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Cumbria Constabulary has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge, finds HMIC

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is satisfied that Cumbria Constabulary has made good progress in reducing its spending and has continued to maintain strong performance. The force is in a good position with well-managed plans in place to continue to deliver its entire savings while at the same time continuing to improve performance.

In a report published today, HMIC has found:

Progress in making savings

- Cumbria Constabulary has identified that it needs to save £17m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). The force has planned how it will save the total £17m required.
- While as a proportion of its overall budget (15%) this savings requirement is lower than that of most other forces, HMIC considers that Cumbria Constabulary still faces a challenge. This constabulary covers a large geographic and often remote area, with communities dispersed throughout. Additional demand on policing comes from a large influx of tourists all year but especially during the summer months. As Cumbria Constabulary spends more on policing than most other forces and has higher pay costs, there are opportunities to deliver savings and bring its costs in to line with other forces.

Workforce changes and protecting the front line

- The force is reducing police officer numbers by stopping recruitment and holding vacancies. As a result, by the end of the spending review period, it is planned that there will be 104 fewer police officers in Cumbria Constabulary. This means the number of police officers is planned to reduce by 8% between March 2010 and March 2015; this is a smaller reduction than in most other forces.
- There is strong evidence that Cumbria Constabulary 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 90% to 95%. 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, it is planned that there will be 197 fewer police staff in the Cumbria Constabulary. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 24% between March 2010 and March 2015 – this is considerably higher than in most other forces.
- Cumbria plans to reduce the number of police community support officers (PCSOs) by 16 or 15%, which is a smaller reduction than in most other forces.

Impact on the public

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 14%, which is broadly in line with the figure for England and Wales (13%).
- Victim satisfaction remains high at 89.6%, which is higher than in other forces.

Future challenges

- Cumbria Constabulary benefits from additional government funding above its police formula allocation. This is an important part of Cumbria's funding and should it be removed, phased out or reduced this would have a significant impact on the constabulary's ability to continue to deliver policing at current levels and to deliver future savings.

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

“Cumbria Constabulary has made good progress in delivering savings so far. There are plans in place to deliver all of the savings needed by the end of this period. It has been able to achieve savings without reducing the service to the public of Cumbria; crime in the county is falling in line with other forces; and satisfaction with policing is higher than average.

“The force has already started to develop plans to deliver the further savings that will be required after 2015.

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

The full report for Cumbria Constabulary, 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 $\pm 2.7\%$
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.