

Chief Constable's Report to the Police & Crime Commissioner

Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge

July 2013

1. Background & Context

Government funding to police forces in England and Wales is being reduced by 20% between March 2011 and March 2015. As we enter the third year of the spending review period, HMIC is continuing to track how forces are making savings to meet this budget reduction.

The Inspection methodology included in-force inspections, data collection from all forces, a public survey, interviews with Chief Officers and PCCs, as well as focus groups with officers and police staff.

The inspection focused on three questions:

1. What is the financial challenge, and how are forces responding to it?
2. What is the impact of the changes that forces are making, both on the workforce, and on the service they provide to the public?
3. How are forces managing current and future risks?

2. Findings

The report discusses a number of key areas regarding forces' ability to make the required savings.

A. Analysis of financial plans

- HMIC has confidence that forces will bridge the residual funding gap by March 2015.
- All forces have achieved a better alignment between finance budgets and workforce plans.
- All forces are planning for how they will manage future cuts beyond March 2015, although some were more advanced in this than others.

B. How forces are making savings

- Forces are choosing to make savings in very different ways, dependent on their priorities, the demand on their services, and their leadership and composition.
- Pay savings: given the proportion of the budget allocation to pay (approx 80%), it is impossible that workforce numbers can be entirely protected.
- The most common areas for non-pay savings are: contract renegotiation, collective procurement, reduced purchasing and estates reconfiguration.
- Some forces are changing the workforce mix, e.g. increasing the proportion of police staff to fill roles that do not need to be done by warranted officers.
- All forces are increasing their recruitment of the Special Constabulary.

- While the proportion of total workforce on the frontline is increasing, the actual numbers are falling. The front line is thus being protected but not preserved.

C. Reshaping and reconfiguring to adjust to smaller budgets and workforces

- The approaches being used include: controlling cost; reducing the work; reorganising the workforce into more efficient structures; and enhancing the productivity of officers.
- All forces have reviewed their operating models, with the majority carrying out a significant level of change and restructuring.
- HMIC expects that all forces should have considered the following approaches: borderless deployment; single-crewing; matching resource to demand; and a scheduled appointment system.
- Improved technology has been found to be particularly beneficial in the following areas: control room; HR and finance; and crime and intelligence. However, in general the IT systems and technology in use are outdated and this needs addressing urgently.

D. Collaboration and partnering

- Collaboration between forces remains the most common.
- Forces are increasingly looking to collaborate with other locally-based public sector partners, however there is a risk that the shared services may not genuinely integrate.
- There are a few larger value partnerships with the private sector, who can offer specialist skills and economies of scale, however, contracts can be lengthy and there is a limit to their flexibility.
- HMIC considers the advantages of collaborations to be: reduction and sharing of overheads; lower levels of staffing as demand can be better matched; benchmarking and comparing; greater specialist proficiency and capability; increased resilience; reduced risk through improved interoperability.
- Where collaboration is contributing to less than 10% of the savings plan, HMIC recommends the force and their PCC should review their plan to establish if there is greater scope for collaboration. HMIC will assess in the autumn whether any improvements have been made in these forces.
- Successful collaborations require: a shared vision and commitment between the leaderships of the forces and the PCCs; negotiation and a degree of compromise from both parties; swift and pragmatic solutions to technical barriers; comprehensive consideration of the implications for the workforce; and working around the problem of a lack of common IT systems.

E. Impact on workforce profile and morale

- Further workforce efficiencies could be made through focusing on the mix of ranks and wider spans of leadership.
- Austerity can provide an opportunity for flexible working through undertaking demand analysis to identify the most effective working hours for part-time staff.

- Forces need to strike a balance between managing sickness in order to improve the productivity of their workforce, and managing the health and well-being of their staff.
- Addressing concerns about staff morale requires strong leadership and an understanding of the need to influence behaviours and culture, to motivate the workforce through times of uncertainty and fewer career prospects.

F. Impact on the service provided to the public

- *Visibility*: Satisfaction with police patrols is generally low – around 39% felt dissatisfied by the number of patrols in their area. However, half of respondents see police as often now as they did 12 months ago so there is no clear link to changes made as a result of the spending review.
- *Accessibility*: The public's preferred method of notifying the police of a crime is by telephone. They do not support the closure of front counters. They have a limited appetite for accessing services online. However, this is a growing communication channel, particularly with younger generations.
- *Responding to need*: Satisfaction is achieved by responding in a time that the victim thinks is reasonable. Satisfaction can tail off as a case progresses particularly if they are not kept informed of progress.
- *Victim satisfaction survey*: 83% of people feel safe from crime in their local area. This has remained stable over the last two years despite spending cuts.

G. Future challenges

- *Further reductions to the policing budget*: The Government has announced a further 4.9% reduction for central police funding for 2015/16.
- *Increased demand*: While some crimes have fallen, criminality may have simply shifted online. There is also increased demand in more complex but less visible areas such as the management of sex offenders.

Detailed Force Feedback: Devon and Cornwall Police's response to the funding challenge

• The challenge

Devon and Cornwall is required to find savings equating to 17% of its total expenditure between 2011-15. It made 66% of the savings required in the first two years of the spending review period. It has plans in place to achieve the remaining savings in the next two years and has started to consider what savings it will need to make after March 2015.

The force faces a more difficult challenge, being a low cost force with an extensive geographic area and a large number of visitors in the summer months increasing demand.

• Response to the challenge

The force plans to achieve 74% of the savings requirement from its pay budget. It plans to lose slightly more officers than other forces but fewer PCSOs.

The number of officers in frontline roles is reducing by 10% overall, but the proportion of frontline officers remains constant at 93%.

