



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Responding to austerity

Sussex Police

July 2014

© HMIC 2014

ISBN: 978-1-78246-452-5

www.hmic.gov.uk





Contents

How well does the force provide value for money?	4
The force in numbers	6
Introduction	8
To what extent is the force taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?	9
To what extent has the force an affordable way of providing policing?	12
To what extent is the force efficient?	20
Our judgments	25

How well does the force provide value for money?

Overall judgment

Sussex Police is on track to achieve the savings required by the end of the spending review period. It has made good progress in developing collaboration plans with Surrey Police so that it is better placed to achieve savings in the future, while protecting the policing service it provides to the public.

Good

Summary

Sussex Police is on track to achieve its required savings of £56.8m over this spending review period. It has plans in place to achieve further savings in 2015/16. Sussex Police has a very good track record of achieving savings. In spite of a difficult financial challenge, it has achieved more savings than it needed to over the spending review period.

The force recognises that for it to maintain effective service provision into the future while responding to further austerity it cannot do this alone. Sussex is working closely and constructively with Surrey Police to develop a way of providing policing that allows the two forces to gain maximum benefits from working together, both in terms of financial savings and also to improve the quality of policing.

Crime has continued to fall in Sussex throughout the spending review period at a lower rate than for England and Wales. In the year to March 2014, crime rates fell more than in England and Wales.

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

Good

Sussex Police is financially well-managed and has a very good track record of achieving savings. In spite of a difficult financial challenge it has achieved more savings than it needed to over the spending review period.

Finances are well managed and there is a cautious approach to budgeting. The force has built up healthy reserves which provide some security and the ability to invest in projects that will improve policing and lead to greater efficiencies in the future.

The alliance with Surrey Police is ambitious and has already contributed significantly to savings, and offers potential for much greater future savings as well as improving services.

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

Good

Sussex Police recognises that working in collaboration with a range of partners is crucial to enabling it to work more efficiently to achieve the scale of savings needed in the future.

The force is working constructively with Surrey Police to develop a way of providing policing that allows the two forces to gain maximum benefits from the alliance. It is also looking beyond the alliance for further opportunities to collaborate.

The force has made a concerted effort to concentrate savings in non-pay areas so that it has been able to limit the reduction to its workforce numbers.

The change programme is well led and robustly managed.

To what extent is the force efficient?

Good

The force has done some work to assess demand and plans to carry out a more comprehensive analysis as part of the plans to develop the alliance with Surrey.

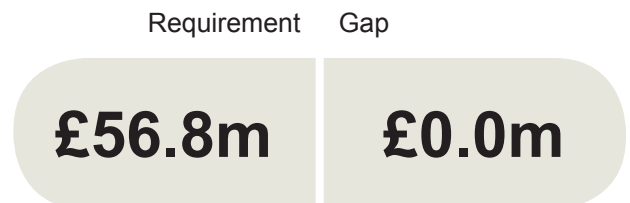
Despite reductions in both police officer and PCSO numbers, the force has worked hard to ensure that the proportion of both working in visible roles has increased and is higher than the England and Wales figure.

Crime has fallen over the spending review, although at a lower rate than the figure for England and Wales. Over the 12 months to March 2014 Sussex's performance has improved. However, the force's detection and victim satisfaction rates are lower than the figure for England and Wales.

The force in numbers

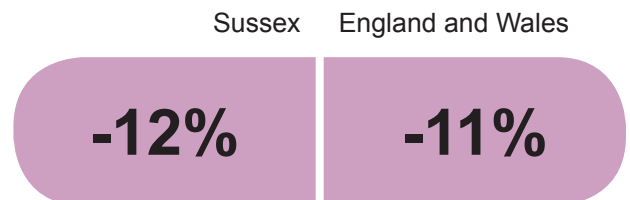
Financial position

The force's savings requirement



Providing policing

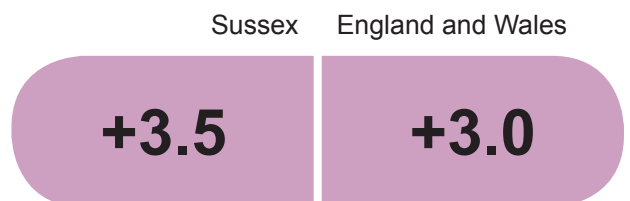
Planned change in police officer numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15



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

Sussex	England and Wales
£89.2	£117.7

Workforce cost per head of population
2013/14

Sussex	England and Wales
£135.1	£168.1

Change in recorded crime
2010/11 – 2013/14

Sussex	England and Wales
-12%	-14%

Victim satisfaction 2013/14*

Sussex	England and Wales
84.0%	85.2%

*Confidence intervals: $\pm 0.0\%$ for Sussex; $\pm 0.2\%$ 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 providing 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 Sussex 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

Sussex Police has identified that it needs to save £56.8m 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 18 percent is in line with the value for England and Wales.

