current workforce model matches demand, organisational and financial requirements well. However, the constabulary recognises that this model will become unsustainable given the need to reduce spending still further, which will result in reduced workforce numbers.

HMIC is encouraged to see that the constabulary is currently undertaking more detailed analysis to support the case for change so that the impact of any further reductions in staff can be fully evaluated.

The constabulary works well in collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary. It has been able not only to save money but also provide greater resilience by joining forces to provide specialist services. HMIC found many examples of constructive work with local partner organisations to work together to prevent crime and improve services.

Overall, Suffolk Constabulary has a good track record of achieving the required savings; it has successfully reduced its spending by £18.8m from 2011/12 to 2014/15.

¹ Outstanding, Good, Requires improvement or Inadequate – see Annex A for definitions.

The constabulary’s control of its expenditure is good with clear leadership and accountability processes in place. Its plans do reflect the police and crime commissioner (PCC) priorities with shared understanding and assumptions when planning for the future.

It has outline plans already in place to achieve most of the anticipated further reductions in spending through to 2020.

<p>How well does the force use its resources to meet its demand?</p>	<p>How sustainable and affordable is the workforce model?</p>	<p>How sustainable is the force's financial position for the short and long term?</p>
<p> Good</p>	<p> Requires improvement</p>	<p> Good</p>
<p>Suffolk Constabulary is continuing to improve its understanding of the current demand for policing services across the county. It needs to do more to gain a sufficiently comprehensive picture of current and likely future demand.</p> <p>The introduction of a new approach to responding to calls for service, based on the individual circumstances rather than type of crime, is positive. It recognises that some victims of crime need more support from police services regardless of the type of crime.</p> <p>While the constabulary is yet to develop a thorough understanding of the cost of</p>	<p>Suffolk Constabulary's current workforce model matches demand, organisational and financial requirements well and is aligned to the PCC’s police and crime plan.</p> <p>However, the constabulary has recognised that the current model is unsustainable given the need to reduce spending further which will result in reduced workforce numbers.</p> <p>The constabulary has started a more detailed analysis to support the case for change so that the impact of any further reductions in staff can be fully evaluated. The constabulary is currently undertaking more detailed</p>	<p>Overall, Suffolk Constabulary has a good track record of achieving the required savings; it has successfully reduced its spending by £18.8m from 2011/12 to 2014/15.</p> <p>It achieved a balanced budget in 2014/15 and has planned a balanced budget for 2015/16. The approach to reducing spending has been managed robustly and resulted in savings accruing ahead of time allowing the constabulary to build up financial reserves.</p> <p>The constabulary has secured funding from other sources and works with other organisations to apply for and be provided with funding. There is evidence of good budgetary control</p>

<p>delivering its core services, it has commissioned a project from an external consultancy company to support this work and help with developing the budget for 2016/17.</p> <p>The constabulary works well in collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary. It has been able to save money and provide greater resilience by collaborating to provide support functions and specialist policing services.</p> <p>HMIC found many examples of constructive work with local partner organisations to work together to prevent crime, reduce demand and improve services.</p>	<p>analysis to support the case for change so that the impact of any further reductions in staff can be fully evaluated.</p> <p>The constabulary has now embarked on a five-year plan to transform how it will deliver local policing by 2020. It has made sound and prudent predictions about the level of staffing it will be able to afford by 2020.</p> <p>The constabulary has extensive collaborative working arrangements with Norfolk Constabulary involving a number of specialist policing units and back office functions generating significant savings</p> <p>While the constabulary has identified firm savings plans for 2015/16, plans for 2016/17 onwards are less well developed. This together with the developing understanding of the constabulary's demand means that the constabulary is currently unable to fully plan a future workforce model that will match predicted demand, organisational and financial requirements, hence the grade of requires improvement.</p>	<p>by managers, supported by finance advisors, and scrutiny of expenditure.</p> <p>The PCC's priorities are reflected in the constabulary's plans and there is clear accountability. The constabulary and the office of the police and crime commissioner (OPCC) work together and share assumptions for financial planning.</p> <p>The constabulary has started to develop plans for future anticipated savings through to 2020; however it will need to have a full understanding of its demands and finalise a model for policing that is capable of meeting future demand efficiently, effectively and within a reduced budget.</p>
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Force in numbers



Financial position

Forecasted change in expenditure 2015/16 to 2018/19



It is important to note that some forces only provided figures for savings they had formally signed off at that point, while others provided estimates for the whole period. As a result, the savings figure above might not reflect the full saving which the force might have to make. 2014/15 GRE has been used here as a baseline.



Providing policing

Planned change in police officer numbers 31 March 2015 - 31 March 2018

Suffolk Constabulary England and Wales

-5%

-6%

Planned change in total workforce numbers 31 March 2015 - 31 March 2018

Suffolk Constabulary England and Wales

-2%

-6%

Proportion of police officers on the operational frontline 31 March 2010

Suffolk Constabulary England and Wales

91%

89%

Proportion of police officers on the operational frontline 31 March 2015

Suffolk Constabulary England and Wales

94%

92%

Planned proportion of police officers on the operational frontline 31 March 2018

Suffolk Constabulary England and Wales

94%

92%



Organisation

Police officer cost per head of population compared to England & Wales (2014/15)

Suffolk Constabulary England and Wales

£84

£115

Workforce cost per head of population compared to England & Wales (2014/15)

Suffolk Constabulary England and Wales

£132

£165



Key statistics

Changes in recorded crime (excluding fraud) 12 months to 31 March 2014 to 12 months to 31 March 2015

Suffolk Constabulary England and Wales

+4%

+2%

Changes in recorded crime (excluding fraud) 12 months to 31 March 2010 to 12 months to 31 March 2015

Suffolk Constabulary England and Wales

-17%

-16%

Victim satisfaction 12 months to 31 March 2015

Suffolk Constabulary England and Wales

87.2%

83.8%

Changes in victim satisfaction 12 months to 31 March 2011 to 12 months to 31 March 2015

Suffolk Constabulary England and Wales

Increased

No change

Victim satisfaction: Suffolk, confidence interval +/- 2.1 percent. England and Wales, confidence interval +/- 0.2 percent.

For full details on the data used in this graphic see annex A in the efficiency national report.

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. Now, in a period of sustained budget reductions, forces need to continue to make efficiencies while focusing on reducing crime and keeping communities safe.

