

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

Findings

Summary

Northamptonshire Police Authority has put in place plans for managing the handover to PCCs. These have recently been updated with clear delivery dates for actions to ensure a successful transition. Work is now focusing on the development of a number of options for the incoming PCC to consider in order that he or she may operate effectively from day one, including arrangements for governance and accountability.

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

The police authority remains fully committed to ensuring business as usual and has engaged with partner agencies (for example local councils) to enable them to understand and prepare for the transition to PCCs.

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

Ensuring business as usual until November 2012

There is a strong commitment from the authority to maintain business as usual through existing committee structures until the role is handed over to the incoming PCC. Members are fully engaged in continuing to hold the force to account for performance, and provide support where required. Any key decisions will continue to be made through normal processes.

Plans for managing the transition to PCCs

The transition process is the responsibility of the police authority, with day-to-day management being led by the chief executive. Staff from the force may be requested to help with work when required. The authority has recognised the additional demands that the transition has placed on the small number of police authority staff it has, and is making arrangements to address this through the use of force resources.

Key risks have been identified and an action plan developed which outlines the work programme in detail; including formal milestones, delivery dates and progress. Plans for briefing prospective PCC candidates are being drafted and are intended to be transparent, fair and open.

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.

There is recognition that the development of governance options and a framework within which the PCC may operate is a priority and will be the focus of future detailed work. The authority will research emerging PCC candidates' manifestos to assist with developing the local policing plan and provide options for the elected PCC to consider. HMIC will follow the progress of this work through the summer.

How stakeholders are involved in the transition process

There is a strong emphasis on partner engagement, including those who have an interest in crime, community safety and the new policing landscape, such as local authorities, criminal justice agencies and the voluntary sector. An engagement day for 60 of these key partners was held in February, with a further partnership day to be held in September to focus on commissioning arrangements and the impact on partners.

The regular contact with authority members and officers from forces within the East Midlands Alliance has been maintained, which will be beneficial as plans are developed further.

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.