The scale of the challenge

HMIC considers that Sussex Police faces a difficult challenge. Although the proportion of savings needed is similar to other forces, Sussex is already a comparatively low spending police force and therefore has less scope to find savings:

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

Savings plans for 2014/15 and 2015/16

The force has had a well-managed approach to finding and achieving its savings during the spending review period. It is on track to achieve more savings than it needed to. In 2013/14 the force had a target to save £9.6m and actually cut spending by £13.0m.

Savings to date have been achieved through the Serving Sussex programme. Some of the higher than expected savings arose, when the government reimbursed the force for extra costs incurred in policing the protests at Balcombe in West Sussex.

The force exercises strong financial management, which has undoubtedly contributed to the force's success in achieving its savings. The force takes a cautious and prudent view of anticipated saving and benefits only incorporating them into budgets once it is clear they have been achieved.

In 2014/15, it has a target to save £11.0m and is planning to save £12.3m. These extra savings will be used to offset the further savings required in 2015/16. In 2015/16, the force has identified a savings requirement of £14.1m with planned savings of £4.9m. HMIC were reassured by the developing work which will achieve the required savings and we can have confidence that the remaining gap will be closed.

The force is anticipating making much of its savings in 2015/16 from the collaboration with Surrey Police. Sussex Police have entered into a strategic alliance with Surrey Police, known as 'Policing Together', which has already started to contribute to the savings the force has achieved and plans to provide savings for 2015/16 and future years. This is an ambitious programme that aims to provide services across both counties by doing it once and doing it together.

The force has a higher level of reserves than many other forces, with reserves in excess of £79m at the end of 2013/14. This means that it has some funding to fall back on to bridge a gap, if necessary, in advance of recurring savings being found. The force plans to use some of the reserves to invest in improvements and in new IT, which will help to make the force more efficient.

The force has invested in a number of spend-to-save projects, whereby they have invested capital in order to save on annual revenue costs. For example, under the 'Smarter Systems' programme a single IT system will support the criminal justice process. The new system will save officer and staff time throughout the justice process, from the preparation of case files, through to presentation at court, and mean that offenders can be brought to justice more quickly and effectively.

Outlook for 2016 and beyond

The force is still developing plans for future years to deal with future austerity. As well as continuing to implement plans from the Serving Sussex programme, the majority of future savings are expected to come from the Policing Together collaboration with Surrey Police, which is an ambitious and wide ranging alliance that will provide a shared policing service below the rank of assistant chief constable to both Sussex and Surrey. Opportunities for business support functions to also be shared will be considered, as work completed by consultants has identified that this could achieve up to £5m of savings across both force's (around £2m for Sussex).

Summary



Good

- Sussex Police is financially well-managed and has a very good track record of achieving savings. In spite of a difficult financial challenge it has achieved more savings than it needed to over the spending review period.
- Finances are well managed and there is a cautious approach to budgeting. The force has built up healthy reserves which provide some security and the ability to invest in projects that will improve policing and lead to greater efficiencies in the future.
- The force has plans to meet its savings requirement for 2014/15 and has plans to meet £4.9m of the £14.1m needed for 2015/16. HMIC were reassured by the developing work which will achieve the required savings and we can have confidence that the remaining gap will be closed.
- The alliance with Surrey Police is ambitious and has already contributed significantly to savings, and offers potential for much greater future savings as well as improving services.

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 its 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

Sussex Police is currently structured into three geographical divisions: East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton. The force also has responsibility for the policing of Gatwick airport.

The force is currently undertaking a full review of how it provides policing across the force area. This will consider the services that need to be retained by Sussex Police and those which can be shared with either Surrey Police or potentially other partners. The planned approach, known as the ‘target operating model’ is being developed in conjunction with Surrey Police as part of the planned alliance. It will be important that the model in Sussex (and in Surrey) ensures that the force is able to maximise the benefits of collaboration. While the work to develop a target operating model across both forces is at an early stage, the force is clear that its aim is to have a “*unified organisation*” with Surrey Police.

