

Police

authority

inspection

report

Sussex Police Authority

June 2010



The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services to deliver better outcomes for everyone.

Our work across local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services means that we have a unique perspective. We promote value for money for taxpayers, auditing the £200 billion spent by 11,000 local public bodies.

As a force for improvement, we work in partnership to assess local public services and make practical recommendations for promoting a better quality of life for local people.

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary are appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the Home Secretary and report to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, who is the Home Secretary's principal professional policing adviser. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary are charged with examining and improving the efficiency of the Police Service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. HMIC is independent both of the Home Office and of the Police Service.

The primary functions of HMIC include:

- The formal inspection and assessment of all forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (as well as a number of non Home Office funded police forces), HM Revenue and Customs, and the Serious Organised Crime Agency.**
- Undertaking thematic inspections across forces, some in conjunction with other bodies, including the other Criminal Justice System Inspectorates.**
- Undertaking a key advisory role within the tripartite system (Home Office, chief officer and police authority/Northern Ireland Policing Board), where its independence and professional expertise are recognised by all parties. HMIs also provide a crucial link between forces and the Home Office, and contribute to the process of appointments to the most senior ranks in the Police Service.**

Contents

Executive summary	4
Setting strategic direction and priorities	7
Performance scrutiny	10
Engaging with communities	14
VFM and productivity	18
Next steps	21
Appendix 1 – Context	22
Appendix 2 – Methodology	24

Executive summary

- 1 Sussex Police Authority (the Authority) is performing adequately overall and improving. The Authority is influential in ensuring that Sussex Police (the Force) has the leadership, capacity and capability needed to deliver good quality service. Its effective recruitment to senior appointments has helped ensure that the Force is led in line with the Authority's desired local policing style. Its Chief Officer appointments have driven improvement to Sussex policing in the past two years. The Authority has helped to produce a meaningful Local Policing Plan, directly linked to the annual policing budget. This sets a clear priority for local neighbourhood policing. The Authority's shorter term vision for policing Sussex is clear.
- 2 The Authority has a strong annual financial planning process and effective budget management, monitoring and reporting processes. This helps it ensure that current spending is prioritised and delivering value for money. The Authority has supported the Force in keeping costs lower than many other forces and in meeting its nationally set efficiency targets. The Authority clearly influenced a Force 'shift pattern review' and this saved more than £2 million in overtime costs between March 2008 and December 2009. The Authority is committed to and engaged in collaborative working within the South East Collaboration programme, although this programme is not yet delivering significant savings for Sussex.
- 3 The Authority is well organised to deliver its responsibilities in key areas. Its governance and committee structure is robust and improving. It has good leadership, member and staff capacity to deliver its functions. Lead member roles are well established, and members and staff are active, engaged, enthusiastic and highly capable. This gives it a sound basis and good capacity for further improvement.
- 4 The Authority's scrutiny of the performance of the Force has improved over recent months with the realignment of its committee structure. It has also successfully introduced public webcasting of its committees and this is improving its focus on performance scrutiny. The Force's performance has improved in the last two years and the Authority has been influential in aspects of this. Authority members have built strong relationships with police officers delivering local policing and this is helping them monitor performance. This scrutiny has, for example, led to improvement in crime reduction, detection rates, public call handling and neighbourhood policing.
- 5 The Authority seeks the views of the community through varied means, with good use of technology. This is giving the Authority some good information on which to base its future priorities and decisions. It has taken action as a result of community concerns, for example by getting more officers in neighbourhood policing and in improving custody facilities. The Authority effectively tackles inequality, respects diversity and works to improve outcomes for its most vulnerable people. It engages known minority and vulnerable groups and has addressed their needs well, although it cannot yet be sure that it knows all of its communities since its community profiling is incomplete. It has a robust equality scheme and its members are proactive in their engagement with diverse groups. Although not complete, this helps the Authority to meet the needs of its vulnerable and diverse groups.

