



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Staffordshire Police's response to the funding challenge

July 2013

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Staffordshire Police: Executive summary

Staffordshire Police has responded well to the challenge of making savings. It has a well-managed and comprehensive programme to deliver the changes necessary to save money while protecting front line policing and improving services.

The programme has so far successfully delivered more savings than required each year and over this period the force has maintained strong performance in reducing crime, and high levels of public satisfaction.

HMIC is confident that the force has the capacity to deliver all of the savings required and is well placed to face future challenges.

Financial challenge

Staffordshire Police has identified that it needs to save £32.6m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). As a proportion of its overall budget (16%) the savings requirement is broadly in line with most other forces. Staffordshire Police still faces a moderately difficult challenge because: the amount of money it receives¹ is comparatively low, given the size of the population in Staffordshire; and it has fewer officers than most other forces; and it already spends less on police officers and staff compared to most other forces.

Progress in making savings

Staffordshire Police has planned to save all of the £32.6m required by March 2015. The force has made strong progress through a well-managed change programme, known as 'Communities First', and is on track to succeed in delivering its savings plans. Using some of its reserves² to bridge the gap during this period, it plans to achieve a balanced budget by 2015.

Changes to the workforce

All forces spend most of their money on staff costs (such as wages and overtime), and so have focused on reducing this expenditure in order to cut costs.³ Staffordshire Police is no exception.

1 From the central police funding grant, and from other sources such as council tax.

2 Reserves are funds often used to pay for unforeseen events and balance liabilities.

3 See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

Staffordshire Police is reducing police officer numbers by limiting recruitment and holding vacancies when officers leave or retire; as a result, by the end of the spending review period it is planned that there will be 464 fewer police officers in Staffordshire. This means the number of police officers in the county is planned to reduce by 21% between March 2010⁴ and March 2015; this is a greater reduction than in most other forces.

The evidence demonstrates that Staffordshire Police is 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 93% 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, it is planned that there will be 242 fewer police staff in Staffordshire Police. This means the number of police staff will reduce by 18% between March 2010 and March 2015; again, this is more than in most other forces. Staffordshire Police plans to decrease the number of community support officers (PCSOs) by 28 (12%); which is a smaller reduction than in most other forces.

Impact on the public

HMIC expects forces to make savings without damaging the service provided to the public. We monitor whether they are achieving this by examining recorded crime rates, and the results of the victim satisfaction surveys which all forces conduct.

Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime⁵ (excluding fraud) fell by 16%, which is more than the figure for England and Wales (13%). Victim satisfaction remains high at 88.6%⁶ – this is higher than other forces.

This strong performance indicates that Staffordshire Police has been able to make savings without having a detrimental effect on the service it provides to the public.

Future challenges

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had not published his first Police and Crime Plan at the time of the inspection. An interim plan has been prepared setting out some of the PCC's ambitions and for this reason we did not assess the impact of the plan at the time of the inspection.

Staffordshire Police has made good progress so far and has a good understanding of the challenge. There is a well-managed programme of change in place that will enable them to make the required savings while at the same time protecting front line policing and maintaining service quality.

4 We use 2010 as our baseline as many forces started to make staff reductions in anticipation of the spending review.

5 Crime excluding fraud, as per the new crime classifications released in July 2013 by the Office for National Statistics.

6 ± 1.7%.

The challenge

Over the four years of the spending review (March 2011 to March 2015), Staffordshire Police identified that it needs to find savings of £32.6m, which equates to 16% of its total expenditure⁷ (which in 2012/13 was £192.2m). Across England and Wales a 17% reduction in total expenditure is required.

Progress in making savings: Years 1–2

The force successfully made 60% (£19.4m) of the total savings required by March 2015 in the first two years of the spending review period. It achieved this by not recruiting any new police officers and requiring all police officers to retire when they completed their full pensionable service of 30 years. It is also reducing the number of police staff and PCSOs it employs. It has introduced new structures, replacing the four command units with one that operates over 11 local policing areas. It has streamlined support services and central functions.

Plans for Year 3–4

The force has plans in place to achieve further savings of £8.4m in 2013/14, and another £4.8mm in 2014/15. This will leave no funding gap at the end of this period.

