



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Responding to austerity

West Mercia Police

July 2014

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ISBN: 978-1-78246-455-6

www.hmic.gov.uk





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How well does the force provide value for money?

Overall judgment

HMIC commends West Mercia Police for making excellent progress in achieving what has been a challenging savings target. Through the innovative and ambitious alliance with Warwickshire Police, the force has demonstrated some excellent efficiency savings at the same time as continuing to provide good performance in policing the West Mercia area.

Good

Summary

West Mercia Police has already achieved the savings required for the spending review ahead of schedule and is now developing plans for the future. A clear focus on value for money is demonstrated through the alliance with Warwickshire Police that has the opportunity to achieve further significant savings over a number of years. The force is extremely well placed to face future financial challenges.

The force has made good progress with developing and implementing the alliance; the phased approach to managing this unprecedented organisational change has been effective and well led. The alliance is providing the force with significant opportunities for cost savings and importantly is providing the people of West Mercia with a better equipped and more effective police service.

The force understands its demand and is ensuring that police time is used to best effect. The shared resources of both forces are deployed in a 'borderless' way to ensure that the most appropriate response is provided regardless of who owns the resource. Despite major changes and the scale of the cuts in spending, recorded crime has continued to fall in West Mercia and has fallen at a faster rate over the last year than in the rest of 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?

Outstanding

West Mercia Police has entered into an ambitious and innovative alliance with Warwickshire Police that is enabling both forces to make significant savings through collaborating.

As a result of the alliance the force will overachieve on savings during the spending review and as a result will also balance their budget for 2015/16.

Finances are well managed, with sound future plans shared across both organisations. Further significant savings are expected from the alliance. The force is extremely well placed to face future financial challenges.

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

Good

Collaboration is a key strength, demonstrated by the alliance, and unequalled by any other force in the country. It is providing the force with significant opportunities for cost savings and is providing the people of West Mercia with a better equipped and more effective police service.

So far most of the savings have been made from reducing staffing numbers. As the new staff structures are now in place, the alliance is set to increase the savings in non-pay areas.

The force will have lost a slightly higher percentage of its police officer strength than other forces but has protected frontline policing from cuts and the projected proportion of officers on the front line by 2015 will be higher than the figure for England and Wales.

To what extent is the force efficient?

Good

The force carried out an analysis of demand and risks when devising the structure and set up teams equipped to deal with the identified risks and needs.

The crime bureau is able to deal with much of the force's low level crime, resolving a high proportion at the first point of contact without needing a police officer to attend, freeing up police time to deal with more serious issues.

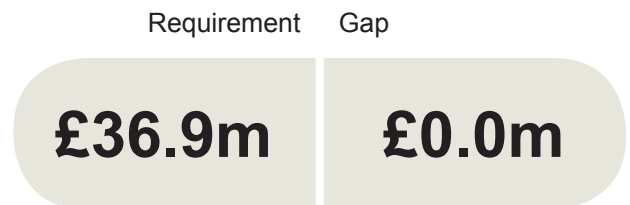
The shared resources of both West Mercia and Warwickshire forces can be deployed in a 'borderless' way to ensure that the most appropriate response is provided to emergency calls.

Recorded crime has continued to fall over the spending review period at a faster rate than in the rest of England and Wales.

The force in numbers

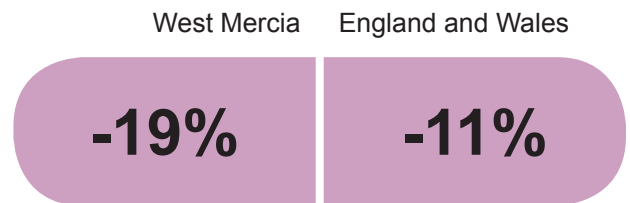
Financial position

The force's savings requirement

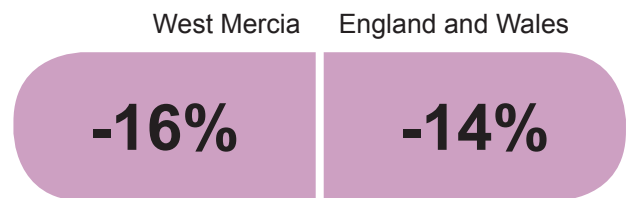


Providing policing

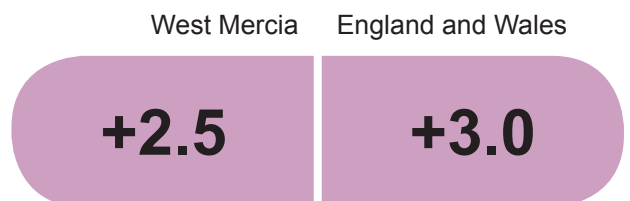
Planned change in police officer numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15



