

Policing in Austerity - Meeting the Challenge

July 2014

Background

In the October 2010 spending review, the Government announced that central funding to the police service in England and Wales would be reduced in real terms by 20 percent in the four years from March 2011 to March 2015.¹

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's (HMIC's) Valuing the Police Programme has tracked how forces have planned to make savings to meet this budget requirement. They published findings on this in July 2011, June 2012 and July 2013.²

This report, in the final year of the spending review, concerns how forces have managed the considerable challenges to make savings so far. In order to consider this, they asked three questions:

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

National Findings

HMIC described their main findings as follows:

- HMIC finds it impressive that police forces in England and Wales have risen to the challenge of austerity finding almost £2.53bn in savings while still protecting the front line of policing.
- 5 forces were judged as having an outstanding response to the spending review. The majority were judged to be good. 3 forces required improvement.
- HMIC expresses particular concern that neighbourhood policing is at risk of erosion in some areas.
- Collaboration between force, public and private sector organisations remains patchy and fragmented.
- Changes are required if forces are to be supported in achieving further substantial cost reductions in the future. They call for a considered and open debate about how policing is best funded and organised in the future.

Devon & Cornwall Police Findings

HMIC described their main findings as follows:

Overall judgement - GOOD

Devon & Cornwall has continued to make good progress in achieving savings despite facing a very difficult challenge. HMIC is reassured that the force is working hard to find ways of cutting spending while protecting neighbourhood policing and fighting crime.

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

Devon and Cornwall Police faces a significant challenge in achieving the required savings as it already spends less on policing than most forces in England and Wales. However the force has made good progress and is not only on track to achieve the savings required over the review period but is also working hard to achieve further savings beyond this period.

To what extent has the force an affordable way of providing policing? - GOOD
The force has improved processes and services to increase productivity and reduce waste. It has strived to provide effective policing in spite of cuts in workforce numbers.

To what extent is the force efficient? - GOOD
The force has a comprehensive understanding of its demand and is developing a sophisticated and effective approach to ensuring that its resources are used efficiently. Although there continue to be fewer crimes per head of population in Devon and Cornwall than in England and Wales as a whole, overall crime has not reduced in Devon and Cornwall at the same rate as the figure for England and Wales. The force's detection rate and victim satisfaction is broadly in line with other forces across England and Wales.

Police & Crime Commissioners Response

I welcome the report describing the results of Her Majesty of Inspectorates inspection of how effectively police forces have met the considerable challenges that funding cuts present to policing.

I am pleased to report that Devon and Cornwall was judged to be good in the report and consider this to be a fair view of how effectively the force has managed budgetary constraints over the last 3 years. We are on track to achieve the £53.3m savings that are needed in Devon & Cornwall during the spending review period.

My Police & Crime Plan has made delivering increased efficiency and long term security for Devon & Cornwall a key priority. Work is currently being undertaken by my office and the force to develop plans to ensure that funding is secure for the future. This includes developing plans for an ambitious alliance with Dorset Police and wider collaboration on specific projects such as forensic services, procurement and serious organised crime with other forces in our region.

Devon & Cornwall Police have worked hard to develop a comprehensive understanding of its demand providing an opportunity to ensure that resources are used more efficiently.

However considerable challenges remain. The report makes clear that Devon & Cornwall Police has faced a particularly difficult challenge not just because of the scale of cuts required but also because the force was already a relatively low spending force compared to others. This will continue to present challenges as we try to find the scope to make additional savings to meet future savings requirements.

Future savings are likely to need a fundamental shift in demand on the police service. In order to achieve this, the force will need to become more focused on prevention. Finding the capacity to deliver this change is likely to prove challenging given the substantial savings already made.

I will continue to work closely with Devon & Cornwall Police to identify innovative ways to deliver the savings required and to protect the high standard of service that the communities of Devon & Cornwall expect.

Chief Constable's Response

Recommendations

As a result of their inspection, HMIC have made the following national and Devon and Cornwall specific recommendations. A comment either on what we are already doing or what we intend to do follows each recommendation.

Recommendation 1

Not later than 30 September 2014, each of the three forces with an overall assessment of 'requires improvement' should:

- (a) carry out an urgent review of its savings plan; and
- (b) provide to its police and crime commissioner and HMIC a comprehensive and detailed plan which specifies the sufficient steps it will take to remedy the failures and other shortcomings which have led to the assessment in question.