Looking beyond the current spending review

The force has started to consider what savings it might need to make after March 2015. Throughout this spending review the force has taken a longer term view of the future challenges it faces. Their medium term financial strategy (MTFS) supports the Communities First programme and provides a financial forecast through to 2020 and has produced detailed 'glide paths' showing how the workforce and spending will need to reduce over this seven year period in line with predicted funding reductions. Staffordshire Police are well placed to move forward with this thorough understanding of the potential implications of future spending constraints.

The scale of the challenge in Staffordshire

Staffordshire Police faces a similar financial challenge to most other forces given the level of savings needed. However, achieving the required savings is a moderately difficult challenge because:

- it spends less per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales;
- it has a lower than average number of police officers per head of population; and
- the cost of police officers and police staff per head is lower than most other forces in England and Wales.

⁷ Based on a gross expenditure baseline in 2010/11.

Demand

Forces face different levels of demand for the service they provide to the public. This section looks at three of the key indicators of demand to provide an overall impression of the challenges each force faces:

- the number of calls the force receives from the public;
- the number of crimes the force deals with; and
- the number of prosecutions (suspects charged with offences) the force brings.

12 months to March 2013	Staffordshire Police	England and Wales
Emergency and priority calls per 1,000 population	120	134
Victim-based crime per 1,000 population	46.4	54.5
Prosecutions (charges) per 1,000 population	9.2	10.2

In 2012/13, Staffordshire Police received marginally fewer emergency and priority calls from the public than most other forces. It also dealt with fewer crimes per head of population and it supported fewer prosecutions per head of population than most other forces.

How difficult is the challenge?

Although facing a financial challenge similar to other forces, Staffordshire does face difficulties as it looks to find further savings. It covers one of the largest counties in England and includes areas of high deprivation in Stoke on Trent. It already spends less than the average on policing, but is stable, well-managed and has good plans in place.

Response to the challenge

Because over 80% of a police budget (on average) is spent on staff costs⁸, it is not surprising that forces across England and Wales plan to achieve most of their savings by reducing the number of police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs) and police staff employed.

Staffordshire Police is no exception. It made an early start on this in 2010, when it started to implement the 'Communities First' programme; slowed police officer recruitment; required officers to retire; and reduced the number of police staff. The force plans to make 73% of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is a similar proportion to that in most other forces, and shows that there is a focus on making some savings from non-pay budgets.

Changes to workforce numbers

The following table shows the force's planned changes to workforce numbers over the spending review period, and compares these to the change for England and Wales.⁹

	31 March 2010 (baseline)	31 March 2015	Change	Staffordshire change %	Change for England and Wales %
Police Officers	2,161	1,697	-464	-21%	- 11%
Police Staff	1,373	1,131	-242	-18%	- 16%
PCSOs	237	209	-28	-12%	- 17%
Total	3,772	3,037	-735	-19%	- 13%
Specials	334	766	+432	+129%	+60%

Overall, the table shows that Staffordshire Police plans to lose considerably more officers and more staff than in other forces. PCSO numbers will also reduce but by a smaller margin than most other forces.