As part of its annual inspections into police effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy (PEEL), HMIC's efficiency programme assessed how a force maximises the outcomes from its available resources. We reviewed both the financial and workforce planning of police forces while examining wider questions of cost, capability and productivity. Our inspection focused on the overall question, 'How efficient is the force at keeping people safe and reducing crime?'

To answer this question we looked at three areas:

- How well does the force use its resources to meet demand?
- How sustainable and affordable is the workforce model?
- How sustainable is the force's financial position for the short and long term?

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 received and conducted in-force inspections. We interviewed chief constables and the chief officers responsible for finance, organisational change, human resources and performance in each force and held focus groups of officers and staff at different grades and ranks, and made unannounced visits to police stations.

This report sets out the findings from this wide-ranging inspection of Suffolk Constabulary.

How well does the force use its resources to meet its demand?

HMIC examined how the constabulary understands the demands on its services and how it allocates its staff and financial resources to meet these demands. Then we assessed whether these decisions are leading to good results for the public – that the 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 its demand?

Suffolk Constabulary is continuing to improve its understanding of the current demand for policing services across the county but has yet to have a full picture across all of its services. The first phase of its local policing model review used a number of analytical tools but included limited analysis of demands and relied more on the views of senior leaders. As a result, the model was based more on the need to achieve savings and based on professional judgment rather than a robust analysis of what was required to meet demand.

The constabulary acknowledges that while analysis was completed for the criminal investigation department (CID) and investigations business cases, the decisions were heavily influenced by professional judgment, rather than the analysis of demand. Such an approach presents a risk in that in some areas of policing demand may not be fully understood and therefore resources not properly aligned, which could affect the services provided.

The constabulary is now using more detailed and sophisticated analytical techniques to understand fully the demand it faces within the second phase of this review. This includes activity-based assessments, consultation with staff and capturing what individuals do in detail to understand fully what and how services are provided to the public. This will assist the constabulary's understanding of its current demand and how to provide better policing services to the public.

There are areas for improvement in the accuracy of the constabulary's crime recording, which may provide a misleading picture of some aspects of demand. The constabulary has identified the need to improve its recording of crime to ensure that it is fully compliant with the national recording standards. To improve its performance, the constabulary has undertaken a programme of work which includes two independent reviews and assistance from a neighbouring force.

It is important that the work to understand fully the current demand for services continues in order that the constabulary can be confident that any changes in how it provides policing are based on sound evidence and analysis.

This will enable the constabulary to manage the demand from the public better and continue to provide effective policing as its budgets reduce.

How well does the force match resources to demand?

The constabulary maintains a good overview of the major ongoing risks and threats from crimes that are facing communities in Suffolk. It has developed a set of operational priorities for policing which are reviewed quarterly with monthly updates to ensure resources are directed at tackling these priorities and that the risks and threats are effectively managed. The constabulary's tactical tasking and co-ordination group receives updates on specific policing operations and day-to-day emerging issues, this enables seasonal trends and any increased threat and risk to be monitored and acted upon. For example the constabulary has recently increased the number of staff supporting vulnerable victims in line with the PCC's police and crime plan.

Until recently Suffolk Constabulary had a policy of allocating resources based on the volume of different types of crime or incidents that need police attendance, for example numbers of reported burglaries or car thefts. As a result the number of officers and staff assigned to various roles was based on historic crime and incident data. The constabulary has now recognised that as resources are continuing to reduce, it needs to develop a more sophisticated approach to matching resources to demand, to ensure that it can continue to meet the needs of the public, particularly the most vulnerable. This is a fundamental change in approach, which acknowledges that not all victims of crime require the same level of service. It recognises that some victims of crime need more support from police services regardless of the type of crime, and other incidents can be satisfactorily resolved without police attending or with less resource.

In April 2015, the constabulary introduced an approach of deciding on the appropriate level of police response based on the threat or risk posed to members of the public considering their individual vulnerability in each case. It introduced a widely-used technique for risk assessment known as THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement). The technique provides members of staff who are receiving calls for police services with a way of making a fully-rounded decision about the relative risk to the individual victim, the level of threat, and the opportunities to investigate a crime. This enables the police response to be more proportionate to the risk and threat to the victim.

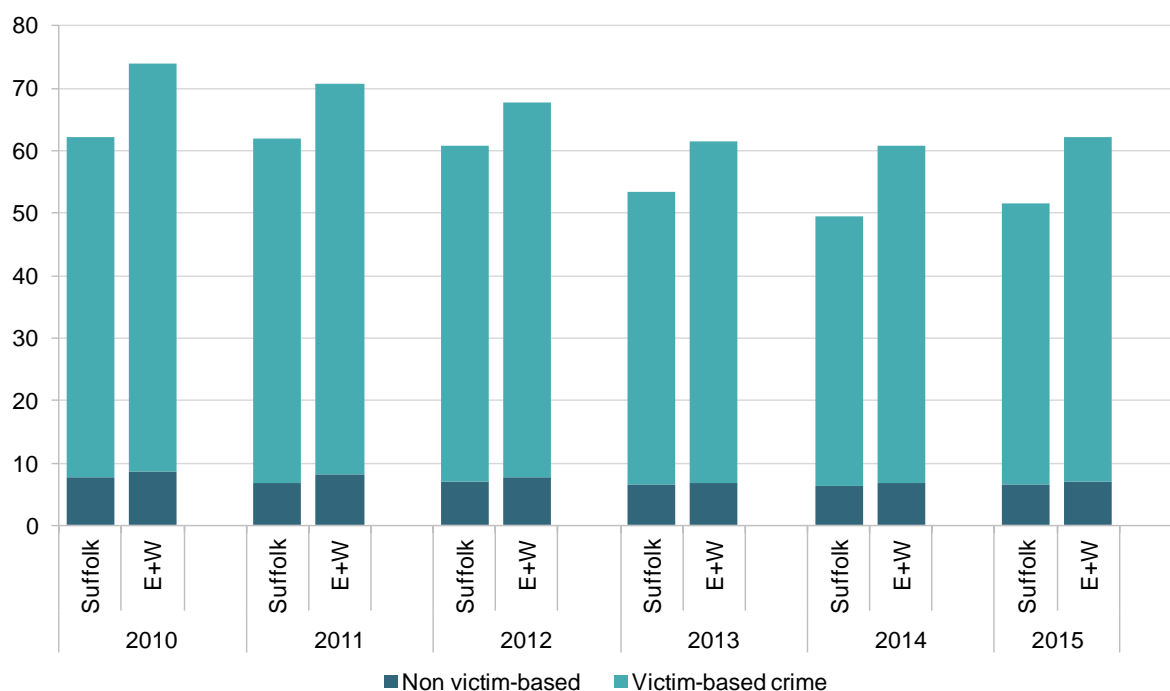
How well are the force's services meeting the demand from the public?

