

Cheshire Police Authority

Transition to police and crime commissioners

About this review

On 15 November 2012 the first elections outside London for police and crime commissioners (PCCs) will be held across England and Wales. PCCs will hold chief constables to account for policing in their force area on behalf of the public. New police and crime panels will scrutinise the actions and decisions of each PCC and make sure information is available for the public, enabling them to hold the PCC to account. Police authorities will cease to exist.

During early summer 2012,¹ Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) assessed how police authorities are preparing for this change. We examined their transition plans and visited every authority to ask:

- Is the police authority ensuring business as usual until November 2012?
- Has the police authority got a plan for managing the transition to PCCs?
- Are arrangements in place to secure a seamless handover to PCCs?
- Are other stakeholders properly involved in the transition process?

This report summarises what we found in Cheshire. A thematic report, *Preparing for Police and Crime Commissioners*, is available from www.hmic.gov.uk

Findings

Summary

Cheshire Police Authority has already put in place plans for managing the handover to the PCC. These include actions to ensure that other partner agencies are involved in the transition, and that the public are aware of what the changes will mean to them.

The police authority remains fully committed to ensuring business as usual, and has identified the key decisions that need to be made between now and November 2012. In addition, it has already developed some options for how the PCC may want to operate. Police authority members are to be commended for their continuing commitment and professionalism.

¹ Meetings with police authorities took place between April and June.

Ensuring business as usual until November 2012

Police authority members are committed to ensuring that business as usual is maintained until November 2012.

There is a clear governance structure for the transition period and the key decisions that are required during this time have been identified. Police authority members continue to engage with local communities across the county, as well as to monitor the service being delivered by the constabulary to the public.

Plans for managing the transition to PCCs

Cheshire Police Authority has a clear transition plan, which is being managed through an established transition board. The board includes both police authority and constabulary representatives. Partners are kept well informed on plans and progress through the regular meetings already in place, as well as through a number of PCC-specific seminars.

Key risks have been identified, with actions taken to mitigate these. Clear links have been made between the risks and how these might affect the handover process.

Plans for briefing prospective PCC candidates are being developed to ensure a consistent, unbiased approach.

Arrangements to secure a seamless handover to PCCs

It is important that the incoming PCC is able to work effectively as soon as they are elected. It will be for them to decide how they wish to run their office, hold the constabulary to account and engage with the public to identify local priorities. A range of options for governance, accountability and decision making is being developed for the incoming PCC to consider. HMIC will follow the progress of this work over the coming months.

How stakeholders are involved in the transition process

The police authority has placed a strong emphasis on engaging with other partner agencies, including local authorities, criminal justice agencies and the voluntary sector. In addition, it is working to identify the legal and financial changes to partnership arrangements that will result once the PCC is in post.

Next steps

HMIC will continue to monitor the transition to PCCs, with a focus on the arrangements that will enable PCCs to work effectively from day one.