

18 July 2013

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

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is confident that Lancashire Constabulary fully understands the challenge facing them. There are very detailed plans in place to deliver the necessary savings by March 2015 and a strong track record in making savings.

In a report published today, HMIC has found:

Progress in making savings

- Lancashire Constabulary has identified that it needs to save £42.8m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). It has planned how to save £40.8m and still has £2.0m to find. The constabulary is in a very strong position to deliver and exceed its planned savings and expects to close the gap through savings identified from further reviews which are already in progress.
- This savings requirement is 14% of its overall budget and is less than most other forces. Lancashire's position is not without challenge as it spends less on policing per head on policing compared with other forces in England and Wales, so it will be harder to find further savings.

Workforce changes and protecting the front line

- The constabulary 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 525 fewer police officers in the constabulary. This means the number of police officers is planned to reduce by 14% between March 2010 and March 2015; this is a greater reduction than in most other forces.
- There is evidence that Lancashire 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 88% to 92%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.
- The constabulary 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 118 fewer police staff in Lancashire Constabulary. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 6% between March 2010 and March 2015. This is fewer than in most other forces. The constabulary plans to reduce the number of police community support officers (PCSOs) by 19 or 4%. This is fewer than in most other forces.

Impact on the public

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 9%, which is less than the figure for England and Wales (13%).
- Victim satisfaction remains high at 86.5%, which is higher than for most other forces.

Future challenges

- The constabulary is developing plans for beyond this spending review in anticipation of further spending cuts through to 2017. These plans include reducing and managing demand on the constabulary by early intervention and implementing more sustainable solutions, while still maintaining and improving services.

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

“Lancashire Constabulary faces a smaller savings requirement than most other forces. However, as Lancashire spends less on policing than other forces this is not without challenge.”

“The constabulary has responded to the challenge well, with the majority of spending cuts already made ahead of target.”

“HMIC is impressed that the plans for achieving the savings have been strongly focused on making sure that as far as possible the quality and visibility of policing in Lancashire is maintained despite fewer staff.”

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

The full report for Lancashire 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 $\pm 0.7\%$
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.