To assess the constabulary's response to public demand, HMIC considered crime figures and rates in Suffolk; victim satisfaction levels; and whether the constabulary is using different ways to communicate with and engage the public.

Although police recorded crime is by no means a complete measure of the totality of demand a force faces, it does provide a comparable performance indicator across all forces. Crime rates are reported as a number of crimes per 1,000 population in each force area to enable comparison between areas. Total police recorded crime is made up of victim-based crime (e.g. theft) and non victim-based crime (e.g. possession of drugs) Two thirds of forces showed an annual increase in total police recorded crime in the year ending 31 March 2015. This increase in police recorded crime may have been affected by the renewed focus on the quality and compliance of crime recording since HMIC carried out a national inspection of crime data integrity in 2014.

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015 Suffolk had a victim-based crime rate of 45.0 and a non victim-based crime rate of 6.6 per 1,000 population. This represents a decrease (17 percent) in the victim-based crime rate and a decrease (15 percent) in the non victim-based crime rate since the start of the spending review in 2010. During the same time period England and Wales had a victim-based and non victim-based crime rate of 55.2 and 6.9 per 1,000 population respectively. This represents a decrease in both crime rates by 15 percent and 19 percent respectively since the start of the spending review. The scale of the change in crime rate can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Police recorded crimes per 1,000 population in Suffolk in the 12 months to 31 March 2010 to the 12 months to 31 March 2015, compared to England and Wales



Source: Home Office crime statistics and ONS mid-2013 population estimates (2013 population data are used across multiple years to reveal actual change in police recorded crimes, rather than changes due to population change)

Of those who have been the victim of a crime in Suffolk, 87.2 percent were satisfied with their whole experience with the police in the 12 months to 31 March 2015.² This is higher than the national victim satisfaction rate of 83.8 percent over the same time period.³ There has been a significant increase in victim satisfaction between the 12 months to 31 March 2011 and the 12 months to 31 March 2015 in Suffolk.

Suffolk Constabulary is focused on improving the service it provides to the public. It demonstrates a strong commitment to ensuring that its services are meeting the needs of the public and that confidence in the police is increased. It has established a senior level board to oversee public confidence and another with responsibility for monitoring public satisfaction. A range of measures are routinely reviewed to gauge progress, such as victim satisfaction, the time taken to attend emergency calls and levels of public confidence. It holds public meetings throughout the year to seek views on how to improve its services.

HMIC monitored how a force engages with the public as part of the inspection. Figure 2 below shows Suffolk Constabulary uses a range of methods (including Facebook, Twitter and email) to engage with the public.

² Suffolk, confidence interval +/- 2.1 percent.

³ England and Wales, confidence interval +/- 0.2 percent.

Figure 2: Methods of public engagement used by Suffolk Constabulary in the 12 months to 31 December 2014

Are the following communication channels being used by the Force?	
Facebook	Yes
Twitter	Yes
Email	Yes
Text message	Yes
Web forum	Yes
Instagram	No
Local phone (not 999 or 101)	Yes

Source: HMIC Efficiency data collection

Once fully implemented the constabulary expects that its new approach using THRIVE will enable it to allocate resources better towards those who are particularly vulnerable. Also, it expects to see more calls resolved at an earlier stage either within the control room⁴ or by telephone investigation. As a result it expects fewer deployments to incidents that do not present a risk and do not provide investigative opportunities, allowing it to prioritise its resources to higher-risk incidents. It is important that the constabulary undertakes a review of the effectiveness of the new approach and that this is considered alongside the work to understand demand on its services better. The constabulary needs to consider both within its review of its policing model.

Suffolk intends to remove the current one-hour target for attending non-emergency calls from the public. While yet to be formally approved, this change is being considered without wide consultation with senior managers across the constabulary. The constabulary needs to ensure that it monitors the impact of this change in relation to the service it provides to the public.

⁴ Facility in which call-handlers answer telephone calls from the public, determine the circumstances of the incident, decide what needs to be done, and initiate the initial response.

How well is the force managing demand?

Suffolk Constabulary is actively looking at new ways to understand and manage demand on its services better, and making more efficient use of police time and resources.

In April 2015, Suffolk introduced a service desk within the constabulary control room which receives calls from the public. By improving its working methods, early signs are showing that this is leading to greater efficiency and reducing demand for police attendance at incidents. The constabulary has also introduced a system where appointments are made with members of the public for an officer to attend at a later date to deal with less urgent issues.

Suffolk is also working with a range of other organisations to reduce unnecessary demand and redirect calls for service where appropriate. Examples of this include working with the Samaritans and the Red Cross to assist where people are concerned about the welfare of relatives living in the county, thus reducing demand on frontline staff. The constabulary is also working alongside mental health professionals in Ipswich to provide a more appropriate and proportionate response to those needing specialist care and support.

The constabulary recognises the value of working proactively with other local agencies to tackle jointly the underlying causes of crime and anti-social behaviour in order to prevent it and reduce demand on all services in the longer term. An example of this is Lowestoft Rising, which is a fundamental change in the way public services are provided. It aims to integrate public services in a more co-ordinated way, bringing together Suffolk County Council, Waveney District Council, Suffolk Constabulary, the OPCC and Health East (Clinical Commissioning Group) in order to address a range of social issues. As a result, the constabulary estimates that the number of burglaries of people's homes have reduced by 60 percent since 2010/11. The constabulary also stated during inspection that there had been a reduction in the number of young offenders and a decrease in the number of street drinkers in the town, as a result of preventive work to tackle the causes and cycle of street drinking.

How well does the force monitor and understand outputs, outcomes and costs?

Suffolk Constabulary has undertaken a wide range of activities to understand how it provides services to the public and has worked to manage and reduce demand better. The constabulary recognises that it could do more to understand better the relationship between its costs and the outcomes of services. While the constabulary is yet to develop a thorough understanding of the cost of providing its core services, it has commissioned a project from an external consultancy company to support this work and help develop the constabulary's budget for 2016/17.

Together with Norfolk Constabulary, Suffolk has recently entered into a three-year contract with the 'Better Policing Collaborative' which is a partnership made up of a number of universities as well as the organisation, Skills for Justice.⁵ This group should offer an opportunity for the constabulary to apply an academic evaluation of specific areas of policing. This should provide the constabulary with a better understanding of what does and does not work and allow it to make future decisions based on strong evidence.

