



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Valuing the Police: Preparedness Inspection

**Merseyside Police
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 Merseyside Police. A thematic report, *Adapting to Austerity*, which brings together findings from all 43 forces, is also available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

Findings for Merseyside Police

What is the financial challenge in Merseyside?

Merseyside Police and Merseyside Police Authority reported that they are facing a **£61.4m** cash reduction to their budget over the four years of the comprehensive review period (2011/12–2014/15). In real terms (ie when inflation is taken into account), this equates to 15% of their gross revenue expenditure.

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

The force and authority clearly understood the scale of the financial challenge facing them, and have considered a full range of options in developing a four-year plan to meet it. This was supported by a change programme which covers the first two years of the comprehensive spending review period; actions for years three and four were still to be determined. The changes form part of the overarching 'Excellent Policing Programme', which was launched in 2011.

Lead authority members were involved in each of the Excellent Policing Programme projects, and also sat on the force's change management board. Governance, programme and project management structures were established and roles and responsibilities were well defined.

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

Merseyside Police planned to make the following changes to its workforce numbers.

| | Police Officers | Police Staff | PCSO |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|------|
| 31 March 2010 (actual) | 4,516 | 2,252 | 468 |
| 31 March 2015 (proposed) | 3,866 | 1,801 | 365 |

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 proposed figures shown for March 2015 were provided to HMIC by the force in June 2011.

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?

The Excellent Policing Programme was designed to engage the whole workforce in delivering excellent service to the public through focusing resources in key areas. Each project was required to assess its impact on service provision and performance, as well as any potential risk to public confidence levels in the police.

The force and authority have developed a clear communications strategy, which was due to be refreshed following the launch of the Excellent Policing Programme. They have communicated and consulted with the public and partners about the proposed changes, and there is evidence that feedback from this has been used to help shape the plan.

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.

Merseyside's *Policing Plan* includes objectives to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the coming year.

