



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Dorset Police's response to the funding challenge

July 2013

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Dorset Police: Executive summary

Dorset Police faces a smaller financial reduction than many other forces, it still has challenges in finding the savings it needs. It already spends less on policing, has fewer staff and lower costs per officer and staff member than other forces, so it has less scope to make savings.

The force has made a good start and has plans that will cut spending by over £22m by 2015. The force is already ahead of its target in making savings.

However, this comes at the cost of some of the biggest reductions in police officer numbers in England and Wales. There is a concern that further funding reductions will lead to further staff cuts and the force will find it harder to maintain service delivery.

Financial challenge

Dorset Police has identified that it needs to save £22.5m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015).

While as a proportion of its overall budget (16%) this financial requirement is broadly in line with most other forces, Dorset Police still faces a challenge to deliver savings. This is because it already spends less on policing per head of population than most other forces, it has a lower number of staff so has a comparatively lower pay bill and the amount it spends on each officer and staff member is also lower than most other forces. It therefore has less scope to make savings than some forces.

Progress in making savings

Dorset Police has planned how it will save all of the £22.5m it needs by 2015. With a well-managed programme in place, the force is already ahead of its 2013/14 target by £3m. The force is predicting that it will achieve all of the required savings by 2015 without needing to draw from its reserves¹.

Changes to the workforce

All forces spend most of their money on staff costs (such as wages and overtime), and so have focused on reducing this expenditure in order to cut costs.² Dorset Police is no exception.

It is reducing police officer numbers by limiting recruitment and holding vacancies; as a result, by the end of the spending review period, it is planned that there will be 310 fewer police officers in the force. This means the number of police officers is planned to reduce by 21% between March 2010³ and March 2015; this is a greater reduction than most other forces.

1 Reserves are funds often used to pay for unforeseen events and balance liabilities.

2 See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

3 We use 2010 as our baseline as many forces started to make staff reductions in anticipation of the spending review.

There is strong evidence that Dorset Police is 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 89% to 97%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.

The force has made a number of police staff redundant, used a voluntary severance scheme and not replaced vacancies as they arose (e.g. through retirements and resignations); and as a result, by the end of the spending review period, it is planned that there will be 281 fewer police staff in the force. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 26% between March 2010 and March 2015; again this is a considerably greater reduction than that seen in most other forces. Dorset Police also plans to decrease the number of police community support officers (PCSOs) by 5%; which is a smaller reduction than most other forces.

Impact on the public

HMIC expects forces to make savings without damaging the service provided to the public. We monitor whether they are achieving this by examining crime rates and the results of the user satisfaction surveys which all forces conduct.

Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime⁴ (excluding fraud) fell by 12%, which is broadly in line with the figure for England and Wales (13%). Victim satisfaction at 82.0%⁵ is lower than other forces.

Future challenges

HMIC found that Dorset Police has a clear understanding of the financial challenge and has well established and effective financial forecasting and management processes in place. Dorset Police is cutting both police officer and police staff numbers by a considerably greater proportion than most other forces to make its savings, although in doing so has protected police officers in frontline roles. It has developed a detailed change programme which will allow it to reduce costs while continuing to fight crime.

With significant loss of staff over the period of this spending review, future funding reductions will make it more difficult for Dorset Police to continue to protect frontline roles. To limit this, the force must take every opportunity to become more efficient and ensure it has pursued all options that will help deliver savings while maintaining service delivery.

4 Crime excluding fraud, as per the new crime classifications released in July 2013 by the Office for National Statistics.

5 $\pm 1.6\%$.

The challenge

Over the four years of the spending review (March 2011 to March 2015), Dorset Police identified that it needs to find savings of £22.5m, which equates to 16% of its total expenditure⁶ (which in 2012/13 was £134.9m). Across England and Wales a 17% reduction in total expenditure is required.

Progress in making savings: Years 1–2

The force successfully made 58% (£13m) of the total savings required by March 2015 in the first two years of the spending review period. It achieved this by: considerably reducing its recruitment of new police officers; reducing the number of police staff it employs (which it started to do in 2010); and restructuring how the force delivers elements of its policing, e.g. moving away from a geographical policing model based on Basic Command Units to a more flexible model including moving to the use of response hubs which are located close to the areas of highest demand. The force has also focused on reducing non-pay spending.

