



Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

## **Valuing the Police: Preparedness Inspection**

**Northamptonshire Police  
July 2011**

## Purpose of the review

The Police Service, along with all other parts of the public sector, is facing its biggest financial challenge in a generation. This could be seen either as an opportunity to innovate and refresh – or as a reason to continue as is and see services cut back.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has been heavily involved in monitoring the Service's reaction and preparedness for cutting crime while reducing costs. As part of this, in Spring 2011 we carried out an inspection of all 43 forces and authorities in England and Wales, to assess:

- how they are planning to meet the financial challenge; and
- what the impact will be on the service they provide to the public.

This report summarises the findings for Northamptonshire Police. A thematic report, *Adapting to Austerity*, which brings together findings from all 43 forces, is also available from [www.hmic.gov.uk](http://www.hmic.gov.uk).

## Findings for Northamptonshire Police

### What is the financial challenge in Northamptonshire?

Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Police Authority reported that they are facing a **£20m** cash reduction to their budget over the four years of the comprehensive spending review period (2011/12–2014/15). In real terms (ie when inflation is taken into account), this equates to 13% of their gross revenue expenditure.

### Are the force and authority prepared to meet this financial challenge?

The force and authority understood the financial challenges ahead and recognised that shaving efficiencies from areas of business without changing how the service is delivered would be insufficient to address the funding shortfall. They therefore developed a clear and detailed cost reduction plan, which identifies where and when cuts will be made over the next four years. This aims to cover the £20m predicted funding gap.

The force planned to realise savings through a number of projects. These include:

- more efficient working;
- a restructure of operational policing and support functions; and
- an emerging programme of collaboration or shared services both within the East Midlands region and with partners from further afield

The cost reduction plan identified critical timescales and savings milestones. The force and authority had effective governance arrangements in place to monitor progress.

While much of the savings plan was realistic and achievable, HMIC was less confident that the plans to achieve savings from regional collaboration and a shared service approach to support (back office) functions were fully developed and viable.

## What will be the impact on the number of police officers and staff?

Northamptonshire have planned that their workforce will change as follows:

	Police Officers	Police Staff	PCSO
31 March 2010 (actual)	1,343	1,172	164
31 March 2015 (proposed)	1,195	738	142

March 2010 figures have been used as the baseline, because most forces began a recruitment freeze in that year, and as a result workforce numbers started to fall. The proposed figures shown for March 2015 were provided to HMIC by the force in June 2011.

The force and authority's plans for the workforce will continue to be refined as the change programme progresses.

## What will be the impact on service to the public?

The force and authority made a clear commitment to protecting visible policing, placing the principle of 'Putting Communities First' at the forefront of their change programme. Initiatives to mitigate the loss of police officers and staff in order to maintain service to the public were underway. These included the introduction of a volunteer scheme, a cadet scheme and a significant increase in the number of officers serving within the Special Constabulary.

The force assessed the likely impact of cuts to the budgets of their community safety partners (in particular, those they work with in addressing anti-social behaviour and road safety). Public consultation has taken place and there was evidence that feedback from this has influenced the change programme.

## Does the force have targets to reduce crime and ASB?

The first job of the police is to reduce crime and keep the peace; and in 2010, Theresa May, the Home Secretary, stated that she expects forces and authorities to make financial cuts while still reducing crime and without damaging the front line.

Northamptonshire's *Policing Plan* includes targets to reduce crime and ASB in the coming year.