How well is the force using new working methods to improve services?

Suffolk has a strong commitment to continuous improvement and evidence of this is shown by its mature and successful collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary. The constabulary is exploring a number of new working methods to improve services.

The constabulary makes good use of collaborative working with other police forces regionally and particularly with Norfolk Constabulary. It has developed a strong collaboration with Norfolk, with the constabulary indicating that 1,700 police officers and staff work in joint units between the two forces. This has enabled Suffolk Constabulary to reduce its costs by operating more efficiently, as well as providing access to greater resilience for both forces. The arrangements for collaboration are kept under constant review. The constabulary assesses that further savings of £1.29m has recently been achieved across both Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies by changing the way the collaborative arrangements provide services within criminal justice and custody.

The constabulary is working collaboratively with Norfolk Constabulary to ensure systems and processes are consistent to enable greater sharing of information and joint use of operational resources between the two constabularies. For example, both constabularies have introduced the THRIVE assessment framework and operate using the same command and control system. There is also a plan to introduce a new IT system (Athena) later this year that will help achieve more seamless services in relation to investigation, intelligence, custody and case management.

Suffolk Constabulary in collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary has introduced a new human resources and finance (ERP) system, the aim of which is to reduce business support costs. Staff told HMIC that there had been insufficient training before the system was introduced and it was limiting their ability to be more efficient.

⁵ Skills for Justice is the sector skills council for justice, community safety and legal services.

The constabulary has an opportunity to learn lessons from the introduction of this IT system by undertaking an evaluation, so that it is better placed to manage the more significant business change that will come with the implementation of the Athena IT system later in the year.

Suffolk is also working with a number of other public sector organisations and charities in an effort to reduce demand and ensure that the most appropriate organisation responds to calls for service from the public. By working closely with other organisations, the constabulary is aiming to provide a more co-ordinated and seamless service to the public. For example, the 'street triage project' involves mental health nurses working alongside the constabulary's response officers in Ipswich. It aims to improve the care and support provided to people experiencing mental illness who come into contact with police. The pilot scheme has been evaluated and the constabulary is looking to extend the scheme across the county.

HMIC found many examples of the constabulary being willing to explore new approaches and working jointly with others, although it is less clear that the wide range of different activities are always being systematically evaluated to ensure that the outcomes justify the investment of time and resources from all concerned.

Summary of findings



Good

Suffolk Constabulary is continuing to improve its understanding of the current demand for policing services across the county. It needs to do more to gain a sufficiently comprehensive picture of current and likely future demand.

The introduction of a new approach to responding to calls for service, based on the individual circumstances rather than type of crime, is positive. It recognises that some victims of crime need more support from police services regardless of the type of crime.

While the constabulary is yet to develop a thorough understanding of the cost of delivering its core services, it has commissioned a project from an external consultancy company to support this work and help with developing the budget for 2016/17.

The constabulary works well in collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary. It has been able to save money and provide greater resilience by collaborating to provide support functions and specialist policing services.

HMIC found many examples of constructive work with local partner organisations to work together to prevent crime, reduce demand and improve services.

How sustainable and affordable is the workforce model?

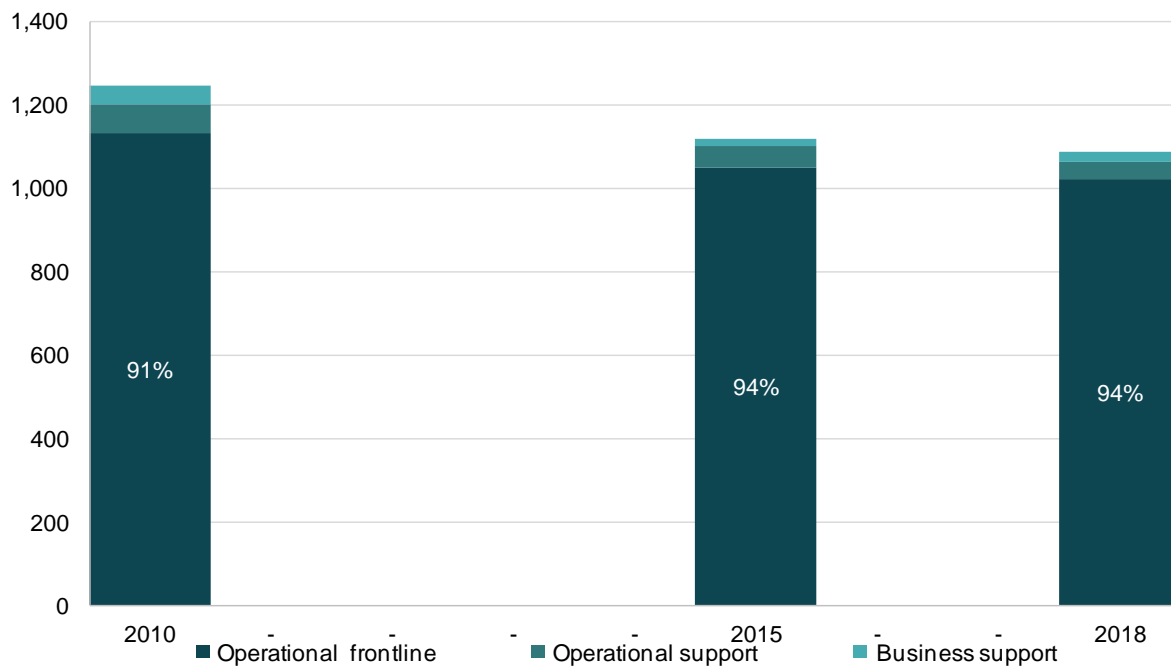
HMIC examined how Suffolk Constabulary has structured its workforce (i.e. its mix of police officers, staff and PCSOs, and the proportion of all these groups working in frontline positions), and assessed whether this was affordable and sustainable as the constabulary responds to its financial challenge. We also considered what the constabulary is doing to ensure the workforce has the right skills and capacity to fight crime and keep communities safe now and in the future.

How well does the force's current workforce model match demand, organisational and financial requirements?

Suffolk Constabulary forecasted a total savings requirement over the first four years of the spending review as part of the value for money inspection (2011/12 to 2014/15) of £18.8m. This is the equivalent of 15 percent of the 2010/11 gross revenue expenditure for the constabulary. Savings were made in both the pay and non-pay budgets. Since 2010, Suffolk Constabulary has seen a reduction of 99 police officers, 156 staff and 6 Police and Community Support Officers (PCSOs) full-time equivalent (FTE).