Plans for Year 3–4

The force has plans in place to achieve further savings of £5.2m in 2013/14, and another £4.3m in 2014/15. This leaves no funding gap at the end of the spending review period.

Looking beyond the current spending review

The force has started to consider what savings it might need to make after March 2015.

Based on current planning the force expects that most of these future savings will have to be found from pay costs. This would impact on the force's ability to maintain its local policing neighbourhood teams and some protective services (functions such as traffic, dogs and major crime). The force report that a further 10% cut would necessitate a fundamental change of approach such as consideration of a strategic alliance with another force.

The scale of the challenge in Dorset

Dorset Police needs to make a 16% saving on its budget. While this is a similar proportion to other forces, the task in finding savings is made more challenging because:

- it already spends less on policing per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales;
- it has a lower number of police officers per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales; and

⁶ Based on a gross expenditure baseline in 2010/11.

- it spends less on police officers and police staff per head than most other forces in England and Wales.

In addition Dorset is a small police force which cannot benefit from the economies of scale of larger forces, hence its scope for reducing spending is much less than many forces.

Demand

Forces face different levels of demand for the service they provide to the public. This section looks at three of the key indicators of demand to provide an overall impression of the challenges each force faces:

- the number of calls the force receives from the public;
- the number of crimes the force deals with; and
- the number of prosecutions (suspects charged with offences) the force brings.

12 months to March 2013	Dorset Police	England and Wales
Emergency and priority calls per 1,000 population	114	134
Victim-based crime per 1,000 population	49	54.5
Prosecutions (charges) per 1,000 population	7.0	10.2

In 2012/13 Dorset Police received fewer emergency and priority calls from the public than elsewhere. It dealt with fewer crimes per head of population than other forces and supported fewer prosecutions than elsewhere.

How difficult is the challenge?

Dorset faces a smaller financial requirement than other forces and while the force does have challenges in delivering savings there are opportunities to improve the efficiency of how the force provides services to the public.

Response to the challenge

Forces deliver their response to the savings requirement through a change programme. Because over 80% of a police budget (on average) is spent on staff costs,⁷ it is not surprising that the change programmes of forces across England and Wales, plan to achieve most of their savings by reducing the number of police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs) and police staff employed.

Dorset Police is no exception. It made an early start on this in 2010, when it slowed its recruitment of new police officers and police staff, and reduced the number of police staff. The force plans to make 80% of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is higher than in most other forces, showing the force is bearing down on both pay and the costs of goods and services.

Changes to workforce numbers

The following table shows the force's planned changes to workforce numbers over the spending review period and compares these to the change for England and Wales.⁸

	31 March 2010 (baseline)	31 March 2015	Change	Dorset change %	Change for England and Wales %
Police Officers	1,486	1,176	-310	-21%	-11%
Police Staff	1,077	796	-281	-26%	-16%
PCSOs	164	155	-9	-5%	-17%
Total	2,727	2,127	-600	-22%	-13%
Specials	300	357	+57	+19%	+60%

Overall, the table shows that Dorset Police plans to lose considerably more officers and staff than in other forces. However, there is a much smaller reduction in the number of PCSOs than for other forces in England and Wales.

