

Gwent 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 Gwent. A thematic report, *Preparing for Police and Crime Commissioners*, is available from www.hmic.gov.uk

Findings

Summary

Gwent Police Authority and Gwent Police have ensured that comprehensive plans are in place for the handover to PCCs in November, and have actively involved local authorities and other partners in the process. They have supported this work through the appointment of a dedicated police officer to provide expertise and continuity during the transition process.

A business as usual approach has been adopted in the run up to the elections, helped by planning on an all-Wales basis (to ensure Welsh Government priorities are recognised). A detailed handover report ('legacy statement') and draft police and crime plan is being prepared, which will help the PCC to operate effectively from day one. Recent local elections have seen seven new police authority members in post; the authority is working to maintain governance arrangements across the force. Plans to introduce the new police and crime panel are also developing well.

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

Police authority members are to be commended for their continuing commitment and professionalism.

Ensuring business as usual until November 2012

Police authority members and staff are fully committed to providing strong leadership and governance until November, with senior officers being held to account for specific areas of work and (in particular) crime performance.

While the recent local elections have caused delays in developing the police and crime panel and finding a local authority to host them, the plans are now developing well. The authority is still taking important decisions around collaboration and workforce reductions. HMIC also found evidence of innovation, for instance in decisions to share chief police officers and staff, and put in place a combined firearms team with Dyfed-Powys and South Wales Police.

Plans for managing the transition to PCCs

Gwent has an established transition board, on which local authority chief executives are represented. This is supported by an implementation board, which is co-chaired by the Chief Executive of the police authority and the Deputy Chief Constable to ensure the handover progresses smoothly and that partners are kept well informed of progress and issues that may affect them.

Key risks have been identified and graded for importance, with actions to mitigate these taken at the implementation and transition boards. Any outstanding risks will be highlighted in the handover report ('legacy statement') which is currently being developed. While the capacity of the police authority secretariat has reduced, Gwent Police has supported the change process by appointing a police inspector to manage the day-to-day transition work.

Arrangements to secure a seamless handover to PCCs

It is important that the incoming PCC is able to work effectively from day one. It will be for them to decide how they wish to run their office, hold the force to account and engage with the public to identify local priorities. However, a number of options will be contained in the legacy statement and draft policing plan, which the PCC may want to use to plan activity within the first few months.

Gwent has shared knowledge and expertise with all Welsh forces and has been involved at a national level to ensure that, for example, financial plans and reports are detailed and in line with legal requirements. Arrangements for the office of the PCC and early diary planning are in hand, which should help to ensure a smooth transition before and after the elections. HMIC will follow the progress of this work through the summer.

How stakeholders are involved in the transition process

The police authority has placed a strong emphasis on engaging with other partners (such as local authorities, criminal justice agencies, and the voluntary sector). Plans for briefing prospective PCC candidates are transparent and are shared with staff to ensure a consistent approach.

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.