The force is also looking at how it provides local policing across the force area. This work will assess levels of demand to ensure resourcing is appropriately allocated; the review will include all aspects of local policing including the configuration of neighbourhood policing.

Collaboration

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

Collaboration is a clear priority for the force. It is seen as crucial to provide the savings required in the next two years and in the longer term. This will be achieved in the main through the Policing Together programme with Surrey Police. The force has made significant progress in developing this programme over the past year.

Collaboration with Surrey Police has already proved effective; for example, joint IT solutions with Surrey have made a significant saving. In addition the two forces worked together to provide a better response to the flooding in early 2014, with Sussex as the lead force for Operations Command. Sussex was able to assist Surrey with 18 extra 4x4 vehicles, owned by Sussex, which were used to help local people. There is much greater potential for future savings, for example, the forces are looking at amalgamating their respective police dog

units. This will not only result in savings, but will also provide an improved service, with extended hours, which would not have been possible without this joint approach.

As well as the move to become more integrated with Surrey Police, Sussex is continuing to look at opportunities with other agencies. For example, how it could work with other blue light services, such as ambulance and fire services, to share a control room as well as some back office and transport services. It is already working with a local authority for some business support functions such as pensions administration.

In 2014/15 the force plans to spend only 1 percent of its net revenue expenditure on collaboration, which is lower than the 11 percent figure for England and Wales. Collaboration is expected to contribute to 1 percent of the forces savings requirement, which again is considerably less than the 10 percent figure for England and Wales. The alliance with Surrey Police is likely dramatically to change this picture from 2015/16.

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 help prepare for future funding reductions.

Sussex Police has developed an extensive change programme initially called “Serving Sussex 2015”, it has now been streamlined as the scale of future savings became clearer through “Serving Sussex 2017”. This sits alongside the extensive work that is being undertaken to develop the collaborative arrangements between Sussex and Surrey Police.

The change programme is well led and now much more widely understood and shared throughout the force. HMIC was encouraged to find that, unlike last year, senior officers are now able to clearly explain the rationale for the change and the direction that the force is taking. There is a clear plan in place, detailing each project in a logical order to provide a sequence of change. Professional programme management techniques are being used to ensure that projects are completed on time, risks are reviewed and the expected benefits are achieved.

The force has a clear road map for the future changes. This identifies all the changes that are in hand and are planned. It is an essential tool to ensure that all changes have the correct sequencing, for example, IT constraints in some areas mean that timing is dictated by external factors. The road map has also been a useful tool to keep projects on track, and to stop new change initiatives being started where the benefits could not be demonstrated.

To review each area of business the force are using a method called Quest. This provides a step-by-step guide when looking at a particular team or function, to identify where

improvements can be made, and duplication or waste can be removed. To help develop skills in change management, trained staff from the change and human resources team form part of each division, providing support.

The force has methods for both internal and external scrutiny to support the change process. Internally there is challenge through a process called 'Star Chamber' that focuses on a particular function and/or budget by the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and operations groups led by the deputy chief constable. Externally the force has used consultants to support the management of change by providing advice and independent challenge.

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

- collaboration with other forces;
- use of business improvement approaches to improve efficiency and effectiveness;
- working in partnership; and
- rationalising the force's estate.

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

- changing the way business support functions will be provided;
- greater use of mobile data to improve the effectiveness and efficacy of how staff work;
- changing the way functions that support frontline policing are provided;
- changing the way local policing is provided;
- collaboration with other forces and the public sector.

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

The force has continued to engage with its staff, mainly through the staff associations, with whom chief officers have regular meetings. During the inspection, staff were clear that the level of engagement with chief officers has improved recently, as the force develops its new change programme. Communication with staff about changes is undertaken through personal briefings as well as email and newsletter updates. The force has also planned to undertake a staff survey in June 2014, so it can better understand the impact of change on staff, as well as helping it to develop the culture of the force. Surrey and Sussex Police now

undertake joint leadership forums. This will help the force to develop its collaboration work with Surrey Police, allowing the two forces to be more aligned, with staff working towards the same strategic objectives.

Officers and staff interviewed during the inspection were aware of the financial challenges the force needed to overcome, as well as the plans to collaborate with Surrey in the future. As a result of the range of communications and support in place, relationships with staff associations were positive and productive.

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 39 percent of its savings from non-pay, this is higher when compared with the national average of other forces in England and Wales which is 29 percent.

