

18 July 2013

Thames Valley Police has made very good progress in meeting its financial challenge, finds HMIC

Thames Valley Police has demonstrated one of the strongest responses to the funding challenge that HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has seen in England and Wales.

In a report published today, HMIC has found:

Progress in making savings

- Thames Valley Police has identified that it needs to save £56.3m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). The force has planned how it will save all of this amount.
- This savings requirement is 12% of its overall budget, a much smaller proportionate reduction than that faced by most other forces. However, Thames Valley Police was a comparatively efficient force at the beginning of this spending review. It has therefore had to overcome difficulties in finding further savings because it spends less on policing than most other forces and has a lower number of police officers (so has a comparatively lower pay bill). The amount it spends on each officer is below that of most other forces, although the amount it spends on police community support officers (PCSOs) and staff members is broadly in line with 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 149 fewer police officers in Thames Valley. This means the number of police officers is planned to reduce by 3% between March 2010 and March 2015. This is a far smaller reduction to most other forces and the force should be commended for having taken effective steps to protect its crime fighting capability.
- Thames Valley Police is protecting frontline posts as it makes these cuts. Once again, this is commendable. Between March 2010 and March 2015, the proportion of police officers in frontline crime-fighting is planned to increase from 88% to 92%. 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. By 2015 it is planned that the number of police staff will reduce by 222 (7%) between March 2010 and March 2015. This is much smaller reduction than that planned by most other forces.
- Thames Valley Police plans to do as much as it can to protect the number of its police community support officers (PCSOs). The force plans to lose 19 PCSOs (4%), which is smaller reduction than that planned by most other forces.

Impact on the public

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) rates fell by 21%. This is a very good outcome as it is considerably greater than the 13% reduction recorded across England and Wales as a whole.
- Victim satisfaction remains high at 87.6%.

Future challenges

- Thames Valley Police has made very good progress so far in meeting its financial challenge in this spending review period. It has implemented a comprehensive change programme, putting in place a sound and cost effective policing model. This means that the force is in a strong position to be able to make the further savings required after March 2015, while, crucially, maintaining its high level of service to the public.

HM Inspector of Constabulary for the Eastern Region, Zoë Billingham, said:

“Thames Valley Police faces a smaller savings requirement compared to other forces, but this is not without its challenge. The force has lower costs than many other forces, meaning it has had to work hard to identify more efficiencies in order to squeeze its costs down even further.

“Thames Valley Police has made a very strong response to meeting its financial challenge over the last two years. It has limited the impact of the cuts on its frontline workforce in a way very few other forces have been able to achieve; protecting its crime fighting capability by driving out efficiencies in other areas. It is one of only four forces in England and Wales where the number of police officers in frontline roles is planned to increase.

“In addition, the force has demonstrated excellent performance in reducing crime over the spending review period.

“HMIC is confident that the force will be able to deliver its planned savings within this spending review by reducing costs whilst continuing to fight crime successfully.

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

The full report for Thames Valley 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 $\pm 1.9\%$
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
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.