In Suffolk, there have been reductions in the total number of police officers (FTE) over the period 2010 to 2015, as shown in figure 3. During this time period the proportion in frontline roles has increased from 91 percent in 2010 to 94 percent in 2015. The constabulary expects to maintain this proportion looking ahead to 2018.

Figure 3: Actual and planned changes to police officer full-time equivalents (FTE) in operational frontline, operational support and business support roles in Suffolk Constabulary, from 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2018



Source: Home Office annual data return and HMIC efficiency data collection

For further information about the data for figure 3 please see Annex B

Suffolk Constabulary's current workforce model matches demand, organisational and financial requirements well and is aligned to the PCC's police and crime plan. However, the constabulary recognises that this model will become unsustainable given the need to reduce spending still further which will result in reduced workforce numbers.

The constabulary collaborates extensively with Norfolk Constabulary on a number of operational and back office functions which has generated considerable savings. The services that are part of the collaboration agreement remain under review and further savings are being made. Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies hold a joint 'establishment forum' at which senior officers make decisions about the joint workforce. It scrutinises vacancies to understand any impact on the constabularies and also works to minimise redundancies.

The constabulary is preparing to meet the challenge of further budget cuts by reviewing and adapting how it provides local policing services to the people of Suffolk. The constabulary is currently planning the size of its likely workforce through to 2020 and is seeking to reduce staff numbers gradually as opposed to making sudden and significant changes to the number of people it employs.

Current workforce numbers are closely aligned to the constabulary's finance plan and there is good coordination between the human resources and finance departments, particularly on the resources that are needed to achieve the change plans. Each vacancy is scrutinised to assess whether it needs to be filled or held open for the future. This allows the constabulary to manage its reductions in staff while fulfilling the savings requirements contained within its financial plan.

The constabulary's savings plans are not always supported by detailed business cases. The first phase of the constabulary's local policing review resulted in a reduction of PCSOs and police constables, although seven of these posts were redeployed into the areas of protecting vulnerable people. The reduction in numbers was driven largely by the size of the saving needed to balance the budget with very limited analysis of demand or of the impact the reduction in police officer strength would have on the constabulary's ability to continue to meet demand.

The second phase of the review is still being developed. HMIC found evidence that the constabulary is currently undertaking a more scientific and detailed analysis to support the case for change. This means that the impact of any further reductions in staff can be fully evaluated and adjustments made to mitigate as far as possible any negative impact.

There are a wide range of individual change programmes and projects at various stages of completion. While the change programme is well structured and co-ordinated HMIC is concerned that there is no systematic method for evaluating the impact or results of the change plans that have already finished.

The constabulary recognises that it still has work to do to ensure its workforce has the right mix of skills and expertise to respond effectively to changing demand and emerging crime types, for example high-tech detective skills now increasingly needed to tackle cyber-crime. The constabulary is not currently recruiting large numbers of police officers or police staff due to the need to save money; therefore, it needs to consider how it will provide the right level of skills for the future.

How well does the force's projected workforce model match demand, organisational and financial requirements?

Figure 4: Actual and planned changes in workforce FTE from 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2018 for Suffolk Constabulary compared to England and Wales

	March 2010	Difference between 2010 and 2015		March 2015	Difference between 2015 and 2018		March 2018
		Force	England and Wales		Force	England and Wales	
Police Officers	1,246	-8%	-12%	1,147	-5%	-6%	1,088
Police Staff	971	-16%	-19%	816	4%	-6%	852
PCSOs	173	-4%	-27%	167	-9%	-11%	151
Workforce total	2,390	-11%	-15%	2,129	-2%	-6%	2,091

Source: HMIC Efficiency inspection data collection and Home Office workforce statistics

For further information about the data for figure 4 please see Annex B

At present, the constabulary's projected workforce model is not as closely matched to future organisational, financial and demand needs as it might be. While the constabulary has identified firm savings plans for 2015/16, plans for 2016/17 onwards are less well developed. This, together with the developing understanding of demand, means that the constabulary is currently unable to plan fully a future workforce model that will match predicted demand, organisational and financial requirements.

Suffolk Constabulary has embarked on a five-year programme to transform how it will provide policing in 2020 and to design a workforce model to match predicted demand, organisational and financial requirements.

The constabulary has made sound and prudent predictions about the level of resource it will have at its disposal through to 2020 and is developing its understanding of future demand. It has prioritised the work of its change programme to ensure it retains the capability and specialist capacity within its human resources, finance and IT functions to achieve the necessary change.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Suffolk Constabulary's current workforce model matches demand, organisational and financial requirements well and is aligned to the PCC's police and crime plan.

However, the constabulary has recognised that the current model is unsustainable given the need to reduce spending further which will result in reduced workforce numbers.

The constabulary has started a more detailed analysis to support the case for change so that the impact of any further reductions in staff can be fully evaluated. The constabulary is currently undertaking more detailed analysis to support the case for change so that the impact of any further reductions in staff can be fully evaluated.

The constabulary has now embarked on a five-year plan to transform how it will deliver local policing by 2020. It has made sound and prudent predictions about the level of staffing it will be able to afford by 2020.

The constabulary has extensive collaborative working arrangements with Norfolk Constabulary involving a number of specialist policing units and back office functions generating significant savings.

While the constabulary has identified firm savings plans for 2015/16, plans for 2016/17 onwards are less well developed. This together with the developing understanding of the constabulary's demand means that the constabulary is currently unable to fully plan a future workforce model that will match predicted demand, organisational and financial requirements, hence the grade of requires improvement.

Areas for improvement

- The force should develop a future workforce plan that is aligned to its overall demand and budget. The plan should include future resource allocations, the mix of skills required by the workforce and behaviours expected of them.

How sustainable is the force's financial position for the short and long term?