Executive summary

6 Key areas for further development are as follows.

- The Authority's medium and longer term strategic direction for the Force is not clear. It has not yet begun to balance future policing challenges and spending within likely future resources. Regional collaboration has not yet delivered significant efficiencies, and future options for this have not been identified with partners. Important and difficult decisions therefore still need to be made on options for service delivery, workforce mix and the balance between different types of policing.
- The Authority is not yet able to demonstrate that it is planning effectively to deliver future value for money. It does not have a comprehensive understanding of its costs in some areas. Benchmarking is not routinely or consistently used by the Authority to understand the costs of policing and to inform priorities. This is making it difficult for the Authority to be able to match future resources to policing needs, so that it can then take decisions about what type of future police service it needs and is affordable. This lack of a comprehensive strategic approach is preventing the Authority from reducing the risks presented by the current and future economic climate.
- Risk management is under developed in the Authority. It does not have a full and clear understanding of all risks and threats to policing. It has its own risk register, but members' awareness of this is low and they make little use of it. Key decisions about meeting the priorities that reflect community concerns may not therefore be fully informed by a full threat and risk assessment.
- The Authority's strategic approach to using information from engagement and consultation with the public is not well developed. A key challenge for the Authority is to develop, with partners, its community profiling, consultation, engagement and feedback arrangements so that they can inform strategies and plans. The Authority's understanding of the reasons for public confidence in policing is under developed. It also misses opportunities to increase its impact through working in partnership and to promote public understanding of its role. Feedback to the community and public visibility of the Authority need to be developed so that the public know how their input influences policing priorities, why consultation is taking place and what the purpose of the consultation is. As a result the Authority cannot demonstrate that its consultation is systematically used to set direction and drive improvement.

- Although recently improved, the Authority’s scrutiny of policing performance is not sufficiently challenging in areas of poor or deteriorating performance. The Authority does not set sufficiently challenging targets to drive continuous policing improvement in all priority areas. Its relationship with the Force is based on consensus and dialogue. The impact of scrutiny is not always clear within the Authority, for local people and for the Force. The Authority’s tracking and recording of its scrutiny and then linking it to improved outcomes for local people is under developed. Its oversight of elements of the protective services programme (such as tackling terrorism, serious crime and other major public safety challenges) is under developed. The Authority does not have clear role descriptions for its members and does not have a structured training programme to help ensure scrutiny and challenge functions are consistent and collective. The Authority influences and supports the Force, but it is not yet fully effective in holding the Chief Constable firmly to account for all aspects of Force performance both at a local and strategic level.

7 The Chair and members of the Authority and the staff it employs are highly capable. The Authority is aware of and alert to improvement opportunities. It clearly sees this inspection as providing an opportunity for reflection and further improvement. Its recent track record in delivering improvements indicates that it has the capacity and skills to deal with the areas for improvement set out above.

Table 1 Summary of inspection scores

Key questions	Score
How does the police authority ensure that both it and the force have the leadership, capacity and capability needed to deliver good quality service outcomes on behalf of the public?	2
How effective is the police authority in scrutinising and ensuring the force delivers the priority services that matter to local people?	2
How well does the police authority achieve results through community engagement and partnerships to deliver its ambitions and strategic priorities?	2
How effective is the police authority in ensuring a clear and sustained focus on value for money to secure a good deal for the public?	2
Overall score	2

Setting strategic direction and priorities

How does the Police Authority ensure that both it and the Force have the leadership, capacity and capability needed to deliver good quality service?

- 8 The Authority is performing adequately in this area. It works effectively with the Force in setting direction and priorities for the short term. The Authority has ensured that the Force is well led and has made effective senior appointments. Members and staff of the Authority have good capacity. Early indications from the new structure for scrutiny of Force performance via its committees are encouraging. Equality, access to services and quality of service provision are clearly addressed in the Authority's planning and activities. Its support for diversity and community engagement is clear in a number of areas such as the care and custody of detainees, the community impact of policing powers and the planning and conduct of large operations.
- 9 The Authority has a clear focus on shorter term issues but its longer term planning and strategic risk management is not well developed. It is supportive of collaboration with other forces but options and opportunities for significant collaboration have not as yet been articulated by the Authority. In some respects the Authority has a view that its role is to support and influence, rather than set direction for the Force. It has a good track record in supporting the policing of Sussex but it has not yet developed its longer term strategic direction for the Force.