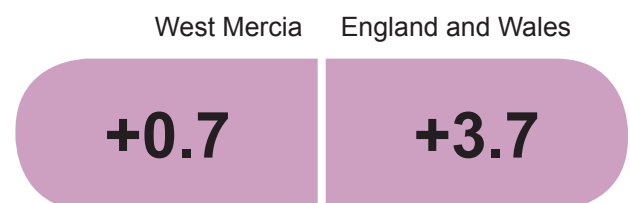
Planned change in total workforce numbers 2010/11 – 2014/15



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

West Mercia

England and Wales

£93.2**£117.7**

Workforce cost per head of population
2013/14

West Mercia

England and Wales

£140.0**£168.1**

Change in recorded crime
2010/11 – 2013/14

West Mercia

England and Wales

-18%**-14%**

Victim satisfaction 2013/14*

West Mercia

England and Wales

85.0%**85.2%**

*Confidence intervals: $\pm 1.2\%$ for West Mercia; $\pm 0.2\%$ 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 West Mercia 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

West Mercia Police has identified that it needs to save £36.9m 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 17 percent is broadly in line with the 18 percent figure for England and Wales.

The scale of the challenge

HMIC considers that West Mercia Police faces a difficult challenge because although the overall savings requirement is not as high as other forces, West Mercia Police already spends less on policing than most other forces as it. This means that there are fewer opportunities to achieve further efficiencies and savings, as West Mercia:

- spends less on police officers and PCSO's per head of population;
- has a low number of police officers per head of population; but
- the cost of police staff is above most other forces.

Savings plans for 2014/15 and 2015/16

The force has a track record of achieving the savings required to meet the financial challenge. It has entered into an alliance with Warwickshire Police. This innovative and ambitious collaboration programme has enabled both forces to achieve significant savings. All police functions below the level of deputy chief constable are managed as a single service combining all resources to provide policing to the two force areas.

Over the spending review the force has made £27.9m of its required savings. This has been achieved with a combination of pay and non-pay reductions and the use of reserves.

The alliance has achieved large underspends across both forces which is expected to continue (£12m so far for West Mercia). West Mercia and Warwickshire Police have a joint financial plan, in which both forces have agreed that they will use up the high levels of reserves they are collectively holding to balance the budget before they resort to further cuts in police officer numbers to make their savings. This will provide time to develop a more efficient way of jointly providing services.

Outlook for 2016 and beyond

The alliance has forecasted funding reductions until 2018/19 and has an agreed £29m savings target. With the potential for further savings to be found from the alliance the force is extremely well placed to face future financial challenges.

Summary

Outstanding

- West Mercia Police has plans in place to balance the budget for 2014/15 and 2015/16.
- The force has entered into an ambitious and innovative alliance with Warwickshire Police that is enabling both forces to make significant savings through collaborating. The force will overachieve on savings during the spending review and will balance the budget for 2015/16.
- Finances are well managed, with sound future plans shared across both organisations. Further significant savings are expected from the alliance. The force is extremely well placed to face future financial challenges.

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

The alliance with Warwickshire Police means that all operational and support services are jointly managed and provided. Both forces still retain their separate governance arrangements under their respective police and crime commissioners (PCCs) and each force retains its own branding and identity, although resources can be shared across both areas if needed.

All resources, including staff below the level of deputy chief constable (each force retains its own chief and deputy chief constable) are pooled and each force contributes to the central pot on a ratio of 69:31. In recognition that West Mercia is a much larger force than Warwickshire it contributes 69 percent of the running costs and receives 69 percent of any savings achieved.

