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Cleveland Police has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge, finds HMIC

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) considers that Cleveland Police has a well-managed change programme and is on target to meet its savings requirement. The force is yet to develop new structures and ways of working based on a reduced workforce.

In a report published today, HMIC has found:

Progress in making savings

- Cleveland Police has identified that it needs to save £28.1m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). The force has planned how it will save £27.5m, it therefore still has £0.5m to find. This represents a small part of the force's expenditure and the force expects this to be closed over the remaining two years of the spending review.
- As a proportion of its overall budget (19%) this savings requirement is greater than that of most other forces. However, as the force spends more on policing than other forces and has higher police officer costs there are opportunities for reducing costs in line with others.
- A number of Cleveland's functions are provided by a private sector organisation – Steria. Further savings from these areas must be negotiated and agreed and so may be more difficult to achieve than where the functions are solely under the control of the force.

Workforce changes and protecting the front line

- The force is reducing police officer numbers by limiting recruitment and holding vacancies. As a result, by the end of the spending review period it plans to have 325 fewer police officers. This means the number of police officers is planned to reduce by 19% between March 2010 and March 2015; this is a greater reduction than in most other forces.
- There is evidence that the force is successfully protecting frontline posts as it makes these cuts. Between March 2010 and March 2015, the proportion of police officers in frontline crime-fighting roles is planned to increase from 87% to 91%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.
- The force has also made some police staff redundant and not replaced others as they have left (e.g. through retirements and resignations). As a result, by the end of the spending review period, there will be 496 fewer police staff. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 70% between March 2010 and March 2015. This is higher than most other forces but is mainly due to many business support and operational functions now being provided through a contract, rather than by staff employed by the force.
- Cleveland plans to reduce the number of police community support officers (PCSOs) by 27 or 14% which is fewer in most other forces.

Impact on the public

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 8%, which is less than the figure for England and Wales (13%).
- Victim satisfaction with the service provided is 82.9%, which is lower than for other forces.

Future challenges

- Cleveland Police has a detailed change programme to provide greater efficiency in the way it provides policing, as well as providing savings. HMIC considers that the force has a well managed change programme and is on target to meet their savings requirement.

HM Inspector of Constabulary for the Northern Region, Roger Baker, said:

“Cleveland Police faces a larger financial challenge than other forces. During a significant period of considerable change and instability within the command structure, the force has worked hard to deliver savings and minimise any potential negative impact on service delivery and performance.”

“The force has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge and has developed a detailed change programme which will allow it to reduce costs while continuing to protect frontline crime fighting roles. However, it is less advanced in developing new structures and ways of working based on a reduced workforce.”

“HMIC considers that Cleveland Police is on track to meet its savings requirement.”

“HMIC will continue to monitor the force for the remainder of the spending review period.”

The full report for Cleveland Police, along with the national thematic review, can be found at www.hmic.gov.uk

Notes to Editors:

1. The thematic report ‘Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge’ can be found at www.hmic.gov.uk
2. Victim satisfaction for this force has a confidence interval of $\pm 1.6\%$
3. HMIC’s July 2012 report ‘Policing in austerity: One year on’ and July 2011 report ‘Adapting to Austerity’ along with supporting materials can be found at www.hmic.gov.uk
4. In October 2010, the government announced that the central funding provided to the police service would reduce by 20% in the four years between March 2011 and March 2015.
5. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is an independent inspectorate, inspecting policing in the public interest, and rigorously examines the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces to tackle crime and terrorism, improve criminal justice and raise confidence. HMIC inspects all 43 police forces in England and Wales together with other major policing bodies.
6. For further information, HMIC’s press office can be contacted during office hours from 8:30am – 5:30pm Monday – Friday on 0203 513 0600.
7. HMIC’s out-of-hours press office line for urgent media enquiries is 07836 217 729.