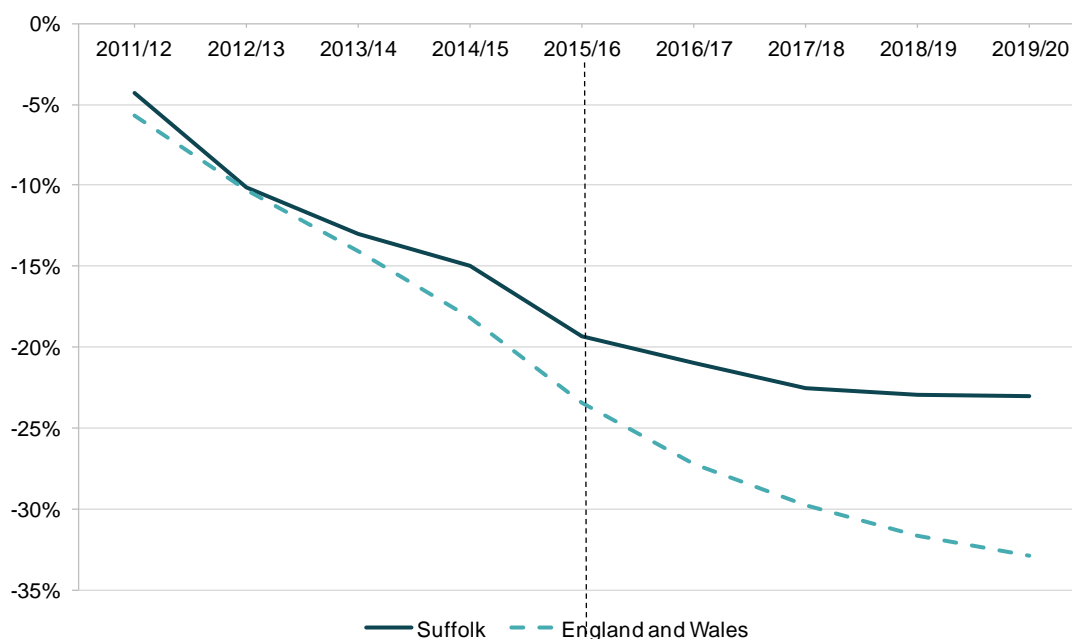
HMIC examined how forces have achieved savings over the spending review period, the saving plans that forces have developed for the future, and the assumptions that forces have made in understanding of the financial challenges ahead. We also assessed whether forces have good financial controls and governance, and if spending reflects the priorities outlined in the police and crime plan.

Has the force achieved its saving requirements and balanced the budget for the spending review period and 2014/15?

Suffolk Constabulary forecasted savings of £18.8m over the first four years of the spending review (2011/12 to 2014/15), the equivalent of 15 percent of the 2010/11 gross revenue expenditure for the constabulary. Over the period savings were made in both the pay and non-pay budgets, so as to balance budgets by 2014/15. Over the same period all forces across England and Wales forecasted a total savings requirement of £2.53bn, the equivalent of 18.2 percent of the 2010/11 gross revenue expenditure for England and Wales.

Overall, Suffolk Constabulary has a good track record of achieving the required savings. It achieved a balanced budget in 2014/15 and achieved more savings than it needed to in that year. At the time of the inspection, it was anticipating an under-spend of £0.8m which will be added to the constabulary's financial reserves.

Figure 5: Estimated change in expenditure from 2011/12 to 2014/15, and forecast planned savings for 2015/16 to 2019/20, against the 2010 gross revenue expenditure baseline for Suffolk Constabulary and England and Wales



Source: HMIC policing in austerity data, HMIC efficiency data collection and The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) Police Objective Analysis data

For further information about the data for figure 5 please see Annex B

Has the force achieved a balanced budget for 2015/16?

Suffolk Constabulary has planned a balanced budget of £117.5m for 2015/16, which includes a cut in spending of £5.4m. It is forecast that 87 percent (£4.7m) of the reduction will be made from the pay budget, with the remaining 13 percent (£0.7m) being made from the non-pay budget. The constabulary plans to meet its reduction in spend without using reserves as a bridge. Since the 2010 baseline, at the start of the spending review, this represents savings of 19 percent.

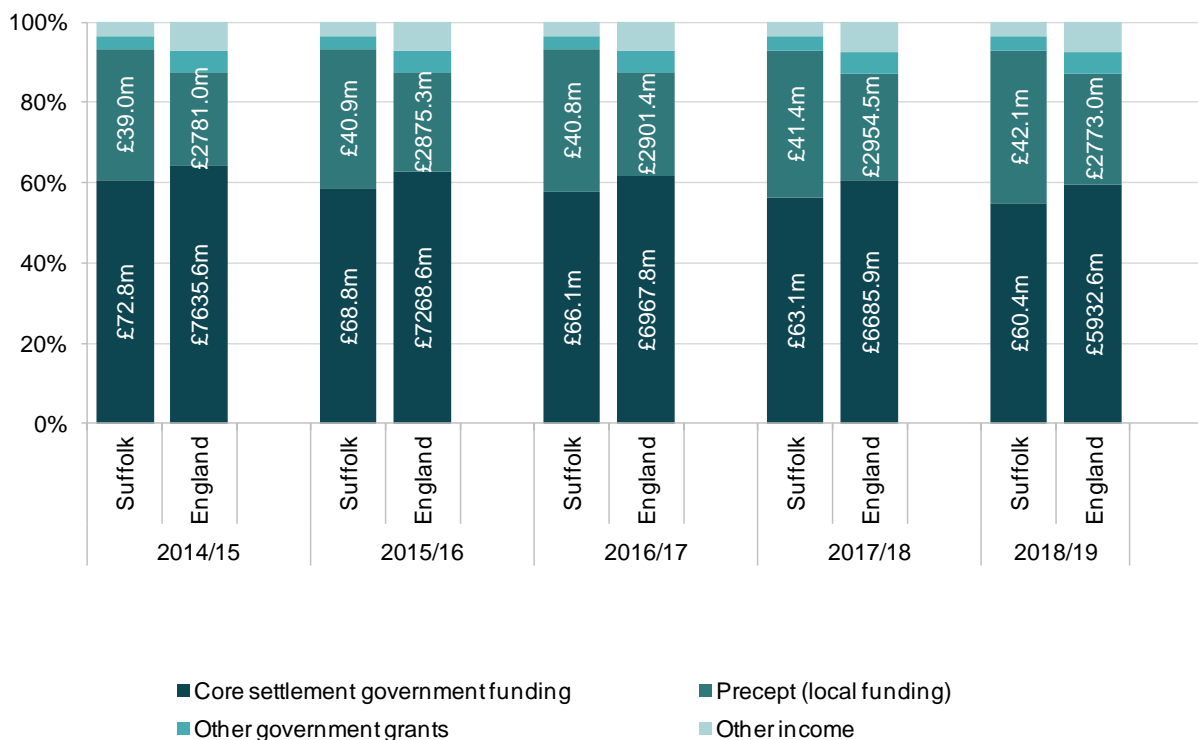
The 2015/2016 budget plan is supported by an increase to the council tax precept⁶ of 2 percent. The constabulary has achieved the majority of the savings through the implementation of the first phase of its local policing review.