A common structure is now in place across the two forces with neighbourhood policing and local crime prevention activity at its heart. West Mercia is divided into local policing areas (LPAs). Each LPA has dedicated safer neighbourhood teams with police officers, staff and PCSOs working in a locality with local partners to protect communities and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. Patrol officers work from strategically located 'hubs' and respond to all emergency and priority calls for police attendance.

Specialist police services to fight crime and keep people safe are shared across both forces, providing not only opportunities for cost savings but also giving access to a better, more well-equipped and resilient policing service for the people of West Mercia. In addition to significant savings, large reductions in overtime were reported as result of better access to a pool of specialist staff and increases in pre-planned operations to target criminals.

Collaboration

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

Collaboration is a key strength for West Mercia Police; the alliance with Warwickshire since 2012 is ground breaking. HMIC recognises the significant effort that both organisations have made in making this a success. The concept took seven months to develop and has

been implemented within two years of its inception. Mature and professional relationships are in place within the leadership teams of the individual forces enabling joint decisions to be made in the best interest of the strategic alliance. Bringing together two different organisations has not been without its challenges, with leaders sometimes needing to compromise as well as remaining enthusiastic about future opportunities. This is a significant achievement, demonstrating that both organisations can work at all levels by adopting a joint approach.

There are no plans for the alliance to move to a single force; although the more embedded the changes become, the more difficult it will be to separate and report on outcomes separately for each force.

In addition to collaborating with each other, the alliance is continuing to explore collaborative arrangements with other police and public sector organisations. HMIC found the following collaboration initiatives.

- a consortium of forces that will provide the main IT systems used for policing (Athena);
- sharing vehicles with the Fire Service in Hereford and Worcestershire;
- joint procurement of forensics services with regional forces;
- an innovative approach to sharing police buildings with other public sector partners to reduce the costs of estate; and
- a custody service, which is privatised through Reliance

There has been more limited progress to date exploring other opportunities for private sector partnerships. The force took the view that the alliance would need to be fully implemented and understood across the forces, so as to be in a position to clearly identify and specify the requirements from a private sector partnership at the outset.

In 2014/15 the force expects to spend 96 percent of its net revenue expenditure on collaboration, which is higher than the 11 percent figure for England and Wales. Collaboration is expected to contribute to 47 percent of the force's savings requirement, which is higher than the 10 percent figure for England and Wales.

Managing change

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

The alliance was officially entered into in 2012, after a period of very detailed planning and

development, which focused on structural change for staffing, the composition of teams, the development of individual roles, and the identification of responsibilities for each part of the combined operations. This approach did not examine the cumulative impact of all the changes when considered in the round. While recognising that this has led to some unexpected consequences, the approach has helped the forces move quickly into the implementation phase of the alliance.

The structures are now in place and operating; the next phase of the programme focuses on the processes and activities undertaken by the new teams. Feedback has been provided to improve general administrative functions and to reduce duplication of effort across other areas of business. Work is now taking place to understand the processes in detail to identify the areas of change that will bring the greatest improvement and efficiency, particularly in relation to the management of demand.

This phase will be centrally managed across both forces. This is in recognition that changes will need to be considered against both organisations to make sure that one area of the business does not create problems for another.

The force identified that the main elements of its change programme during the spending review were: improving the way operational support is undertaken;

- a strategic alliance which is much broader than collaboration;
- changing the way business support, such as human resources and finance, is provided;
- improving the way operational support is provided;
- changes to the way local policing is provided; and
- improving arrangements with other forces for specialist policing services.

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

- better alignment of resources to demand;
- streamlining processes and reducing bureaucracy;
- collaborating with another part of the public sector;
- improved use of IT; and
- improvements to call management.

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

The force has recognised that the alliance presented a major change for staff to the way they were used to working. For the full benefits of linking the two forces together to be realised, it was necessary for staff at all levels and in all areas of work to embrace the change and be willing to work in different ways.

West Mercia Police recognises that there are different working practices across the two forces. Work has started to identify best practice to improve consistency, for example the alliance is considering how best to align organisational values and objectives, and the associated performance review system.