The force has made a concerted effort to drive down non-pay costs. The force continually compares its costs to others, and budgets are built from a zero base with only essential spending being included. Non-pay costs are effectively managed and close scrutiny has enabled the force to reduce these budgets consistently since 2011. HMIC found examples of savings in the running costs of the vehicle fleet, in IT and in forensic services costs.

As with other forces, most of the savings comes from reducing the workforce. The force plans to make 61 percent of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is lower than with other forces.

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

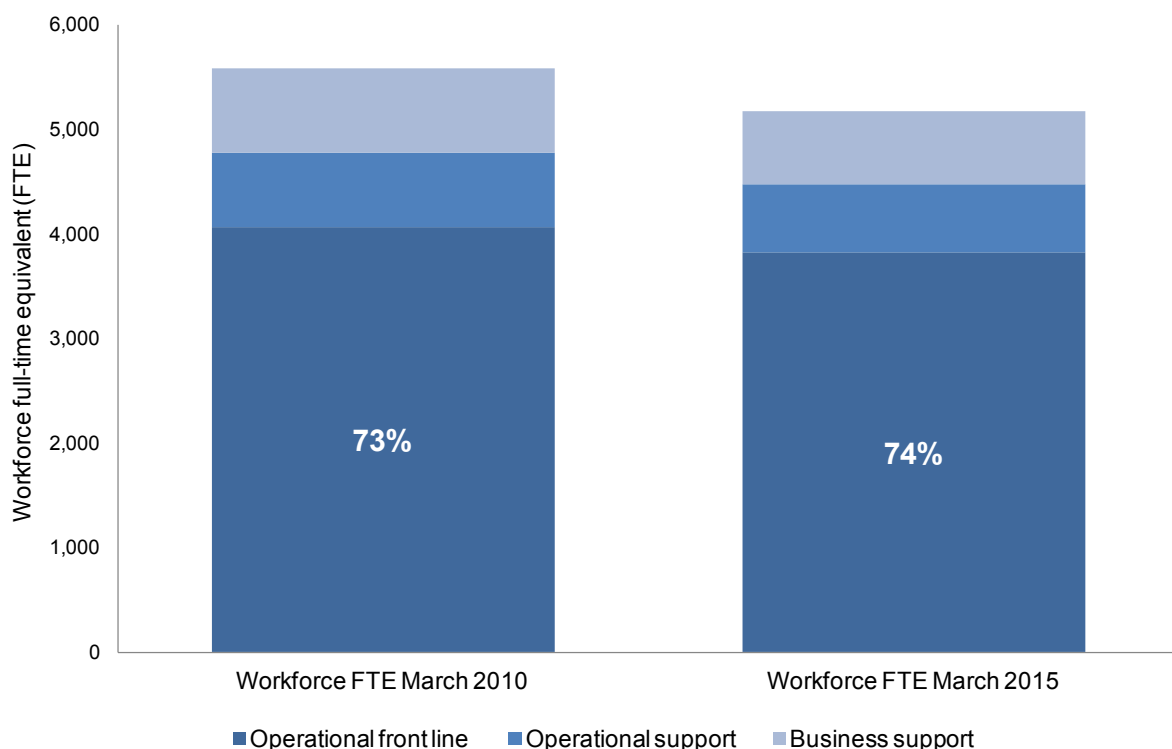
Please note, these figures are rounded.

	31 March 2010 (baseline)	31 March 2015	Change	Force change %	Change for England and Wales %
Police officers	3,213	2,821	-392	-12%	-11%
Police staff	2,155	1,981	-174	-8%	-17%
PCSOs	377	367	-10	-3%	-22%
Total	5,745	5,169	-576	-10%	-14%
Specials	240	450	210	88%	44%

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 Sussex 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.