⁶ Funding raised through council tax as opposed to central funding received from the Home Office in the form of an annual grant.

How well has the force maximised other funding opportunities?

Figure 6 demonstrates the amount of funding that the constabulary received from a central government grant, as precept from local councils through council tax, and from other sources, such as Home Office special grants. Suffolk Constabulary is expecting the proportion of its funding that comes from core settlement government funding to decline over the coming years, while anticipating the proportion of its funding that comes from precept (council tax funding) to increase over the same time period. It should be noted that the core settlement government funding, both monetary values and proportions of total funding, detailed in figure 6, are from force estimates collected as part of HMIC's efficiency inspection data collection. This data should not be considered as an official projection. The Home Office is currently consulting on changes to the forces' funding formula and therefore any current projections may change over the time period highlighted.

Figure 6: Forecast mix of funding for Suffolk Constabulary in the 12 months to 31 March 2015 to the 12 months to 31 March 2019, compared to English forces



Source: HMIC efficiency data collection

The constabulary is proactive in seeking out external funding opportunities across a wide range of public sector bodies and other organisations. This includes joint-funded PCSOs with local authorities across Suffolk. It is also part of a successful bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government through the transformational challenge award. The local partners have been given grant funding collectively to explore wider joint working across other public sector service providers

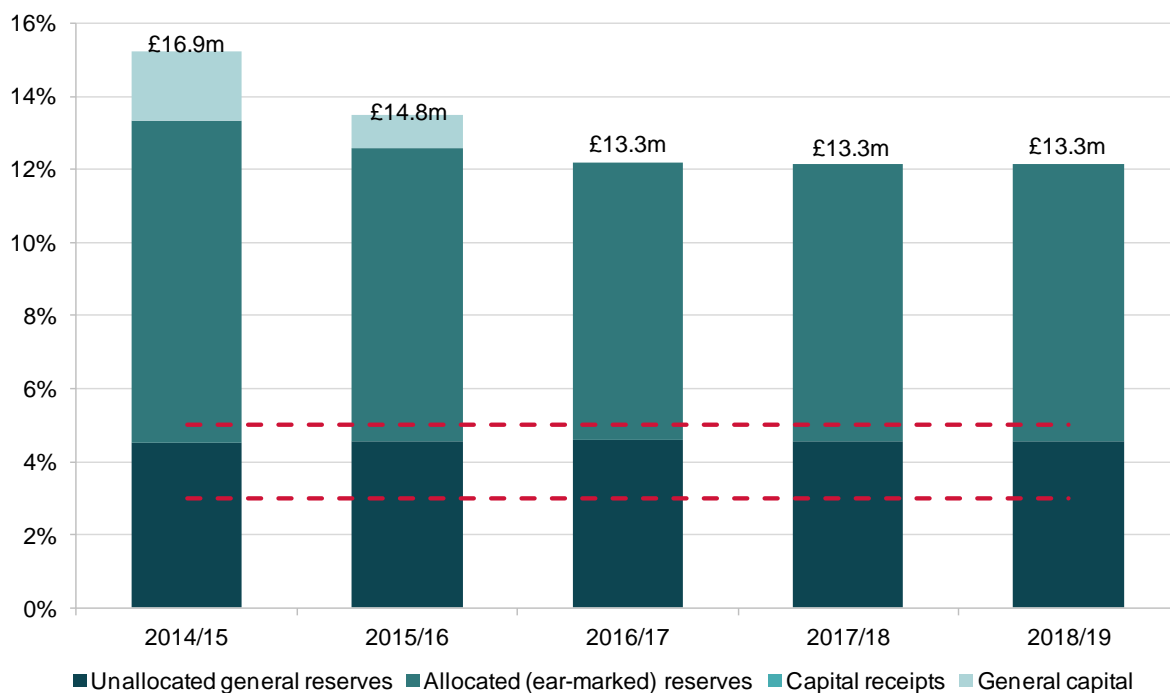
in Suffolk. It focuses on organisations working together to improve public services and reduce the level of demand and to resolve issues successfully before they reach the point of crisis.

How well does the force control expenditure?

The constabulary’s level of reserves and how these are forecast to change over time is shown in figure 7. Suffolk Constabulary reported that its total reserves were £16.9m in 2014/15. These are broken down into several categories:

- unallocated general reserves – a sum to cushion the impact of unexpected events or smooth uneven cash flows;
- allocated (ear-marked) reserves – these are reserves set aside for specific capital purposes;
- capital receipts reserves – these are proceeds from the sale of assets which can only be used for specific capital purposes; and
- general capital to support future planned capital expenditure.

Figure 7: Breakdown of reserves remaining as a proportion of in-year net revenue expenditure, and total reserves remaining (£), for 2014/15 to 2018/19



Source: HMIC efficiency data collection

For further information about the data for figure 7 please see Annex B

The constabulary has effective financial controls in place and a strong track record of managing expenditure. There is clear evidence that Suffolk Constabulary has a firm control of its financial management. Budget holders are well supported by finance colleagues by the provision of effective monitoring and specialist advice. Budgets are reviewed each month and prompt action is taken to reduce overspends and identify savings.

The constabulary intends to move towards a 'self-service' model of business support for budget holders, using the new human resources and finance system to manage their processes. The constabulary will need to ensure that financial rigour is maintained.

Both the joint change programme with Norfolk Constabulary and the constabulary's own change programme have robust governance arrangements to manage change effectively with clear ways to control spending and savings. Potential savings are cautiously estimated and regularly monitored. The constabulary identifies a level of confidence indicator for each area of change to enable it to make informed predictions on the amount of money it is likely to save over a given period. Change programmes are monitored from conception through to implementation.

How well do the force's financial plans reflect the objectives set out in the PCC's police and crime plan?

The constabulary's financial plans reflect the objectives set out in the PCC's police and crime plan. There is evidence that finances are directed at achieving the priorities outlined in the plan, for example additional resources have been given to protect vulnerable victims better.

The constabulary works closely with the PCC on managing its finances and ensuring alignment with the objectives of the police and crime plan. The PCC formally holds the chief constable to account on the constabulary's finances bi-monthly.

How well does the force provide timely and relevant financial information to the office of police and crime commissioner (OPCC), and are shared assumptions used to develop current and future plans?