Considerable effort has been expended into keeping staff informed as the alliance process has rolled out. HMIC found that staff clearly understood that, although the two forces have distinct identities, the alliance operates as one force. This is a key strength and one that can be developed further by increasing the levels of interaction with the workforce in the next programme phase. The majority of issues concerning staff welfare and support are associated with the change programme. These include increased travel time and some tasks take longer to complete. These and other issues are being addressed through a phased implementation approach to change. The next phase will complete an in-depth process review designed to resolve staffing issues.

The management of sickness absence was different in the two forces and a new attendance management policy has been launched to provide a consistent approach. This has resulted in managers becoming more involved at an earlier stage of sickness, and involves writing directly to GPs, advising them of the adjustments that can be made in the workplace to encourage people to return to work. Occupational health was identified as an area where the time required to access support has increased. This is due, in part, to capacity issues caused by an increase in ill-health retirements as a result of officers being moved back into frontline posts.

The alliance encourages staff to voice their views. There have been two staff surveys (developed by Warwick Business School) over the past 12 months and online forums have been available in which questions can be raised and answered. The cultural change programme has been the main result of the findings from the surveys and workforce feedback to date.

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 also to 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 10 percent of its savings from non-pay; this is less than other forces

Although some savings have been made in non-pay areas, the focus in the first phase of work was inevitably on changes to staffing structures and reducing the workforce to fit the new teams. Much of the structural change has been achieved, and there is now opportunity to consider the totality of the remaining non-pay costs across both forces such as estates and vehicle fleet. It is likely that further savings can be made in these areas from rationalising and making better use of collective resources.

The estates strategy aims to get the best use from the police buildings that both forces hold, enabling them to dispose of underused buildings and share facilities. The alliance is exploring the opportunity to develop a joint approach to the management and use of public sector building across both forces and other public sector organisations in the two force areas (known as a joint property vehicle). This is another ambitious and innovative plan; the forces estimate it has the potential to release up to £180m in asset value across the public sector.

The alliance is planning to use some of its extra savings to invest in new technology that will lead to even greater efficiencies. It will replace the main IT systems used for policing and increase the ability for officers to work remotely through mobile technology. There are also plans to fit police vehicles with software that would provide data and intelligence on how the car was being used, and where it had travelled to. This would help to maximise the use of vehicles across the alliance, ensuring that they were used as efficiently as possible.

As with other forces most of the savings comes from reducing the workforce. The force plans to make 90 percent of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is considerably higher than the figure for England and Wales.

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.

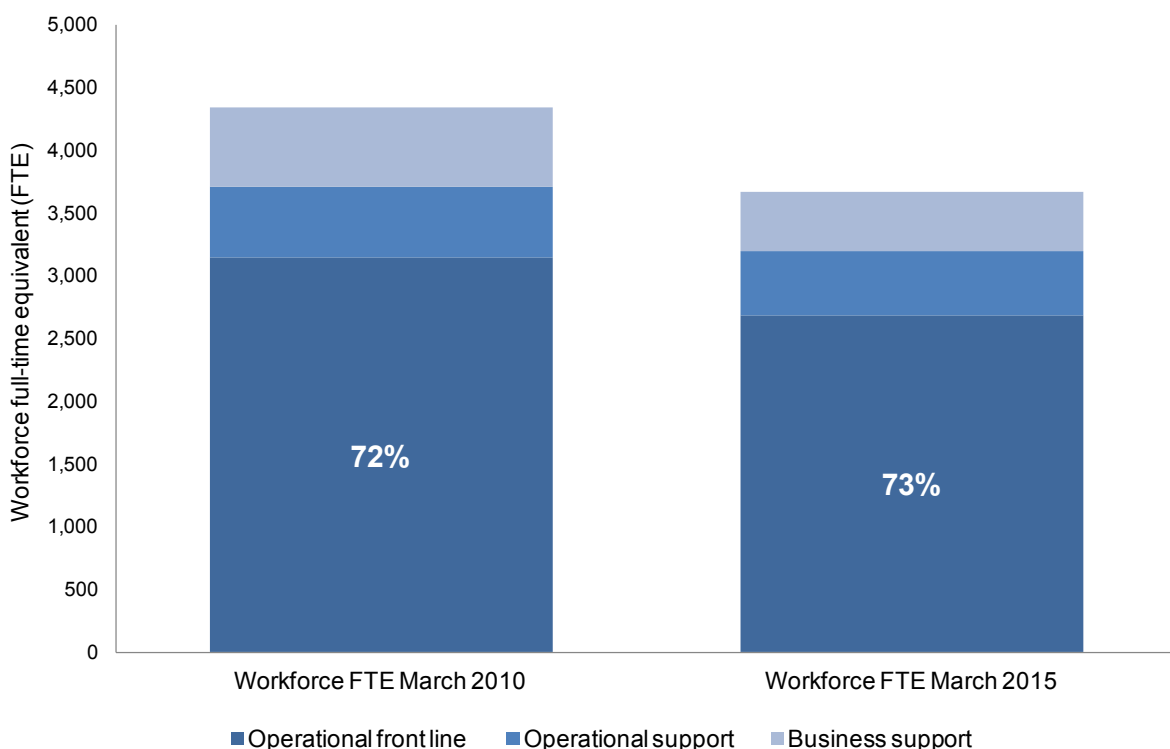
| | 31 March 2010 (baseline) | 31 March 2015 | Change | Force change % | Change for England and Wales % |
|-----------------|---|--------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|---|
| Police officers | 2,391 | 1,949 | -442 | -19% | -11% |
| Police staff | 1,715 | 1,474 | -242 | -14% | -17% |
| PCSOs | 279 | 246 | -33 | -12% | -22% |
| Total | 4,386 | 3,669 | -717 | -16% | -14% |
| Specials | 233 | 470 | 237 | 102% | 44% |