Collaboration is expected to contribute less than 1% of the force's savings requirement, well below the 7% figure nationally.

In the last year, the force has reviewed and adjusted its operating model, and streamlined its change management programme. As a result, HMIC has increased confidence in the force's ability to better manage future change. However, the force is limited by poor quality ICT: updating these systems is a priority for the force.

- **Impact of the changes on the public**

Visibility: in the survey 9% said they had seen an officer more often than 12 months ago, compared with 13% nationally although this was not significant. 78% said they felt as safe or safer than they did two years ago.

Calls for service: the number of emergency and priority calls dealt with within target times have been gradually declining over the last three years.

Crime: recorded crime has only fallen by 2% between 2010/11 and 2012/13, which is the lowest of any force, however, based on number of crimes occurring per head of population, Devon and Cornwall is already a very safe area.

How the public access services: the force is making more use of the internet and social media to communicate with the public and developing different mechanisms for the public to contact the police.

- **Conclusion**

Devon and Cornwall faces a more difficult challenge than many other forces. However, since last year the force has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge and has developed a detailed change programme to reduce costs while continuing to fight crime. Further work is needed to ensure changes are communicated clearly to the workforce and that the cultural change is addressed.

Chief Constable's Response

The evidence-based approach which the new Chief HMIC has brought to this inspection has been welcome. This approach, which is in contrast to the previous approach of using 'professional judgement', also recognises that statements at the start of the CSR that frontline police numbers and policing services need not be affected have proved to be unfounded. Devon and Cornwall, along with many other forces across England and Wales, have risen to the challenge that the CSR has brought and found innovative ways to tackle the funding cuts. We are also pleased that our initial plans, given to the HMIC team during the very first inspection, appear from this subsequent inspection to have been correct and have put us on the right track.

There is a clear recognition in the report that Devon and Cornwall faces a significant challenge due to its lower than average funding, had to make savings prior to the CSR and suffers from a welcome yet unprecedented increase in population, which in turn affects crime and incident levels. Whilst not a matter solely for HMIC it does not appear at this time that the Home Office/HMIC have indicated the mechanism by which this issue will be raised with the Home Secretary on behalf of those forces affected. I believe it is a matter now for all Police and Crime Commissioners to actively engage in this regard. For Devon and Cornwall Police this is critical to our resourcing beyond 2016/17.

Recommendations

Based on their national findings, HMIC have made the following recommendations to all forces:

Protecting crime fighting capacity

1. All Chief Constables and PCCs should review their plans to deliver savings to ensure they are doing all they can to continue to reduce crime and protect the front line while balancing their budgets. They should use the data and information contained in this report, and in HMIC's Value for Money profiles, when conducting their reviews.

Response – Plans are constantly under review, seeking to further reduce crime and protect the frontline.

2. Chief Constables and PCCs in forces that are planning to reduce the proportion of their workforce and/or police officers on the front line should assess whether they have taken the decisive action seen in many forces in order to maintain their crime fighting capacity. HMIC will follow up the assessments in the autumn.

Response – whilst the proportion in the frontline is planned to reduce this reduction brings it in line with the national average from a higher level. This remains under constant review.

Enabling better use of police IT

3. The Police IT Company should urgently work with forces and PCCs to provide an IT capability that supports the frontline officer and delivers better value for money.

Response – The force is making significant investments in IT to support staff in better serving the public.

Maximising savings opportunities through collaboration

4. In preparation for the next spending round period all Chief Constables and PCCs should review their plans for collaboration. In particular they should consider whether there is scope to deliver better value for money and improved capability and capacity through joint working with other forces, the public and/or the private sector.

5. Chief Constables and PCCs in forces planning to deliver less than 10% of their savings through collaboration should assess whether there is scope to improve on this position. HMIC will follow up the assessments in the autumn.

Response - I am currently working on a collaboration scoping project looking within the peninsula and the region. Our collaboration opportunities are not as varied as those of other forces, caused by the geographic realities of a peninsula force and the comparative economic deprivation within the south west. Nevertheless, the collaboration project is actively scoping engagement with local authorities, businesses, the voluntary sector and blue light services. My position as Chief Constable is that I am open to any collaboration which improves public service to the communities within Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly in a manner which improves capability, capacity, provides value for money and is sustainable beyond 2017. We will be in a far stronger position to engage with HMIC upon this matter when they return.

6. The Home Office should review the incentives it provides to encourage forces to collaborate.

Building leadership skills for the future

7. The College of Policing should consider how best to support police leaders in developing the skills they need to lead and manage forces effectively during the age of austerity.

Response - The force has made a significant investment in leadership due to the foresight of the PCC, initially looking at issues relating to management and supervision.

Most efficient and effective models of neighbourhood policing

8. The College of Policing (in its ongoing work on local policing) should identify the most effective models for preventative and proactive neighbourhood policing. HMIC will undertake further complementary work in this regard in the autumn.

Sharing best practice

9. The College of Policing, working with HMIC, should ensure that the good practice that forces have shown in their response to the funding challenge is evaluated and shared across the police service.

Developing a longer term approach

10. The Home Office, police forces, the College of Policing, PCCs and HMIC should work together to develop a longer term approach for policing in an era of sustained budget reductions. This should address:

- how best to assess demand in the context of falling recorded crime. This should include developing a better understanding and the ability to quantify the new emerging threats and crime types (such as cyber-crime); and
- how best to distribute resources in a period of continuing austerity which maximises all forces' chances of withstanding further reductions, and incentivises forces and PCCs to deliver efficient and effective policing.

COG Lead: Shaun Sawyer