

West Mercia 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 2012¹, 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 West Mercia. A thematic report, *Preparing for Police and Crime Commissioners*, is available from www.hmic.gov.uk

Findings

Summary

West Mercia Police Authority has put in place clear and transparent plans for managing the handover to the PCC. These include a joint transition board chaired by the chief constable.

The police authority has adopted a pragmatic approach to this transition period, retaining its focus on force performance and its collaboration work, ensuring that key decisions are still being taken where there is a financial imperative to do so. 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

There is a clear commitment from the police authority to maintain business as usual throughout the transition period. It has clearly identified and acted on the key decisions that have to be made. In June 2012 the authority took the decision to work in collaboration with Warwickshire Police in order to meet savings requirements.

The current governance arrangements ensure that key decisions continue to be made in the run up to the appointment of the PCC.

Plans for managing the transition to PCCs

The police authority and force have a joint PCC transition board, which is chaired by the chief constable. The group meets on a fortnightly basis and includes key people from the force and police authority, and workstream leads. Clear governance structures are in place, with regular reviews of actions and achievements.

In recognition of the complexities of transition in the context of the strategic alliance with Warwickshire Police, the police authorities have a separate, jointly owned, transition plan for finance and resources.

The authority has stated that it will continue to monitor the force's performance throughout the transition period. It has streamlined meeting and governance structures to achieve this in the interim period.

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, the police authority has planned (and identified funding) for a number of governance and decision making options for the PCC, in order to ensure a smooth transition.

The force and police authority have identified key factors that will facilitate a seamless handover to the PCC in West Mercia. These include preliminary work on the 2013/14 budget, producing the police and crime plan and the creation of the PCC office and support arrangements.

How stakeholders are involved in the transition process

The police authority has engaged with local criminal justice boards on their PCC transition work. It is also planning to undertake more work with community safety partnerships and the wider public, as well as other organisations which have an interest in crime and the new policing landscape (such as local authorities, criminal justice agencies and the voluntary sector).

The police authority and force have used established engagement links with local communities to ensure they are kept informed of the role and progress of the PCC. The authority has a section of its website dedicated to the PCC.

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.