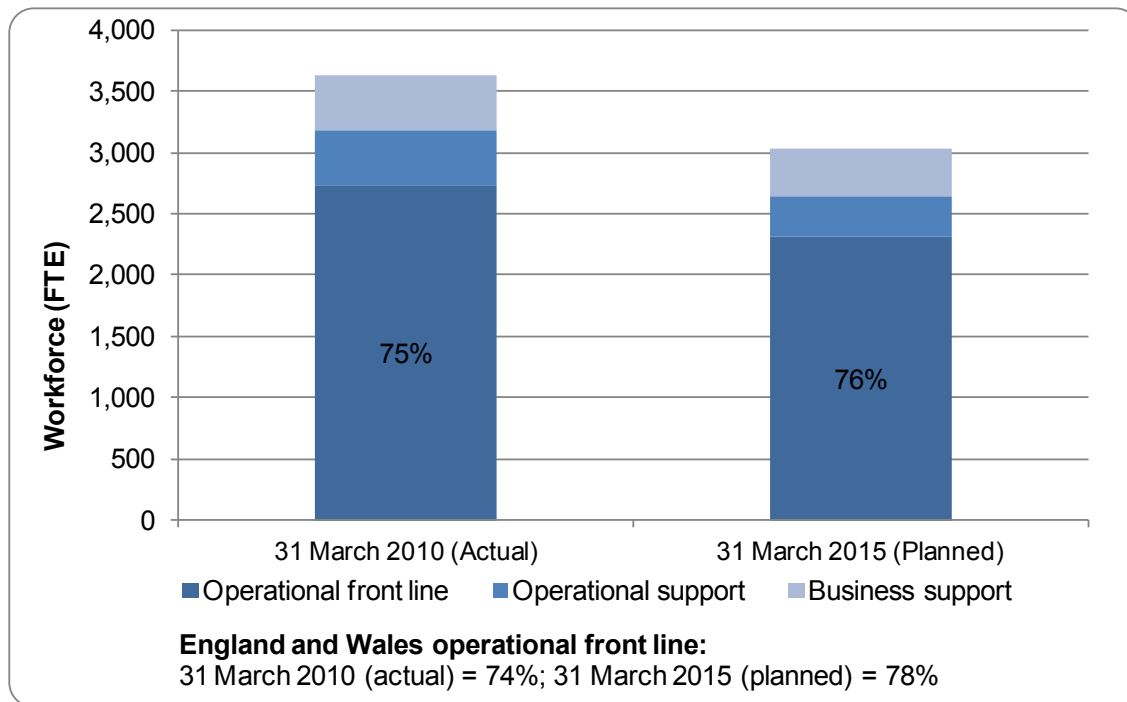
⁸ See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

⁹ Workforce figures for March 2010 show the actual number of people working for the force in permanent posts on the 31 March in that year. People on long-term absences (such as maternity leave) are included in these 'actual' figures, but vacant posts are not. Workforce projections for March 2015 are for budgeted posts, so the actual number of people who will be working for the force at that point in reality may be different, because some posts will be vacant or filled by temporary staff. Forces' projections may also exclude people who will be on long-term absences. The difference between actual workforce numbers and projected numbers should therefore be taken as an approximate expected change.

Changes to the proportion of workforce on the front line

HMIC defines the people who work on the police front line as: “those who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law”. It is important that as forces reconfigure their structures and reduce workforce **numbers**, they focus on maintaining (or if possible increasing) the **proportion** of people in these crime-fighting roles.

