

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

Findings

Summary

Sussex Police Authority has put in place an effective plan for managing the handover to the incoming PCC, with great emphasis placed on the involvement of partner agencies (for example local authorities) in this process. There is also a focus on informing people in Sussex about the role of PCC and what it means through a dedicated website and information leaflets.

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

The police authority remains fully committed to ensuring business as usual and continue to scrutinise how well the force are performing; and police authority members are to be commended for their continuing commitment and professionalism. There is recognition that some options for governance, accountability and decision making to enable the PCC to operate from day one are a priority and work has begun to develop these.

Ensuring business as usual until November 2012

The police authority is absolutely committed to maintaining business as usual. It continues to scrutinise the force and performance through existing committee structures.

The members remain fully engaged in day to day business and intend to continue their role until this is passed to the PCC.

Plans for managing the transition to PCCs

Sussex has a clear transition plan which is managed through an established transition board. While the board has no member representation, oversight is maintained through other meetings to which the transition board reports. Partners, such as criminal justice and local authority representatives, are part of the board, which means that organisations which work with the police have a good understanding about the new PCC structure.

Key risks have been identified, with evidence of action taken to mitigate them. Clear links have been made between the risks and how these might affect the handover process. There was some concern that the capacity of the secretariat might not be sufficient for the demands of the coming months as they manage the transition day to day. The authority is content that there are enough staff at this time but will find additional resources if necessary.

An information protocol has been developed to ensure a consistent and transparent approach by all staff when briefing prospective PCC candidates.

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 authority is preparing a legacy document to give context to key decisions that have been made. A range of options for governance, accountability and decision making are being developed for the incoming PCC to consider. This work is at an early stage and HMIC will review this in September.

How stakeholders are involved in the transition process

There is a strong emphasis on the part of the police authority in engaging with other partners. These include partners who have an interest in crime, community safety and the new policing landscape, such as local authorities and criminal justice agencies. The authority has planned a PCC simulation event that will work through a number of potential scenarios to help prepare partners for the future.

Next steps

HMIC will continue to monitor the transition, with a focus on the arrangements that will enable PCCs to work effectively from day one.