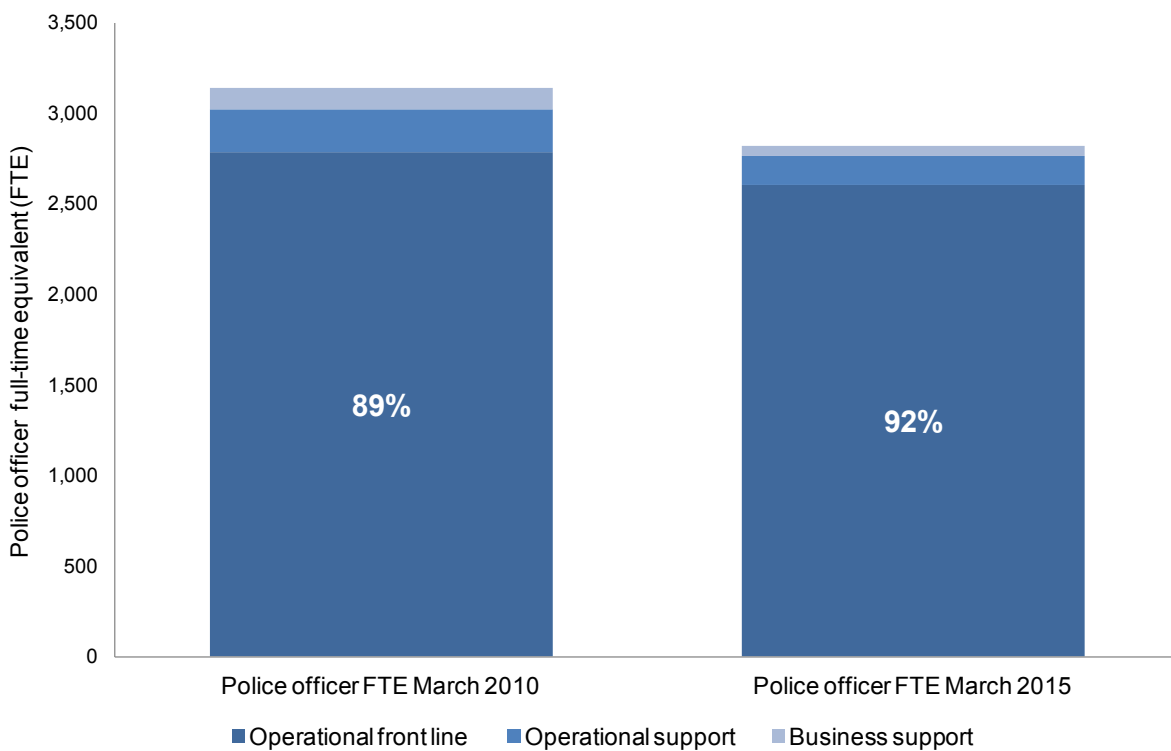
The number of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the constabulary’s total workforce) working on Sussex’s front line is projected to decrease by 240 between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 4,061 to 3,821).

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

The second chart below shows the number of Sussex’s police officers in frontline roles, this is planned to reduce from 2,786 in March 2010 to 2,604 by March 2015, as the chart shows. The proportion of those remaining on the front line is projected to increase from 89 percent to 92 percent. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89 percent to 92 percent and shows Sussex is successfully protecting frontline crime-fighting roles as it makes these cuts. HMIC recognises this position has improved since our

inspection in 2013 and we welcome the renewed focus.

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

- Sussex Police recognises that working in collaboration with a range of partners is crucial to enabling it to work more efficiently to achieve the scale of savings needed in the future.
- The force is working constructively with Surrey Police to develop a way of providing policing that allows the two forces to gain maximum benefits from the alliance. It is also looking beyond the alliance for further opportunities to collaborate.
- The force has made a concerted effort to concentrate savings in non-pay areas so that it has been able to limit the reduction to its workforce numbers.
- The change programme is well led and robustly managed.

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?

Although the force uses a range of strategic and operational assessments of demands and risks and has a good understanding of both these areas, it has not carried out a recent comprehensive analysis of the total demand it faces, with which it could start to manage demand more effectively. It intends to remedy this as part of the change programme which is developing the new target operating model.

Like all forces, Sussex completes an annual strategic assessment. This brings together all available police intelligence and data to assess the key threats and risks facing the force in the coming year. This is then used to develop the force control strategy and informs the PCC's police and crime plan. It is reviewed quarterly to keep it updated with any changing priorities or new risks, so that the police can ensure they move resources around to respond effectively. For example, the force was able to identify that it needed to put more effort into tackling the growing threat from cybercrime and that extra resources were needed for safeguarding vulnerable people.

The risks are reviewed every quarter to identify if they need to change or to be retained. It includes where new types of crime are beginning to increase, such as cybercrime, and where improvements in public confidence are increasing demand, such as the volume of vulnerable people and sexual offences. As a result of the strategic assessment, decisions have been made to provide budget and to put resources into managing the risks. Plans are in place to complete this process jointly with Surrey Police in 2014/15.

How efficiently does the force allocate its resources?