The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile in Staffordshire.¹⁰

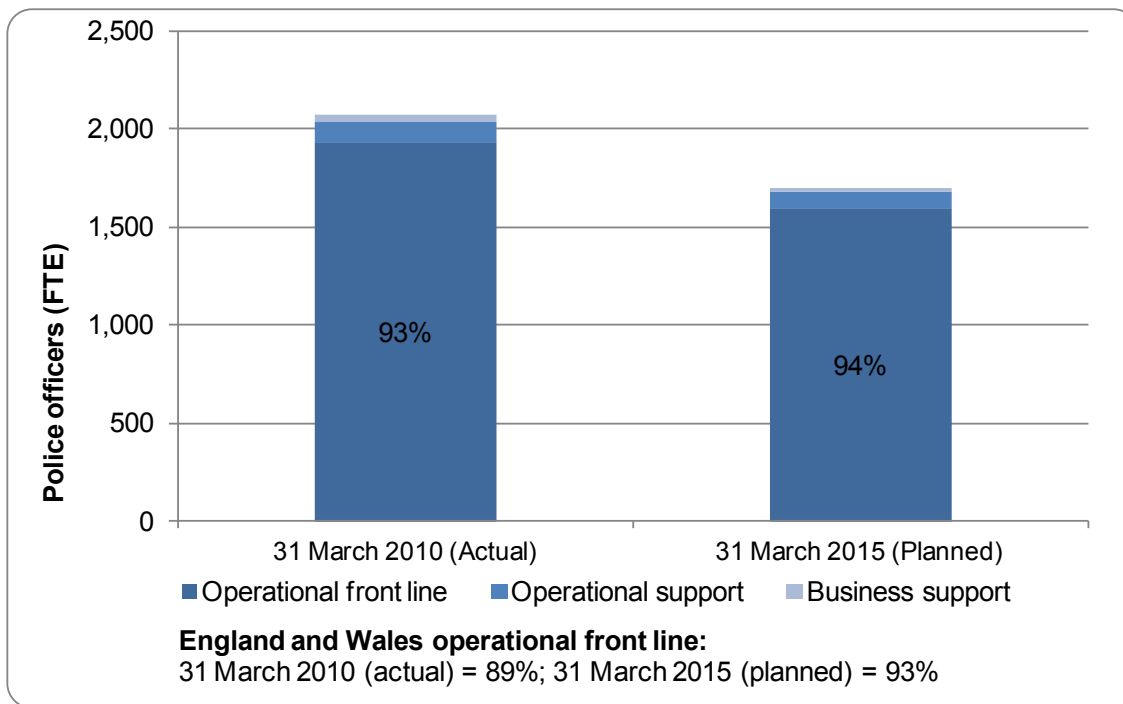


The **number** of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the force’s total workforce) working on Staffordshire’s front line is planned to reduce by 16% between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 2,734 to 2,306).

Over the same period, the **proportion** of Staffordshire’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is planned to increase from 75% to 76%. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74% to 78%.

The **number** of Staffordshire’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 17% from 1,930 in March 2010 to 1,594 by March 2015, as the chart on the next page shows. The proportion of those remaining on the front line is projected to increase from 93% to 94%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.

¹⁰ From 2010 Gwent, the Metropolitan Police Service, Wiltshire and North Wales police forces chose to code those officers and staff who are on long-term absence from duty due to maternity/paternity leave, career break, full-time education or suspension, and those on long-term leave, to their normal working role. This has the effect of inflating their workforce and frontline figures by up to 1% compared to other forces.



Collaboration

HMIC monitors the force’s progress on collaboration¹¹ because it offers the opportunity to deliver efficient, effective policing and help achieve savings.

Staffordshire Police already has some established collaborations with other forces and with other public sector partners, these are embedded and working well.

Prior to the election of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), the Police Authority had been pursuing further collaboration on operational services with West Midlands Police. The PCC took the decision to halt this as he was not satisfied that this would deliver sufficient business benefits to Staffordshire Police.

The PCC’s aspiration is instead to more closely align public services within Staffordshire. He is exploring joint commissioning of community safety and will include this in the final Police and Crime Plan. The ambition is that through better joined-up working, demand would reduce for all agencies and the public would receive the most appropriate professional with the right skills responding to their needs. The PCC has set a challenging timescale of two years to make significant savings through this approach, although the detailed plans are not yet in place to deliver this ambition.

In 2014/15 the force expects to spend 8% of its total expenditure on collaboration, which is lower than the 11% figure for England and Wales. Overall, collaboration is expected to contribute to 8% of the force’s savings requirement, which is higher than the 7% figure for England and Wales.

¹¹ HMIC defines collaboration as “all activity where two or more parties work together to achieve a common goal, which includes inter force activity and collaboration with the public and private sectors, including outsourcing and business partnering”.

Managing change

Reductions in police budgets have inevitably led to a shrinking workforce. HMIC expects forces also to have an eye within their change programmes on the longer term transformation which can help maintain or improve the service they offer to the public and prepare for future funding reductions.

The 'Communities First' programme was launched in June 2010 and has been delivered in phases:

- Phase 1 created new force structures, centralising and rationalising operational and business support functions. Four command units were replaced with one, operating over 11 local policing teams.
- Phase 2 commenced in June 2011 and transformed business processes for managing incidents, volume crime recording and allocation and dealing with defendants.
- Phase 3 focused on operational support activities. This included Intelligence, Call Handling, Protecting Vulnerable People and Justice Services.
- Phase 4 concentrates on redesigning services to deliver successful outcomes in partnership. The focus is on collaboration with local partners and putting victims first. Criminal justice collaboration and the development of integrated offender management and the troubled families' agenda.

How is the force engaging police officers, PCSOs and staff in the change programme?

HMIC found Staffordshire Police was genuinely committed to developing the foundations for sustainable cultural change within the workforce, which will enable it to continue to implement the changes. The force has taken measures to understand its current culture and involve staff in change management processes. A staff engagement steering group is in place to support the delivery of the strategic objectives while giving staff a voice in organisational change. The purpose is to involve staff in shaping and delivering the force's corporate strategy and performance, empowering staff and sustaining morale. The engagement with staff associations is good, and representatives said that they feel valued and involved in all strategic changes.