The overall planned change in workforce numbers over this period is slightly higher as a proportion than other forces; the force is set to lose a much higher percentage of its police officer strength than elsewhere. The workforce plans for the alliance were informed by an initial assessment of risk (rather than demand) and allocated resources accordingly.

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 West Mercia Police.



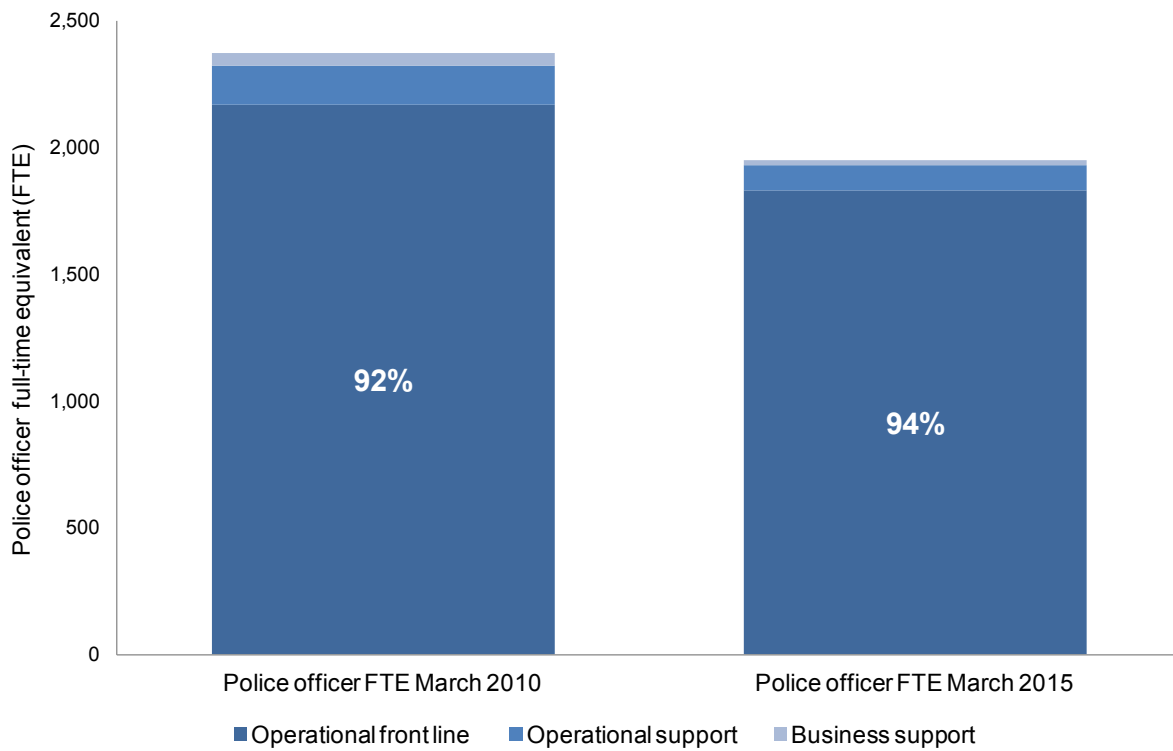
Note: England and Wales reports an increase in the proportion of workforce on the front line from 74 percent in March 2010 to 78 percent in March 2015.

