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South Yorkshire Police has more work to do in response to its financial challenge, finds HMIC

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is concerned that South Yorkshire has not embraced the level of change or achieved the savings seen elsewhere. With an outstanding financial gap to close, South Yorkshire Police will find it much more difficult to make any further savings required in the future.

In a report published today, HMIC has found:

Progress in making savings

- South Yorkshire Police has identified that it needs to save £49.3m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). The force has planned how it will save £39.6m. It therefore still has £9.6m to find.
- While as a proportion of its overall budget (16%) this savings requirement is broadly in line with most other forces, HMIC considers that South Yorkshire Police faces a particularly difficult challenge. This is because the amount of money it spends on policing is lower than most other forces, yet it has a higher number of staff so has a comparatively high pay bill. The amount it spends on each officer and staff member is also higher than most other forces.

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 256 fewer police officers. This means the number of police officers is planned to reduce by 9% between March 2010 and March 2015. This is a smaller reduction than in most other forces.
- There is evidence that South Yorkshire Police 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 91% to 93%. 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 plans to have 555 fewer police staff. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 23% between March 2010 and March 2015, which is considerably higher than in most other forces. South Yorkshire Police intends to maintain its police community support officer (PCSO) numbers compared to a reduction in most other forces.
- However, with an outstanding funding gap the force may need to make more workforce reductions than it is currently planning.

Impact on the public

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell by 9%, which is lower than the figure for England and Wales (13%).
- Victim satisfaction remains high at 85.4%, which is broadly in line with other forces.

Future challenges

- South Yorkshire Police faces a more difficult challenge than some other forces to save the necessary money.
- The force also still has £9.6m to find by March 2015.

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

“South Yorkshire Police faces a more difficult challenge than some other forces. Although spending on policing is lower than in most forces and staff costs higher, South Yorkshire Police has not embraced the level of change or achieved the savings seen elsewhere.

“The force still has £9.6m to find by March 2015. HMIC is concerned that this outstanding financial gap means that South Yorkshire Police will find it very hard to make any further savings required in the future.

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

The full report for South Yorkshire Police, 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 $\pm 1.4\%$
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.