Staff surveys have been undertaken in the past to understand the culture and issues of the workforce. More recently the force has favoured direct engagement with chief officers; feedback from managers; and reviewing staff absence and grievances, to give them a better insight into the mood of, and issues affecting staff.

How effective has the response been?

Staffordshire Police has responded well, it has developed a comprehensive change programme which reduces costs and restructures the organisation to better fight crime. It has maintained a strong focus on protecting local policing and, at the same time, is rigorously driving down spending.

The programme has so far successfully delivered more savings than required each year and the extra savings have been placed in a reserves fund. The force has a strong track record in closely aligning its financial management with performance management. It has tightly managed the change programme in order to deliver savings and maintain effective policing. HMIC is confident that the remaining savings required will be delivered.

Impact of the changes on the public

The challenge for forces is not just to save money and reduce their workforce numbers, but to ensure the choices they make in deciding how to achieve this do not have a negative impact on the service they provide to their communities. HMIC therefore looked for evidence that the force had kept a consideration of the effect on the public at the heart of their choices.

Visibility

The work done by police officers and staff in visible roles (such as officers who respond to 999 calls, deal with serious road traffic collisions or patrol in neighbourhoods) represents only a part of the policing picture. Chief constables need to allocate resources to many other functions in order to protect the public, such as counter terrorism, serious and organised crime, and child protection (to name just three).

That being said, research shows that the public value seeing visible police officers on patrol in the streets, and that those who see police in uniform at least once a week are more likely to have confidence in their local force.¹² HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the force had affected the visibility of the police on the streets of Staffordshire.

In March 2013, Staffordshire Police allocated 61% of its police officers to visible roles. This is one percentage point less than it allocated in 2010, and higher than the figure for most other forces (which was 54% across England and Wales).

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, Staffordshire Police allocates 65% to visible roles. This is the same percentage as it allocated in 2010 and greater than the 59% figure for England and Wales.

HMIC conducted a survey¹³ of the public across England and Wales to assess whether the public had noticed any difference in the way their area is being policed. Of those people surveyed in Staffordshire, 13%¹⁴ said that they have seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago, this is broadly in line with the 13% average across all survey respondents in England and Wales.

Of those people surveyed, 77%¹⁵ said they felt either as safe or safer in the areas where they live compared with two years ago. This is broadly in line with the figure for most other forces which is 75%.

¹² See *Demanding Times*, HMIC, London, 2011. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

^{13A} YouGov survey was carried out during a four-week period during March 2013. Satisfaction and confidence surveys are also carried out at a national level by the Crime Survey of England and Wales. These use larger sample sizes and are carried out quarterly over a rolling-year period. Some forces also carry out their own surveys of the general public. More information can be found at www.crimesurvey.co.uk, www.hmic.gov.uk or from force websites.

¹⁴ ± 5%.

¹⁵ ± 5%.

Calls for service

HMIC examined whether Staffordshire Police was taking longer to respond to calls for help, as a result of its workforce reductions and other changes designed to save money. Forces are not required to set response times or targets and are free to determine their own arrangements for monitoring attendance to calls so information between forces is not comparable.

In the three years from 2010,¹⁶ Staffordshire Police had maintained the same target response time of within 15 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' (also known as grade 1) in an urban setting and within 20 minutes for calls classed as 'emergency' in a rural setting. Over the same period, calls classed as a 'priority' (also known as grade 2) had a target response time of within 60 minutes.

The force met its target response time for urban 'emergency' calls 88% of the time in 2010/11, 88% of the time in 2011/12, and 85% of the time in 2012/13. It also met its target response time for rural 'emergency' calls 85% of the time in 2010/11 and 86% of the time in 2011/12 and 84% of the time in 2012/13.

For 'priority' calls, on average the force met its target 69% of the time in 2010/11, 73% of the time in 2011/12 and 77% of the time in 2012/13.

Over the spending review period Staffordshire have been able to broadly maintain their response to emergency calls and increase the number of priority calls dealt with within target.

Crime

In 2010 the Home Secretary, Theresa May, set a clear priority for the police service to reduce crime.