The number of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the constabulary’s total workforce) working on West Mercia’s front line is projected to reduce by 460 between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 3,142 to 2,682).

Over the same period, the proportion of West Mercia’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is projected to slightly increase from 72 percent to 73 percent. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74 percent to 78 percent.

The number of West Mercia’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to decrease by 337 from 2,169 in March 2010 to 1,832 by March 2015, as the following chart shows. The proportion of those remaining on the front line is projected to increase from 92 percent to 94 percent. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89 percent to 92 percent and shows West Mercia police is successfully protecting frontline crime-fighting roles as it makes these cuts.

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



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

- Collaboration is a key strength, demonstrated by the alliance. It is providing the force with significant opportunities for cost savings and importantly is providing the people of the West Mercia area with a better equipped and more effective police service.
- The force has made good progress with developing and implementing the alliance; the phased approach to managing the change has been effective and well led.
- So far most of the savings have been made from reducing staffing numbers. As the new staff structures are now in place, the alliance is set to increase the savings in non-pay areas.
- The force has projected a greater reduction in police officer strength than other forces but has protected frontline policing from cuts; the proportion of officers on the frontline by 2015 will be higher than the figure for England and Wales at 94 percent.

To what extent is the force efficient?

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

How well does the force understand and manage demand?

The analysis of the demand on both forces to inform the proposed structure of the alliance was completed using a nationally developed risk assessment tool for police forces . This involved a review of historic data on calls for police assistance, recorded crime, levels of deprivation within communities and professional opinion to inform decisions as to levels of threat and risk. As a result, this provided a starting point for most of the frontline roles providing 82 safer neighbourhood teams in West Mercia and patrol (response) officers based from a number of specific locations (hubs) to respond to emergency and priority incidents.

In terms of managing the demand in order to make the best use of police time, the first phase of the alliance took policies from across both forces and came up with agreed standards such as when and how to deploy police resources. To help the forces begin to move across boundaries – so that the nearest officer can attend an incident even if it is in the other force area – IT solutions are being provided, such as mobile computers with access to all alliance systems and vehicle technology to improve response times and officer availability.

It has now been recognised by the force that a more in-depth and up-to-date assessment of current demand is required to better inform the decisions as to how resources need to be allocated. This includes the growing demand on the police as a result of reductions made in other organisations such as mental health services and the ambulance service.

How efficiently does the force allocate its resources?

The force is developing performance measures that focus on the quality of service rather than traditional performance targets to better support the agreed vision of “Protecting People from Harm”. This approach assesses the threat, harm and risk to the public and force on a daily basis and then moves resources from across the alliance to the areas of greatest need, including specialist police services for regional and national requirements. The chief officers and PCCs meet regularly across the region to identify emerging regional and national issues and review their commitment in managing these threats.

The force uses technology to monitor demand that comes into the force, the resources to

manage that demand, and the ability to attend incidents in the required time. The alliance force control room applies a borderless service directing the best available resource to respond where necessary. Operational staff interviewed during the inspection fully accepted that they may be required to attend varying locations, though they were rarely sent away from their assigned geographic areas.

Officers and PCSOs use mobile technology, carrying out the majority of their work while out on patrol without the need to continually return to a station to complete forms or file reports. The patrol activities are identified in local briefings, directing staff to crime or anti-social behaviour hotspots and to check on prolific perpetrators and visit vulnerable victims. There are also two harm assessment units that review incidents and risks concerning vulnerable people. The information is then shared with appropriate agencies to provide support and protect them from harm.

