

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

Findings

Summary

South Wales Police Authority has already put in place comprehensive plans for managing the handover to PCCs. These include substantial work and communication with the public, partners and the Welsh Government to ensure the policing issues that affect Wales are taken into account.

The police authority remains fully committed to ensuring that a business as usual approach is taken. Police authority members are to be commended for their continuing commitment and professionalism. They are supported by police authority staff and senior officers from the force, who lead on specific projects to make sure the introduction of PCCs takes place smoothly. The police authority has already started to develop some options for how the PCC and police and crime panel might choose to operate from day one, although these are yet to be fully developed.

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

Ensuring business as usual until November 2012

Police authority members and staff are fully committed to providing strong leadership and governance until November. Around half of police authority members were not returned in recent local elections. However, the authority remains committed to providing strong leadership and governance. Efforts have been made to ensure that new members are briefed on current priorities and the transition plans. Important decisions around collaboration and budget reductions are still being taken. HMIC also found evidence of innovation, for instance in the decision to share chief police officers, staff and combined firearms, traffic and serious and organised crime teams with Gwent and Dyfed-Powys police forces.

Plans for managing the transition to PCCs

South Wales Police and Authority have an established transition board, with clear plans for managing a smooth change to the PCC. This is supported by a weekly team meeting, with senior police officers and staff held accountable for leading different areas of change. While partner organisations do not sit on this board, extensive work has been carried out to ensure their views are sought and that they are informed of progress.

Key risks have been identified and graded for importance, with clear evidence of action taken to mitigate these. Any outstanding risks will be highlighted in the legacy statement (handover report) which is currently being developed. While the recent departure of half the authority members (including the chair) has been challenging, the authority has responded by dedicating a member of staff to manage the change programme.

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 police and crime plan, which the PCC may want to use to plan activity within the first few months.

South Wales Police and Authority share knowledge and expertise with all Welsh forces and have 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 (including the decommissioning of the authority and its records and resources) are outlined in a detailed legacy statement that will contribute to a smooth transition. HMIC will follow the progress of this work through the summer.

How stakeholders are involved in the transition process

South Wales Police Authority places a strong emphasis on engaging with other partners. This includes recognising those who are affected by reductions in police funding (such as local authorities, criminal justice agencies and the voluntary sector). Plans for briefing prospective PCC candidates are transparent and are being 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.