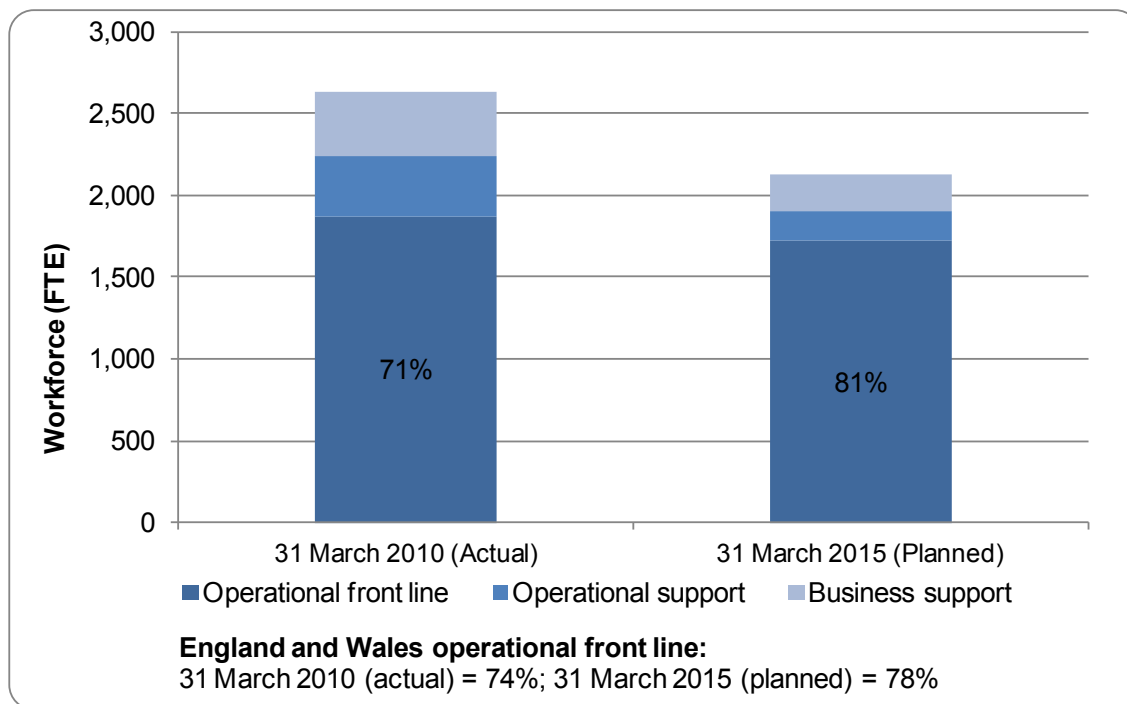
⁷ See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

⁸ Workforce figures for March 2010 show the actual number of people working for the force in permanent posts on the 31 March in that year. People on long-term absences (such as maternity leave) are included in these 'actual' figures, but vacant posts are not. Workforce projections for March 2015 are for budgeted posts, so the actual number of people who will be working for the force at that point in reality may be different, because some posts will be vacant or filled by temporary staff. Forces' projections may also exclude people who will be on long-term absences. The difference between actual workforce numbers and projected numbers should therefore be taken as an approximate expected change.

Changes to the proportion of workforce on the front line

HMIC defines the people who work on the police front line as: “those who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law”. It is important that as forces reconfigure their structures and reduce workforce **numbers**, they focus on maintaining (or if possible increasing) the **proportion** of people in these crime-fighting roles.

