



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Valuing the Police: Preparedness Inspection

**Cambridgeshire Constabulary
July 2011**

Purpose of the review

The Police Service, along with all other parts of the public sector, is facing its biggest financial challenge in a generation. This could be seen either as an opportunity to innovate and refresh – or as a reason to continue as is and see services cut back.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has been heavily involved in monitoring the Service's reaction and preparedness for cutting crime while reducing costs. As part of this, in Spring 2011 we carried out an inspection of all 43 forces and authorities in England and Wales, to assess:

- how they are planning to meet the financial challenge; and
- what the impact will be on the service they provide to the public.

This report summarises the findings for Cambridgeshire Constabulary. A thematic report, *Adapting to Austerity*, which brings together findings from all 43 forces, is also available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

Findings for Cambridgeshire Constabulary

What is the financial challenge in Cambridgeshire?

Cambridgeshire Constabulary and Cambridgeshire Police Authority reported that they are facing a **£16.7m** cash reduction to their budget over the four years of the comprehensive spending review period (2011/12–14/15). In real terms (ie when inflation is taken into account), this equates to 11% of their gross revenue expenditure.

Are the force and authority prepared to meet this financial challenge?

The force and authority showed a good understanding of the financial challenge they face and have considered a range of options to meet it. At the time of inspection, they had already identified the savings required in 2011/12. When he was appointed in September 2010, the Chief Constable instigated an immediate review of policing with the aim of transforming the way services are delivered in Cambridgeshire. He is to be congratulated for this. Full credit should also be given to the authority for committing to a strategic alliance with Hertfordshire Constabulary and Bedfordshire Police.

The force and authority planned to achieve approximately £5m of savings through collaboration across a range of areas, including protective services (eg tackling major crime and serious organised crime), operational support (eg roads policing and firearms) and organisational support (back office) functions. It also aimed to save another £5m through redesigning the policing model. For example, the force had introduced a pilot scheme where victims were encouraged to book appointments at police stations, with the aim of freeing up officer time to patrol communities. At the time of inspection it was too early to judge the effectiveness of this approach. However, the force and authority should monitor it carefully to ensure that the public are not being deterred from engaging with the police or from reporting incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB).

While the force and authority were committed to protecting the level of policing service provided to the public, at the time of inspection the change programme was still at an early stage of development. Understandably, this meant that some of the key details relating to the new policing model and the enhanced collaboration had not yet been worked through.

What will be the impact on the number of police officers and staff?

HMIC asked forces and authorities to provide data on proposed changes to their workforce between March 2010 and March 2015. However, Cambridgeshire Constabulary did not at that time have this detail for the whole period, as the following table shows.

	Police Officers	Police Staff	PCSO
31 March 2010 (actual)	1,471	1,072	209
31 March 2012 (proposed)	1,391	889	195

March 2010 figures have been used as the baseline, because most forces began a recruitment freeze in that year, and as a result workforce numbers started to fall.

The force and authority's plans for the workforce will continue to be refined as the change programme progresses.

What will be the impact on service to the public?

Both the force and authority expressed the aim of continuing to reduce crime and disorder during and after the four-year comprehensive spending review period. However, they were not in a position to give details of the new policing model for Cambridgeshire, or what it will mean for the public, beyond 2012.

The people of Cambridgeshire have been consulted on the changes to the force. There is evidence that feedback from this has influenced decisions about where savings will be made.

Does the force have targets to reduce crime and ASB?

The first job of the police is to reduce crime and keep the peace; and in 2010, Theresa May, the Home Secretary, stated that she expects forces and authorities to make financial cuts while still reducing crime and without damaging the front line.

Cambridgeshire's *Policing Plan* includes priorities to reduce crime and disorder and tackle ASB.

