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Warwickshire Police has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge, finds HMIC

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) considers that Warwickshire Police has responded well to the financial challenge and that the force had made good progress to make savings. The force has made good progress in an ambitious and ground-breaking alliance with neighbouring West Mercia Police.

In a report published today, HMIC has found:

Progress in making savings

- Warwickshire Police has identified that it needs to save £27.6m 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 total by March 2015.
- As a proportion of its overall budget (27%) this savings requirement is considerably higher than most other forces, HMIC considers that Warwickshire Police faces a difficult challenge in finding these savings. This is because the amount of money it receives is comparatively low given the size of the population in Warwickshire, and the costs of its police officers is lower than elsewhere, making it more difficult to achieve further savings.
- There are some opportunities to find further efficiencies from the amount it spends on police staff and police and community support officers (PCSOs), which is higher than in 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 176 fewer police officers in Warwickshire.
- There is evidence that Warwickshire 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 is planned to increase from 87% to 94%. 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, the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 169 or 22% between March 2010 and March 2015. This is a greater reduction than in most other forces.
- Warwickshire Police plans to decrease the number of PCSOs by 47%, which again is a greater decrease than most other forces.

Impact on the public

- Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime (excluding fraud) fell in Warwickshire by 9%, which is less than the figure for England and Wales (13%).
- Victim satisfaction remains high at 83.5% – this is broadly in line with other forces.

Future challenges

- Warwickshire Police's funding reduction of 27% of its overall spending for this spending review period is considerably higher than for other forces in England and Wales, and has resulted in higher than average cuts to both police officer and police staff numbers.
- It is a relatively small force and without the benefits of the alliance with West Mercia Police, it would have found the future challenge of further spending cuts much harder to achieve.

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

“Warwickshire Police faces a more difficult challenge to make the requisite savings than most forces. It is small, with one of the biggest percentage cuts in its budget of any force, and it already spends less on policing per head than most forces.

“Nevertheless, it has responded well, making good progress in an ambitious and ground-breaking alliance with neighbouring West Mercia Police. The force plans to find all the savings it needs, and the alliance places it in a better position to face future challenges.

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

The full report for Warwickshire 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 $\pm 1.8\%$
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.