

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

Findings

Summary

The police authority and force have a joint transition plan in place to manage the handover to the PCC. This is overseen by a transition programme board (made up of members from both the authority and force). A separate finance plan covering the transition work by the authority and force is in place. In addition to the regular authority transition programme board meetings, the force is holding separate transition meetings, which are chaired by the deputy chief constable. The authority maintains a risk register which continues to be refined and developed. The force is assisting the authority by providing project management skills.

The police authority is operating a business as usual approach up to the November elections and will continue to take necessary decisions, including decisions on a collaborative alliance with West Mercia Police. The authority will continue to monitor the wider performance of the force through their current governance arrangements.

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

The authority is considering what new arrangements may be necessary to enable the PCC to hold the force to account come November. Police authority members are to be commended for their continuing commitment and professionalism.

Ensuring business as usual until November 2012

The authority remains committed to operating a business as usual approach up to the elections, and over the first seven days prior to the PCC taking office. The current governance arrangements for making key decisions will remain in place and the authority intends to make all necessary decisions that are required in the coming months (rather than choosing to put them off until the PCC is elected). In particular, in June 2012 the authority took the decision to work in collaboration with West Mercia Police in order to meet the savings targets agreed within their respective financial plans.

Plans for managing the transition to PCCs

The authority and force have a joint transition implementation plan. The chief executive of the police authority oversees this plan, with governance structures provided by the authority's transition programme board and the force's transition meetings. The authority and force are maintaining separate risk registers for transition. HMIC found that the authority's risk register is still being refined and is not yet fully developed: this has been recognised, and the force is providing project management skills to help remedy this. The authority has the capacity to deliver the plan and has set aside a small transition budget to cover any costs.

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. A number of assumptions have been made to support the authority's transition arrangements. The authority has considered, as part of the transition plan, an initial staffing structure for the PCC. They are making provisions for the continuity of external provision such as legal and internal audit services. Preliminary work on the 2013/14 budget and police and crime plan will be taking place ahead of the elections to enable the PCC to be better informed and have some options when considering these areas.

How stakeholders are involved in the transition process

The authority and force engage with partner agencies on their transition arrangements through a number of different forums. The chief executive of the police authority is a member of the Warwickshire Justice Strategic Board. The authority and force are both members of a county council working group on community safety, allowing them to update partners on transition plans. The authority also intends to establish another joint criminal justice partner group, to help to inform the drafting of the police and crime plan for the PCC.

The chief constable continues to maintain a dialogue with partners on PCC arrangements, and on proposed ways of working, through the safer strategic partnership board.

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.