Those steps may include, but should not be limited to:

- (i) a comprehensive assessment and understanding of current demand;
- (ii) developing and implementing an affordable organisational model (often referred to as the force's operating model); and
- (iii) assuring themselves that the model for policing can respond to the assessed demand that the force faces.

Note: Upon receipt of the action plan, HMIC will assess it and conduct a re-inspection of the force to determine progress. The re-inspection will be completed by 1 November 2014. The findings of each re-inspection will be incorporated into HMIC's PEEL assessment, which will be published in November 2014.

THIS RECOMMENDATION DOES NOT APPLY TO DEVONAND CORNWALL.

Recommendation 2

Not later than 30 September 2014, each of the three forces with an assessment of 'requires improvement' in respect of not more than one of the three principal areas of this inspection should:

- (a) carry out a review of its plan in respect of the area in question; and
- (b) provide to its police and crime commissioner and HMIC a comprehensive and detailed plan which specifies the sufficient steps it will take to remedy the failures and other shortcomings which have led to the assessment in question.

Those steps may include, but should not be limited to:

- (i) developing detailed plans for achieving savings for the next financial year that can be implemented within the required timescale; and
- (ii) developing options for savings beyond this spending review with an understanding of how these may affect the service they provide to the public.

Note: Upon receipt of the action plan, HMIC will assess it and incorporate its findings into HMIC's PEEL assessment, which will be published in November 2014.

THIS RECOMMENDATION DOES NOT APPLY TO DEVONAND CORNWALL.

Recommendation 3

Not later than 30 September 2014, the Chief Constable of each force that has a savings plan which fails to assume that the level of year-on-year funding restrictions from 2015/16 will continue at the same rate as those in the current spending review period should:

- (a) review the force's savings plans in that respect;

- (b) consult his or her police and crime commissioner and HMIC on the amendments which he or she considers are necessary to remedy that failure; and
- (c) after taking into consideration such representations as may be made in that respect by the police and crime commissioner and HMIC, amend the plans so as to ensure that the failure in question is remedied.

Response – HMIC have sought detail of all Forces planning assumptions, which were returned to them by 22 September 2014. They have advised they will then offer guidance to achieve compliance with this recommendation.

Recommendation 4

Not later than 15 October 2014, each of the 20 forces which plan to achieve less than 10 percent of their savings in the current spending review period from collaboration should:

- (a) review its plans for increasing savings from collaboration with other organisations (in the public, private and voluntary sectors) in 2015/16 and 2016/17;
- (b) consult its police and crime commissioner and HMIC on the amendments to which it considers are necessary or expedient to improve the level of savings from collaboration to the greatest extent reasonably practicable; and
- (c) after taking into consideration such representations as may be made in that respect by the police and crime commissioner and HMIC, provide its police and crime commissioners and HMIC with amended collaboration plans that specify, in detail, the steps it will take in those financial years to improve its level of savings from collaboration to the greatest extent reasonably practicable.

Response – HMIC have sought a review of planned savings through collaboration, which is due to be returned to them by 15 October 2014.

Additionally HMIC reported

In the light of the achievements of the police service in reducing costs in the current spending review period, and the likelihood that savings to substantially the same extent will be required in the next spending review period, there should be a constructive debate in relation to how policing should be reformed so as, to the greatest extent reasonably practicable, efficiently and effectively serve the public in respect of the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour, the maintenance and restoration of order and the apprehension and successful prosecution of offenders.

The debate should consider all relevant factors, including:

- (a) how, and the extent to which and the respects in which, police forces should operate with one another, including on a local, regional and national basis;
- (b) the extent to which policing functions should be performed locally, regionally or nationally;
- (c) how, and the extent to which and the respects in which, public services, of which policing is one, should co-operate, including on a local, regional and national basis;
- (d) the ways in which police forces receive funding (both locally and nationally), having particular regard to the facilitation of the achievement of the objectives of police and crime plans, the freedoms in this respect available to police and crime commissioners, and possible reforms to the policing allocation formula; and
- (e) the nature and extent of available financial and other incentives for improved efficiency and effectiveness in policing.

The debate should be convened by HMIC. In this respect, a group should be established so as to include the College of Policing, police and crime commissioners, chief constables, bodies representative of police officers and police staff, national and local government, experts in the financing of policing and academics and organisations in fields relevant to crime prevention and the criminal justice system.

It should lead to the production of a range of options for a national blueprint for policing in austerity.

The group's report should be published on Thursday 4 June 2015.