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.

The alliance has teams in place to support preventative policing. A crime bureau is in place to deal with low-level crime and investigations over the telephone, often without deploying an officer. This allows frontline officers and PCSOs to be more accessible to the local community. Meanwhile, patrol officers work in patrol zones supporting the safer neighbourhood teams.

The alliance has provided greater resilience for West Mercia in specialist roles, particularly to combat firearms, serious, organised and major crimes. Staff also have access to an improved intelligence database and electronic crime management system.

Calls for service

HMIC examined whether West Mercia Police 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, West Mercia had maintained the same target response times of 20 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 forces performance in 2010/11 to 2013/14.

| Calls for service | 2010/11 | 2013/14 |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Percentage of emergency calls on target | 93.0 | 95.4 |
| Percentage of priority calls on target | 77.0 | 76.7 |

Over the spending review period, attendance for emergency calls in target has improved and for priority calls has broadly stayed the same.

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 West Mercia area.

In 2014, West Mercia Police allocated 63 percent of its police officers to visible roles. This is 2.2 percentage points lower than the number allocated in 2010, but higher than the figure for most other forces (which was 56 percent across England and Wales).

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs, who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, West Mercia police allocated 67 percent to visible roles. This is 1.8 percentage points lower than it allocated in 2010 (69 percent), but again higher than the 60 percent figure for England and Wales as at 31 March 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 West Mercia, 8 percent said that they have seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago; this compares to 12 percent of respondents in England and Wales.

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 West Mercia said they felt safe from crime where they lived, compared to 84 percent of respondents in England and Wales. Finally, 5 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), West Mercia force reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 18 percent, compared with 14 percent in England and Wales. Over this period, victim-based crime (that is, crimes where there is a direct victim – an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 19 percent, compared with 14 percent in England and Wales.

Looking just at the last 12 months, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by three percent, which is higher than the reduction of one percent in England and Wales.

By looking at how many crimes were recorded per head of population, we can get an indication of how safe it is for the public in that police area. The table below shows recorded crime and anti-social behaviour rates in West Mercia (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) | 47.2 | 61.1 |
| Victim-based crime | 42.3 | 54.3 |
| Sexual offences | 1.0 | 1.1 |
| Burglary | 6.1 | 7.8 |
| Violence against the person | 8.8 | 11.1 |
| ASB incidents | 40.0 | 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. West Mercia's detection rate (for recorded crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2014 was 25 percent. This is broadly in line with the detection rate of 26 percent in England and Wales.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in the West Mercia 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, 85.0 percent (± 1.2 percent) of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by the West Mercia Police. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales figure of 85.2 percent (± 0.2 percent).

Changes to how the public can access services

The force is developing a public engagement strategy to identify how access by the community needs to evolve. It has already introduced community ambassadors in the safer neighbourhood teams who attend various public meetings to represent the police and listen to public concerns, which are fed back to the force.

The force is exploring other less traditional ways for the public to access the police; using a range of channels to engage with the public. A social media strategy has been developed that recently led to a Facebook campaign to reduce sexual offences. This resulted in over 70,000 hits and an increase in reporting of offences. The force recognises that increasing social media campaigning may also increase demand. This will be factored into the next phase of the change programme as demand is explored in more detail.

The force has not provided HMIC with data on planned changes to the number of police stations, front counters or the use of shared access points.

Summary

Good

- The force carried out an analysis of demand and risks when devising structures and set up teams equipped to manage risks and needs. Now the structures are in place and operating, it is planning to carry out a further comprehensive analysis to ensure that it reduces unnecessary demand and continues to align resources to need.
- The crime bureau is able to deal with much of the force's low-level crime, resolving a high proportion at the first point of contact without needing a police officer to attend. This is freeing up police time to deal with more serious issues, and allowing the neighbourhood teams to be more available within local areas.
- The shared resources of both West Mercia and Warwickshire forces can be deployed in a 'borderless' way to ensure that the most appropriate response is provided to emergency and priority calls regardless of which force they belong to.
- Recorded crime has continued to fall in West Mercia over the spending review period at a faster rate than in the rest of England and Wales, despite the force introducing organisational change of unprecedented scale.

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.