

18 July 2013

## **Gwent Police has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge, finds HMIC**

*Gwent Police 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 fight crime. However the recent departure of the Chief Constable brings instability at a crucial time.*

In a report published today, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has found:

### **Progress in making savings**

- Gwent Police has identified that it needs to save £23.5m between March 2011 and March 2015. The force has planned how it will save £22.9m. It therefore has £0.6m to find.
- As a proportion of its overall budget (17%), this savings requirement is broadly in line with most other forces.
- HMIC considers that Gwent Police faces a challenging policing area with concentrated areas of demand and dispersed communities in rural areas.

### **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 88 fewer police officers. This means the number of police officers it planned to reduce by 6% between March 2010 and March 2015; this is a smaller reduction than in most other forces.
- Gwent Police will be broadly 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 decrease from 93% to 92%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%. However, the force benefits from an extra 101 (full time equivalent) community support officers (CSOs) funded by the Welsh Government-funded community support officers.
- 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 the number of police staff will reduce by 111 or 14% between March 2010 and March 2015, although this is less than in most other forces. The force plans to increase the number of CSOs by 72%, compared to a reduction in most other forces.

### **Impact on the public**

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 24%, which is considerably higher than the figure for England and Wales (13%).
- Victim satisfaction remains high at 81.4%, although this is lower than in other forces.

### **Future challenges**

- The recent resignation of the Chief Constable brings an element of instability at an important time for the force.
- There are limited opportunities for economies of scale.

HM Inspector of Constabulary for the Wales and Western Region, Dru Sharpling, said:

*“Gwent Police faces a difficult challenge. Whilst it has higher than average funding per head of population it has a mixed geography with pockets of high demand in urban areas; and as a small force it has limited opportunities for economies of scale. Nevertheless, it has developed a detailed change programme to reduce costs while continuing to fight crime.*

*“The recent departure of the Chief Constable brings a level of instability at a critical time for the force. This instability will need to be addressed at a time when the force is managing change and developing its future to prepare for continuing austerity while providing safer communities for the people of Gwent.*

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

The full report for Gwent Police, along with the national thematic review, can be found at [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://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](http://www.hmic.gov.uk)
2. Victim satisfaction for this force has a confidence interval of  $\pm 1.9\%$
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](http://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.