The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile in Dorset Police.⁹

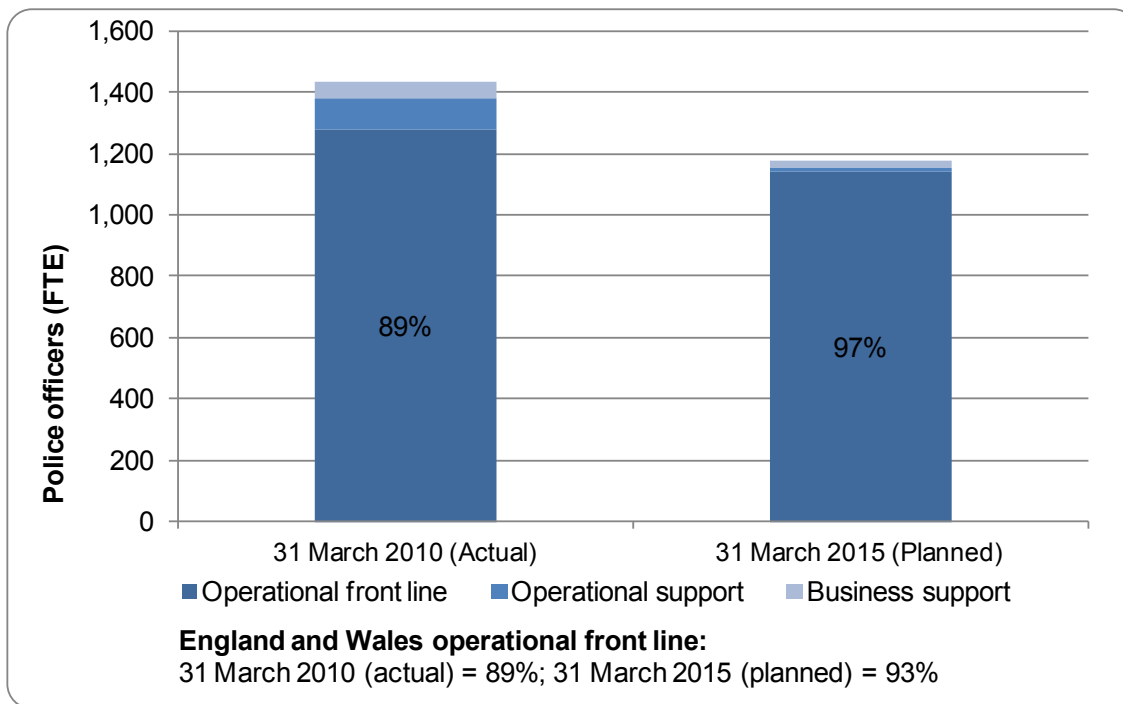


The **number** of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the force’s total workforce) working on Dorset’s front line is planned to reduce by 8% between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 1,873 to 1,720).

Over the same period, the **proportion** of Dorset Police’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is projected to increase from 71% to 81%. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74% to 78%.

The **number** of Dorset’s police officers in frontline line roles is planned to reduce by 11% from 1,278 in March 2010 to 1,138 in March 2015, as the chart on the next page shows. The **proportion** of these remaining on the front line is projected to increase from 89% to 97%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.

⁹ From 2010, Gwent, the Metropolitan Police Service, Wiltshire and North Wales police forces chose to code those officers and staff who are on long-term absence from duty due to maternity/paternity leave, career break, full-time education or suspension, and those on long-term leave, to their normal working role. This has the effect of inflating their workforce and frontline figures by up to 1% compared to other forces.



Collaboration

HMIC monitors force's progress on collaboration¹⁰ because it offers the opportunity to deliver efficient, effective policing and help achieve savings.

We found that Dorset Police already has established collaborative arrangements with other forces in the south west of England but these are limited. They include shared aspects of procurement with Devon and Cornwall Police and Gloucestershire Constabulary; a joint serious and organised crime investigation team with the south west region along with aspects of financial planning and administration. It also has local partnering arrangements with other agencies on, for example, shared services.

The approach has so far been fairly limited and has not resulted in significant benefits or cost savings. Collaboration, particularly for a small force can provide a real opportunity to cut costs and improve the resilience and quality of policing services.

The force has recognised that it needs to make more use of the opportunities for collaboration and has produced a ten-year strategy with an in-depth assessment of the benefits achieved so far and has identified business areas for future collaboration with police forces and partner organisations.

By 2014/15 the force expects to be spending only 3% of its total expenditure on collaboration, which is lower than the 11% figure for England and Wales. And overall, collaboration is expected to generate a cost to the force and not contribute to the savings requirement, as opposed to the 7% saving for England and Wales.

¹⁰ HMIC defines collaboration as "all activity where two or more parties work together to achieve a common goal, which includes inter force activity and collaboration with the public and private sectors, including outsourcing and business partnering".

Managing change

Reductions in police budgets have inevitably led to a shrinking workforce. HMIC expects forces also to have an eye within their change programmes on the longer term transformation which can help maintain or improve the service they offer to the public and prepare for future funding reductions.

The majority of the forces savings will be achieved through the delivery of the change programme called 'One Team' and the delivery plan known as the 'blue print 2012 – 2015'. At the heart of the programme is the Chief Constable's vision of creating a 'one team' culture to deliver excellent services to the people of Dorset.

The force has been reorganised to provide a model that will deliver this approach and be affordable at the end of this round of spending cuts. Safer neighbourhood teams are the foundation of the force's new operating model and style. The model establishes response policing 'hubs', tactically located across the force where the demand is greatest. Many of the hubs are now operational with the final one going live in October 2013. In some areas covered by the force, where demand is lower, officers will conduct a dual role of responding to emergency and priority incidents as well as resolving local neighbourhood problems. They will be supported by PCSOs in this neighboured role. The force is aware of the risk of a reduced officer presence in rural areas, but it will release resources to focus on urban areas with high demand and resources currently stretched.