There is a close working relationship between the chief finance officer and the OPCC. There are effective lines of communication between the constabulary and the OPCC and shared assumptions are used to develop future plans. Relevant financial information is shared with the OPCC, allowing the PCC to hold the chief constable to account. Progress on the constabulary change programme is regularly shared with the PCC who attends the joint chief officer team meeting which oversees that change plans are on target and agrees future plans.

How well developed are the force's plans for possible further savings?

Suffolk Constabulary is anticipating it needs to save a further £10.1m by the end of the financial year 2019/2020 and has developed a long-term budget forecast to support this activity. HMIC considers the assumptions underpinning this plan to be reasonable.

The savings plans 2015/2016 are detailed and well developed. However, the plans from April 2016 onwards are still under development. There are outline plans in place to achieve part of the savings required.

The second phase of the local policing review will contribute further savings. The plans for this change are still in development and the savings attributed are estimates. While HMIC recognises that the constabulary is now employing more sophisticated analytical techniques, it is concerned that the constabulary is yet to fully understand its demand on services to the public. As such it is unable to assess effectively the impact of further reductions on frontline policing.

HMIC recognises that the constabulary has a number of 'invest to save' projects underway. These include the introduction of the new human resources and finance system and cost reductions in the control room.

The constabulary is still working to identify other options to improve efficiency, and together with Norfolk Constabulary, is undertaking analysis to understand how much is currently spent on providing policing services. External consultants have been employed to advise on how this can best be achieved. The consultants will be giving their recommendations in May 2015 enabling Suffolk to finalise its 2016-2017 budgets at the end of this year. Suffolk recognises that there is still an opportunity to find more savings by reducing its non-pay budget and this will be supported by the forthcoming work of the consultants on zero or priority-based budgeting.

Summary of findings



Good

Overall, Suffolk Constabulary has a good track record of achieving the required savings; it has successfully reduced its spending by £18.8m from 2011/12 to 2014/15.

It achieved a balanced budget in 2014/15 and has planned a balanced budget for 2015/16. The approach to reducing spending has been managed robustly and resulted in savings accruing ahead of time allowing the constabulary to build up financial reserves.

The constabulary has secured funding from other sources and works with other organisations to apply for and be provided with funding. There is evidence of good budgetary control by managers, supported by finance advisors, and scrutiny of expenditure.

The PCC's priorities are reflected in the constabulary's plans and there is clear accountability. The constabulary and the office of the police and crime commissioner (OPCC) work together and share assumptions for financial planning.

The constabulary has started to develop plans for future anticipated savings through to 2020; however it will need to have a full understanding of its demands and finalise a model for policing that is capable of meeting future demand efficiently, effectively and within a reduced budget.

Annex A – HMIC judgments

The categories are:

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

Judgment is made against how efficient the force is at keeping people safe and reducing crime. In applying the categories HMIC considers whether:

- the efficiency of the force is good, or exceeds this standard sufficiently to be judged as outstanding;
- the efficiency of the force requires improvement because it is not yet performing at a good level, and/or there are some weaknesses in the organisation; or
- the efficiency of the force is inadequate because it is considerably lower than might reasonably be expected.

Annex B – Further information about the data

Figure 3

Planned changes to police officer full time equivalents (FTE) in operational frontline, operational support and business support roles in the force/constabulary, 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2018.

The data used in figure 3, for March 2010 and March 2015 is taken from the Home Office annual data return 601 and does not include workforce allocated under category '62 other' whereas the data used in figure 4 for March 2010 and March 2015 is taken from the Home Office annual data return 502 and is inclusive of this category. Therefore totals data may not match exactly.

Figure 4

Planned changes in workforce FTE from 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2018 for the force/constabulary compared to England and Wales. The figures in table 4 are rounded to the nearest whole person, full time equivalents (FTEs), and therefore may differ slightly to the exact figures quoted within the report.

For data as at 31 March 2010 and 31 March 2015 we have used Home Office annual data return data which is an 'actual' FTE, whereas for projections for March 2018 are budget based projections and therefore are likely to take into account a vacancy rate depending on a force's/constabulary's planning strategy. In some instances therefore an increase in budgeted posts may not actually indicate the force/constabulary is planning to increase its workforce going forwards. In other cases, forces may be planning to reduce their workforce but have a current high vacancy rate which masks this change.

Due to the complex and continually evolving picture of workforce collaboration between neighbouring forces, not all changes in workforce figures are real in terms of the workforce available. Involvement in strategic alliances and/or regional organised crime units (ROCU) would be an example of where changes over time are likely to be skewed. Therefore sharp increases or decreases over time need to be considered with caution as they may simply represent accounting changes related to how staff are allocated to forces, not real changes in staffing levels.

At the time of the inspection, the future financial climate was uncertain. Several forces were in a position where they did not have confirmed/signed-off plans for workforce projections. It is important to note that figures provided are in many instances unconfirmed estimates provided to assist HMIC in its inspection programme and should not be seen as a concrete plan for the future landscape of policing. These comments apply to figure 3 and figure 4.

Figure 5

Estimated change in expenditure from 2011/12 to 2014/15, and forecast change in expenditure for 2015/16 to 2019/20, against the 2010 GRE baseline for the force and England and Wales

Figure 5 shows how force expenditure has changed over the period of the spending review, relative to the total change in expenditure for all forces across England and Wales. For 2015/16 onwards there has been a change in methodology in comparison to the value for money inspection. The savings requirement is no longer inflated gross revenue expenditure (GRE) minus expenditure but the sum of planned savings and use of reserves to bridge an in-year funding gap. This change is indicated by the vertical dashed line on the chart. The chart shows planned savings (including use of reserves to bridge an in-year funding gap) in future years, calculated using the planned savings for pay and non-pay budgets provided to HMIC at the time of the data collection (February 2015). Some forces only provided figures for savings they had formally signed off at that point, while others provided estimates for the whole period. Therefore small savings requirements do not necessarily equate to a small savings challenge for the future.

Figure 7

Breakdown of reserves remaining as a proportion of in-year net revenue expenditure, and total reserves remaining (£), for 2014/15 to 2018/19

According to a survey of financial directors conducted by the Audit Commission,⁷ it is commonly considered that three percent to five percent of net revenue expenditure is a prudent level of unallocated general reserves for risk-based planning purposes. This range is shown on the graph by the two horizontal red dotted lines.

Please note that all categories of reserves for the force/constabulary are held by the PCC apart from City of London and the Metropolitan police service where reserves are held by the City of London Corporation and MOPAC respectively.

⁷*Striking a balance: Improving councils' decision making on reserves*, Audit Commission, December 2012. Available from <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk>