

Police and Crime Panel

28th October 2014

HMIC Inspection Feedback

Report of PCC Chief Finance Officer



Purpose

To present to members feedback from the latest Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies Inspections of the Force.

Background

As part of the process of holding the Force to account, the PCC receives a regular update on external inspection work. This report has been prepared following agreement with the Chair of the Panel, and outlines the most recent HMIC inspections.

HMIC provide a regular inspection of all Forces, including Durham Constabulary, and they have increased the volume of inspection for each Force in recent months in order to drive improvement at both a Force and national level. This report contains feedback from two recent inspections, each of which is outlined below:

Core business: An inspection of crime prevention, police attendance and use of police time

Between January and April 2014, HMIC carried out inspection fieldwork across all 43 forces in England and Wales. This inspection, called 'Making best use of police time' (now known as 'Core business: An inspection of crime prevention, police attendance and use of police time') assessed three areas of police work. These were:

- how well forces are preventing crime and anti-social behaviour;
- how forces respond to reports of crime, including investigating crime and bringing offenders to justice; and
- how well forces are freeing up the time of their staff so they can focus on core policing functions.

Each of these areas is considered below:

Preventing crime

- Although the inspection found references to crime reduction and prevention in some of the force's plans and documents, there is no overarching crime prevention strategy. This would provide greater clarity to officers, staff and the public, of the importance to the force of preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and how it will be achieved.

- HMIC found some good examples of where the force has undertaken long-term crime prevention initiatives. In addition, HMIC found that the daily management meetings in the force were being used well to focus staff towards crime prevention activity.
- The crime prevention message is reinforced by the Chief Constable's delivery of problem-solving master classes delivered to partners and staff, which has captured 955 staff so far and which will capture a further 465 staff between now and the end of July 2014.
- The use of social media, particularly 'Facebook' and 'Twitter' is at an advanced stage within the force and used effectively to get key messages into the community and update the public about activity in their areas with strong prevention messages.
- The force has an electronic database that is updated with information that helps officers and staff prevent crime in neighbourhoods. We found clear evidence that this is used regularly and consistently to record activity to resolve and prevent community issues. The inspection also identified that some evaluation and sharing of good practice takes place. However, evidence of subsequent evaluation was absent.
- Although the force has provided some training to officers and staff, formal crime prevention training has not been delivered to staff who frequently deal with victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. HMIC believes that by providing training, the force would be able to make the most of opportunities to prevent future crimes and provide a better quality service to the public.
- Dedicated crime prevention officers are under-utilised and do not appear to be included within strategic initiatives.

Crime recording and attendance

- The force is clear about how it will respond to calls for service from the public. It is one of the few forces that have a policy requiring officers to attend all reports of crimes and incidents.
- Within the force, there is a team approach to attendance which includes routine attendance by specialist units, and the Criminal Investigation Department to priority crime types.
- There is good quality assurance process in place by supervisors in the communication centres. Reality testing showed 100% compliance with the force deployment protocol.
- During discussions and observations in the force's call-handling centre, the inspection team identified that the force has clear policies and procedures to enable it to consistently identify vulnerable and repeat victims of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Crime is recorded by the force, initially through creating an incident on the command and control system and then subsequently entering the details onto the crime recording system. The force has systems in place to identify how many crimes that it attends.
- During the inspection, HMIC reviewed a number of crime investigations, including reports of crimes that were not attended. HMIC found that, in general, there was

clear evidence of officers recording updates of the progress of the investigation and supervisory oversight.

- HMIC found that the Integrated Offender Management scheme, in place to manage those offenders likely to cause most harm to the communities, to be well managed. There are regular meetings with key partners and a structured approach is used to identify and assess risk.
- The force was unable to provide HMIC with the number of suspects, but was able to provide the numbers who had failed to answer their police bail. Without this information, the force may be unable to ensure that it has effective arrangements to manage outstanding named suspects and offenders.
- A small sample of named suspect files, including those circulated as wanted on the police national computer, provided clear evidence that activity had been documented and properly supervised in a number of cases.

Freeing up time

- HMIC identified that the force is taking steps to build up a more sophisticated understanding of demand and how its resources are distributed. This includes analysis of different types of incidents and policing activity.
- However, more work can be done in relation to identifying and addressing those tasks that are not believed to be the responsibility of the police.
- The inspection found that there is a clear structure to assist supervisors in assessing the workload and performance of front-line officers and staff.
- The force is not able to identify the amount of savings in staff time that has been made as a result of changes introduced or as a result of new technology it has implemented.
- The use of mobile devices, (such as tablets and mobile phones) to enable officers to access force systems while on patrol is limited.

Comment: the force considers the above findings to be generally positive. HMIC have made a number of recommendations at a national level for all forces to implement. This will form the basis of an action plan within force and will be reported to the PCC.

Valuing the police

During May 2014 the force was inspected by HMIC in relation to its response to austerity. The inspection team examined three specific areas as follows:

- To what extent is the constabulary taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?
- To what extent has the constabulary an affordable way of providing policing?
- To what extent is the constabulary efficient?

The overall assessment of the force was “good”, with the following narrative:

Durham Constabulary has made good progress and is well placed to manage further austerity in the future. It has achieved its savings ahead of schedule and is in a good position to face future challenges.

Durham Constabulary has already achieved the savings it needed to make by March 2015 – twelve months in advance of the end of the spending review timetable.

At this time the constabulary has clear plans in place to achieve all of the savings needed in 2014/15 and most of those in 2015/16. The plans for 2016/17 and beyond are less well developed, but there is an agreed timeline for developing and refining these plans and it is likely that the savings needed can be achieved.

The constabulary is now looking ahead and beginning to develop how it can make further savings, while investing to save in its estate and its use of technology, and also securing the future efficiency and effectiveness of the constabulary.

Overall, the constabulary understands the issues facing it. Its problem-solving approach is used in all areas of its policing. HMIC was reassured by leaders’ ability and determination to make changes while fighting crime and keeping communities safe.

Each of these areas is considered below:

To what extent is the constabulary taking the necessary steps to ensure a secure financial position for the short and long term?

Durham Constabulary has clear plans in place to achieve all of the savings needed in 2014/15. It is likely that the savings needed for 2016/17 and beyond can be achieved, although plans are less well developed.

It has a strong track record of achieving planned savings. In May 2014, it had already achieved the savings it needed to make by March 2015.

It is now looking ahead and beginning to develop ways to make further savings, while investing to save in its estate and its use of technology, and securing the future efficiency and effectiveness of the constabulary.

The constabulary has the capability, capacity and governance structures to achieve the required savings and organisational change.

To what extent has the constabulary an affordable way of providing policing?

The way the constabulary has reorganised policing to the County Durham and Darlington areas has successfully supported the achievement of savings for the spending review, with a considerable reduction in its police officer numbers. However, it has protected frontline policing and increased the proportion of officers working on the front line.

During the course of its change programme, the constabulary reviewed demand across local policing. The way it allocates its resources as a result of that review means they are now used more effectively for neighbourhood policing.

So far, it has achieved the bulk of the required savings through reducing pay costs. It has also reduced non-pay costs effectively.

To what extent is the constabulary efficient?

The constabulary carries out regular and comprehensive assessments of demand, threat, risk and harm.

The constabulary has a strong focus on preventing crime through a problem-solving approach.

A wide range of contact methods is available to the public; Durham has also retained all public enquiry counters.

The constabulary's performance is mixed. Crime has fallen over the spending review period, but not by as much as elsewhere. In the last 12 months, there has been an increase in crime compared to a small decrease in England and Wales. However, the rate of detecting crimes is high, as is victim satisfaction with the constabulary.

Comment: overall the force considers "good" to be a fair assessment. It has made sound progress to date on responding to austerity and has clear plans in place to cover 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Conclusion

The two HMIC reports outlined in this report are generally positive in content and portray a force which is well managed and led. Where there are aspects of service delivery to be improved, this will be addressed, and will no doubt be re-inspected at a future date.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members consider the report.

**Alan Reiss
Chief of Staff**

Appendix 1: Risks and Implications

Finance

No direct implications arising from this report.

Staffing

The ongoing delivery of high quality services may be impacted by further funding cuts, which the Constabulary will seek to manage to the best of its ability.

Equality and Diversity

No direct implications arising from this report.

Accommodation

No direct implications arising from this report.

Crime and Disorder

The first report (Core business: An inspection of crime prevention, police attendance and use of police time) relates directly to crime and disorder and generally shows the force in a positive light, subject to any areas identified for improvement.

Children's Act 2004

No direct implications arising from this report.

Stakeholder/Community Engagement

No direct implications arising from this report.

Environment

No direct implications arising from this report.

Collaboration and Partnerships

No direct implications arising from this report.

Value for Money and Productivity

The second report (Valuing the Police 4) concentrates on VFM and sustainability. It shows the Constabulary in a positive light. However, it is acknowledged that more needs to be done in this area to ensure that the challenge of austerity is met.

Potential Impact on Police and Crime Plan Priorities

No direct implications arising from this report.

Commissioning

No direct implications arising from this report.

Other risks

No direct implications arising from this report.

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