The force established a dedicated change team which conducted a comprehensive demand analysis to inform decisions. The first significant restructuring phase was completed in January 2011 when the final move to replace the self-supporting two basic command units (BCU) with 12 neighbourhood sectors was completed.

The force is now in the second phase of the change programme and is considering the detail of new business cases for change to deliver further savings.

How is the force engaging police officers, PCSOs and staff in the change programme?

HMIC found that the workforce is aware and understands the need for change although staff told us that only those staff directly involved in the change programme feel engaged, consulted and able to influence change. Staff did not feel that the same opportunities were open to the wider workforce.

The staff associations stated they are regularly consulted and have open and positive dialogue with chief officers and the Police and Crime Commissioner and are able to attend board level meetings with an opportunity to contribute.

However, the force has not conducted a staff survey for some time and without structured staff surveys or two-way communication processes, it was not clear whether the force heard and understood issues of concern to staff, and whether it was able to use them to positively influence and integrate change. This is important as the force realises that a significant cultural change is required based on their concern about staff being affected by the level of resource; individual financial concerns for staff; and changes in work patterns and practices.

How effective has the response been?

Dorset Police is on track to deliver its planned savings by 2014/15. However, this is at the expense of police officer and police staff reductions, which have been much higher than in other forces. While service delivery and performance is currently being maintained, HMIC has concerns for the ability of the force to continue these levels when responding to future funding challenges should it lead to the loss of more police officers.

Impact of the changes on the public

The challenge for forces is not just to save money and reduce their workforce numbers, but to ensure the choices they make in deciding how to achieve this do not have a negative impact on the service they provide to their communities. HMIC therefore looked for evidence that the force had kept a consideration of the effect on the public at the heart of its choices.

Visibility

The work done by police officers and staff in visible roles (such as officers who respond to 999 calls, deal with serious road traffic collisions or patrol in neighbourhoods) represents only a part of the policing picture. Chief constables need to allocate resources to many other functions in order to protect the public, such as counter terrorism, serious and organised crime, and child protection (to name just three).

That being said, research shows that the public value seeing visible police officers on patrol in the streets, and that those who see police in uniform at least once a week are more likely to have confidence in their local force.¹¹ HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the force had affected the visibility of the police on the streets of Dorset.

In March 2013, Dorset Police allocated 58% of its police officers to visible roles. This is the same as it allocated in 2010, and is higher than the figure for most other forces (which was 54% across England and Wales).

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, Dorset Police allocated 62% to visible roles. Again, this is the same as it allocated in 2010 and is higher than the 59% figure for England and Wales.

HMIC conducted a survey¹² of the public across England and Wales to assess whether the public had noticed any difference in the way their area is being policed. Of those people surveyed in Dorset, 9%¹³ said that they have seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago; this is broadly in line with the 13% average across all survey respondents in England and Wales.

Of those people surveyed, 78%¹⁴ said they felt either as safe or safer in the areas where they live compared with two years ago. This is broadly in line with the figure for most other forces which is 75%.

11 See *Demanding Times*, HMIC, London, 2011. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

12 A YouGov survey was carried out during a four-week period during March 2013. Satisfaction and confidence surveys are also carried out at a national level by the Crime Survey of England and Wales. These use larger sample sizes and are carried out quarterly over a rolling-year period. Some forces also carry out their own surveys of the general public. More information can be found at www.crimesurvey.co.uk, www.hmic.gov.uk or from force websites.

13 $\pm 5\%$.

14 $\pm 5\%$.

Calls for service

HMIC examined whether police forces were taking longer to respond to calls for help, as a result of its workforce reductions and other changes designed to save money. Forces are not required to set response times or targets and are free to determine their own arrangements for monitoring attendance to calls, so information between forces is not comparable. As there is no requirement on forces to record this information some were unable to provide data and others provided only partial data.

For the three years from 2010 to present, Dorset Police had maintained the same target response time of within 15 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' (also known as grade 1) in an urban setting and within 20 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' in a rural setting. The force has no official target for calls classed as a 'priority' (also known as grade 2) although they aim to attend such calls within an hour.

