

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

Findings

Summary

Suffolk Police Authority has put in place plans for managing the handover to PCCs. Work is now focusing on the developing a number of options for the incoming PCC to consider in order that he or she may operate effectively from day one; this includes arrangements for governance and accountability.

The police authority remains fully committed to ensuring business as usual, including continuing to monitor force performance. It is raising awareness of what the new policing arrangements under the PCC will be, ensuring local councils, community safety and criminal justice partners are involved in the transition and making the public aware of what the changes will mean to them.

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

Suffolk Police Authority has maintained the current arrangements for governance and accountability, including its committee structure. Police authority members are fully engaged in continuing to hold the force to account for performance and to provide support where required.

The key decisions affecting policing in Suffolk have been identified by the police authority and are being properly managed.

Plans for managing the transition to PCCs

The police authority has established a transition project group to manage the transition to the PCC. The group has developed an action plan that is comprehensive, but would benefit from further work to identify milestones as well as actions that are priorities. To manage any risks to the transition the police authority has introduced a register which is monitored at every transition project group and at each strategic development panel. The register highlights some risks but is not extensive.

There is a joint finance group with Norfolk Constabulary to ensure the work on collaboration is considered.

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. The police authority has commenced preparation of the draft police and crime plan. This will include community engagement via an annual survey to gain the public's view on what priorities they would like police to focus on.

The police authority recognises the need to develop options for governance and accountability for the PCC to consider upon appointment. This, together with planning for different financial options will allow the PCC to make informed decisions.

HMIC will continue to monitor the authority's progress throughout the summer.

How stakeholders are involved in the transition process

Suffolk Police Authority has continued to develop relationships with partners across the county by seeking to increase awareness of the transition to the new policing arrangements. This includes meetings with other public sector leaders. In May 2012 the police authority held a well attended seminar to engage with partners, which further developed working relationships and the new framework under which the PCC will operate.

The police authority has also developed a communication strategy which includes a new website to make information available as widely as possible.

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.