Between 2010/11 and 2012/13 (the first two years of the spending review), Staffordshire Police reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 16% compared with 13% in England and Wales. Over this period, victim-based crime (that is, crimes where there is a direct victim – an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 17% compared with 12% in England and Wales.

By looking at how many crimes occur per head of population, we can see how safe it is for the public in that police area. The table below shows crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Staffordshire (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

12 months to March 2013	Rate per 1,000 population in Staffordshire	England and Wales rate per 1,000 population
Crimes (excluding fraud)	52.3	61.4
Victim-based crime	46.4	54.5
Burglary	6.2	8.2
Violence against the person	11.8	10.6
Anti-social behaviour incidents	28.3	40.7

¹⁶ We use 2010/11 as a baseline to show response times prior to the spending review period.

It is important that crimes are effectively investigated and the perpetrator identified and brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to say who has committed a crime, it can be described as detected.

Staffordshire's sanction detection¹⁷ rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2013 is 27.8%. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales detection rate of 27.0%.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in Staffordshire. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to www.hmic.gov.uk/crime-and-policing-comparator.

Victim satisfaction surveys

An important measure of the impact of changes to service delivery for the public is how satisfied victims are with the overall service they receive when they seek police assistance.

In the 12 months to March 2013, 88.6%¹⁸ of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Staffordshire Police. This is higher than the England and Wales figure of 84.6%.¹⁹

Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. Staffordshire Police is planning to shut three front counters²⁰ and close three police stations between 2010 and 2015, but plans to open five new shared access points²¹.

However, they are making more use of the internet and social media to communicate with the public and developing different mechanisms for the public to contact the police. Staffordshire Police is:

- continuing to improve its online services, and its social media channels;
- encouraging neighbourhood officers to use Twitter to help keep communities informed about policing in their area; and
- creating a virtual local notice board using social media publicising all public sector information, described a 'village green notice board'.

17 A sanction detection is a 'solved crime' where a suspect has been identified and notified as being responsible for committing that crime and what the full implications of this are, and has received an official sanction. Official sanctions include charges, cautions, penalty notices, offences taken into consideration (TICs) and cannabis warnings.

18 \pm 1.7%.

19 \pm 0.2%.

20 A police building open to the general public to obtain face-to-face access to police services.

21 A non-police building open to the general public to obtain face-to-face access to police services. For example, shared facilities with council services (e.g. libraries or offices), the fire service or other partners.

Conclusion

Staffordshire has responded well to meeting the funding challenge with a detailed plan to make significant savings over the four year period known as 'Communities First'. The programme aims to deliver planned workforce reductions and operating efficiencies. The force has successfully delivered more savings than required each year, and the extra savings have been placed in a reserves fund. Staffordshire Police continues to seek out opportunities for additional savings, through further efficiencies in the way officers and staff work; the organisation's structures; and the expenditure on goods and services.

The force has a good track record of managing the delivery of savings while protecting local policing and improving services. The force has maintained strong performance in tackling crime over this period. There are detailed plans in place which look forward to 2020 to assess the impact of future budget cuts and evaluate the impact on the police workforce model.

At the time of the inspection, the PCC had not published his first Police and Crime Plan. The impact of any new commitments made in this Plan will become clearer in due course.

Staffordshire Police is on target to deliver the savings required over the spending review period.

In October 2010, the Government announced that central funding to the Police Service in England and Wales would reduce by 20% in the four years between March 2011 and March 2015.

HMIC's Valuing the Police Programme has tracked how forces are planning to make savings to meet this budget demand each year since summer 2011. This report identifies what we found in this third year.

Our inspection focused on three questions:

1. How is the force responding to the budget reduction?
2. What is the impact for the workforce and the public?
3. How is the force managing current and future risks?

To answer these questions, we collected data and plans from forces, surveyed the public to see if they had noticed any changes in the service they receive from the police as a result of the cuts, and conducted in-force inspections. We also interviewed the Chief Constable, Police and Crime Commissioner and the chief officer leads for finance, change, human resources and performance in each force, and held focus groups with staff and other officers.

National findings and patterns across all 43 forces are given in our thematic report, *Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge*, which is available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

This report provides the findings for Staffordshire Police.