During the spending review period, as part of the Serving Sussex programme, the force has implemented a range of methods to better manage demand, such as a focus on repeat callers in the force control room and the implementation of a new computer system (Niche). This allows all activity, incidents, addresses and people linked with crime to be held on one system, improving intelligence and the quality of information to be used by officers and staff. Niche has also provided the opportunity for the force to assess the length of time officers spend on certain activities such as submitting reports or updating crimes.

The force continues to work hard to develop the way it works jointly with other agencies including local councils in East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton; in order to provide better public services and to make best use of police time. The force has recently undertaken a pilot in Eastbourne to improve the way it deals with incidents involving people with mental health problems. The force has also worked closely with its partner agencies to develop a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). The introduction of a MASH brings the police together with all partner agencies to provide a more effective joined up service to protect and support vulnerable people, such as children at risk and victims of domestic violence.

The force is committed to providing local policing through its neighbourhood policing teams. It has invested with partners including local councils and housing providers in a database to manage crime and anti-social behaviour. This will allow the different agencies to share information and provide better joint problem solving.

The force has been active in increasing the way it uses and develops the volunteering scheme which supports local policing across the force. This is demonstrated by an increase of 88 percent in the number of volunteers since 2010. This is now focused on the use of the special constabulary to perform different roles eg., investigations as well as providing additional officers in more rural areas across Sussex. This is a move away from the traditional approach of using special constables to only support times of peak demand such as weekends and bank holidays.

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 Sussex was taking longer to respond to calls for help, as a result of its workforce reductions and other changes designed to save money. Forces are not required to set response times or targets and are free to determine their own arrangements for monitoring attendance to calls, so information between forces is not comparable.

We found that over the four years since 2010, Sussex had maintained the same target response times of 15 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' (also known as Grade 1). Over the same period, calls classed as a 'priority' (also known as Grade 2) had a target response time of within 60 minutes.

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

Calls for service	2010/11	2013/14
Percentage of emergency calls on target	85.0	83.4
Percentage of priority calls on target	74.0	78.7

Over the spending review the number of emergency calls attended has seen a slight decline but for priority calls there has been an improvement.

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 Sussex area.

In 2014, Sussex allocated 61 percent of its police officers to visible roles. This is 4.1 percentage points higher than the number allocated in 2010, and more than most other forces (where the average was 56 percent across England and Wales for 2014).

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs, who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, Sussex allocated 65 percent to these staff to visible roles. This is 3.9 percentage points higher than it allocated in 2010, and higher than the 60 percent figure for England and Wales in 2014.

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 Sussex, 10 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.

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.

Furthermore, 91 percent of respondents in Sussex said they felt safe from crime where they lived, compared to 84 percent of respondents in England and Wales. Finally, 10 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), Sussex Police reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 12 percent, compared to a 14 percent reduction for 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) reduced by 11 percent, compared with 14 percent reduction in England and Wales.

Looking just at the last 12 months, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 7 percent in Sussex, which is a larger reduction than the figure for England and Wales of 1 percent.

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. The table below shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Sussex (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)	51.4	61.1
Victim-based crime	46.2	54.3
Sexual offences	1.0	1.1
Burglary	5.6	7.8
Violence against the person	9.4	11.1
ASB incidents	34.1	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. Sussex's detection rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2014 was 23 percent. This is below the England and Wales's detection rate of 26 percent.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in the Sussex force 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, 84.0 percent (± 0.04 percent) of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Sussex Police. This is lower than the 85.2 (± 0.2 percent) percent figure for England and Wales.

Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are changing the way the public can access policing services and Sussex has begun to provide alternative methods such as online reporting.

The force will be transforming the way in which the public access services, moving to the use of front desks and shared access points with other local partners. This has begun to take place, while the number of stations has reduced. Over the spending review period the force plans to reduce the number of police stations from 30 to 18 and front counters from 31 to 20, and the force will increase the number of shared service access points from 2 to 7.

Summary

Good

- The force has done some work to assess demand and plans to carry out a more comprehensive analysis as part of the plans to develop the alliance with Surrey.
- The force is making good use of local partnership working to join up services and make best use of police time.
- Despite reductions in both police officer and PCSO numbers, the force has worked hard to ensure that the proportion of both working in visible roles has increased and is higher than the England and Wales figure.
- Crime has continued to fall in Sussex throughout the spending review, although at a lower rate than the figure for England and Wales. Over the 12 months to March 2014 Sussex's performance has improved with the force achieving a larger reduction in crime than in other forces in England and Wales. However, the force's detection rate and victim satisfaction is lower than the figure for in England and Wales.

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.