Over that period, the force met its target response time for urban 'emergency' calls 91% of the time in 2010/11, and 92% of the time in 2011/12, and 2012/213. This shows the force has been able to maintain its response. The force did not provide any data in respect of meeting its target response time for rural 'emergency' calls.

For 'priority' calls, the force met its target 82% of the time in 2010/11 and 2011/12 and 84% of the time in 2012/13.

The force plans to replace its existing command and control system, which will further improve response times. In addition, the force is considering bringing together its two contact centres into one location to provide better customer service and further reduce costs.

Crime

In 2010 the Home Secretary, Theresa May, set a clear priority for the police service to reduce crime. Between 2010/11 and 2012/13 (the first two years of the spending review) Dorset Police reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 12% compared to 13% in England and Wales. Over this period, victim-based crime (that is, crimes where there is a direct victim – an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 12% compared with 12% in England and Wales.

By looking at how many crimes occur per head of population, we can see how safe it is for the public in that police area. The table below shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Dorset (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to March 2013	Rate per 1,000 population in Dorset	England and Wales rate per 1,000 population
All Crime (excluding fraud)	53.0	61.4
Victim based crime	49.0	54.5
Burglary	7.0	8.2
Violence against the person	8.3	10.6
Anti-social behaviour incidents	43.4	40.7

It is important that crimes are effectively investigated and the perpetrator identified and brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to say who has committed a crime, it can be described as detected.

The force's sanction detection rate¹⁵ (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2013 is 21.6%. This is below the England and Wales sanction detection rate of 27.0%

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in Dorset. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to www.hmic.gov.uk/crime-and-policing-comparator.

Victim satisfaction surveys

An important measure on the impact of changes to service delivery for the public is how satisfied victims are with the overall service they receive when they seek police assistance.

In the 12 months to March 2013, 82.0%¹⁶ of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Dorset Police. This is lower than the England and Wales figure of 84.6%¹⁷.

Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. Dorset Police is planning to close six front counters¹⁸ and five police stations between 2010 and 2015. The force has one 'joint reception facility' shared with the district council in Swanage and two more are planned across the county over the next two years.

The force is also making more use of the internet and social media to communicate with the public and developing different mechanisms for the public to contact the police.

¹⁵ A sanction detection is a 'solved crime' where a suspect has been identified and notified as being responsible for committing that crime and what the full implications of this are, and has received an official sanction. Official sanctions include charges, cautions, penalty notices, offences taken into consideration (TICs) and cannabis warnings.

¹⁶ $\pm 1.6\%$.

¹⁷ $\pm 0.2\%$.

¹⁸ A police building open to the general public to obtain face-to-face access to police services.

Conclusion

HMIC is reassured that the force has developed a detailed change programme which will allow it to reduce costs while continuing to fight crime. It has responded well and is ahead of its savings targets so far. Dorset Police is expected to meet its financial requirement for the spending review.

The force will balance its budget by the end of the spending review and deliver all the savings required without drawing on its reserves. However, this is at the cost of a significant reduction in police officers and police staff.

There is concern that future funding reductions would lead to further workforce reductions and reduce the proportion of police officers and staff in frontline roles. To limit this, the force must take every opportunity to improve efficiencies and ensure it has pursued all options that will help deliver savings while maintaining service delivery.

The force recognises this and understands this would mean it would have to look to a strategic alliance with another force to continue to provide a viable police service in Dorset.

In October 2010, the Government announced that central funding to the Police Service in England and Wales would reduce by 20% in the four years between March 2011 and March 2015.

HMIC's Valuing the Police Programme has tracked how forces are planning to make savings to meet this budget demand each year since summer 2011. This report identifies what we found in this third year.

Our inspection focused on three questions:

1. How is the force responding to the budget reduction?
2. What is the impact for the workforce and the public?
3. How is the force managing current and future risks?

To answer these questions, we collected data and plans from forces, surveyed the public to see if they had noticed any changes in the service they receive from the police as a result of the cuts, and conducted in-force inspections. We also interviewed the Chief Constable, Police and Crime Commissioner and the chief officer leads for finance, change, human resources and performance in each force, and held focus groups with staff and other officers.

National findings and patterns across all 43 forces are given in our thematic report, *Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge*, which is available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

This report provides the findings for Dorset Police.