Strengths

- 10** The Authority has strong leadership in a number of key areas. Its broad vision, especially for neighbourhood policing, and values sit at the heart of the way it makes senior appointments. The Authority's chief officer and senior police staff appointments are driving improvement. Several of the senior police officers appointed by the Authority have been in post for less than two years and there is clear alignment between the Chief Constable's 'Serving Sussex' approach to policing delivery and the aspirations of the Authority which selected him for that purpose. The Authority set firm priorities for the Force during its 'Challenge 2010' process. It made it clear to the Force that neither reducing front line officers nor police station opening times would be acceptable. This has helped make sure that the Force is led in a way that is both sympathetic to, and consistent with, the Authority's local policing style.
- 11** The Authority is well organised to deliver its governance responsibilities. The new governance structure, introduced in November 2009, is rational and well considered. This is already effective in some key areas, for example it has enabled the production of a meaningful Local Policing Plan directly linked to the annual budget. The Authority was central in preparing this plan and in making sure that it is aligned with the budget for 2010/11. The Authority's committee structure, which mirrors the Chief Constable's 'Three Pillars' of service to Sussex, is still bedding in and it is too soon for any strategic results to have emerged, but there is clear evidence of aspiration, thinking and planning. The Authority ensures ethical behaviour for itself and the Force and has a robust approach to investigating complaints and preventing fraud and corruption.
- 12** The Authority has good capacity to deliver its functions. The Authority's executive is managed well and led by a very experienced and highly qualified team. It employs high quality engaged and talented staff and is improving its capacity to undertake consultation, engagement and communications. The Authority gets good quality treasury management and legal advice by means of a service level agreement with local authorities. It also makes good use of Force staff to augment its capacity. Lead member roles have been established and individual members feel empowered both to challenge the Force and to contribute to its activities. Members are active, engaged, enthusiastic and highly capable, drawing upon sometimes substantial personal qualifications, experience and capacity. For example, members were closely involved in both planning and learning from major policing events such as Operation Otter (political conferences in Brighton) and Operation Peel (the annual Lewes bonfire). The Authority was influential in making sure that policing organisation matches geographical and local government areas in Sussex. Members' attendance is monitored by the Authority and several are devoting considerable time and energy to the work of the Authority, well beyond the one-and-a-half days per week for which they are appointed. Members enhance the way they work together through team building events and seminars before formal meetings.

Setting strategic direction and priorities

- 13** The Authority operates an effective Independent Custody Visitor Scheme. It has led in delivering improvements in detention facilities within the scheme. It has also introduced, alongside the scheme, the monitoring of CCTV cameras in an innovative and efficient way. Its independent volunteers now also monitor the Force's use of CCTV. This is helping to reassure the public and is attracting widespread public recognition and praise.
- 14** The Authority influences the Force to ensure that the needs of vulnerable people are taken into account. Members have been directly involved in some important initiatives, for example to tackle domestic violence, to improve the care of people removed from public places under mental health legislation and the use of anti-terrorism powers of stop and search within communities. The Authority has showed clear leadership in improving the delivery of these services for the people of Sussex.

Areas for Improvement

- 15** The Authority has not set a medium and longer term strategic direction for the Force. It has not yet identified the contribution that regional collaboration must make to future service delivery. Its main focus has been on the shorter term annual planning process which it does well. It has not defined its longer term priorities for improvement and has not communicated to the Force, staff or the public the shape of policing needed to meet future demands and future value for money. As a result the strategic direction is unclear for the public and this uncertainty is impacting noticeably on the Force's expectations of its Authority.
- 16** Risk management is under developed in the Authority. It is not clear what the Force does or is planning to do differently as a result of the Authority's strategic risk planning activity. The Authority currently relies too heavily on the capability and capacity of individual members in key functional areas (for example children and young people, information communications systems, community engagement and financial and corporate governance); this impacts on both members' awareness of the 'whole picture' and the Authority's resilience. The Authority has no plans to mitigate this risk.
- 17** Members are unclear about their collective role and this is leading to an over reliance on some members and is reducing the Authority's capacity to act collectively. Training of Authority members is not consistent and is self reliant rather than strategic and needs-based. The Authority has improved its member induction training and uses seminar events effectively for some member training. However, it has an assumption that members' seniority and experience gained in other walks of life necessarily equip them for the specific roles they are expected to fill on the Authority. This will not always be the case and is a risk to the Authority's delivery of its function.

Performance scrutiny

How effective is the Police Authority in scrutinising and ensuring the Force delivers the priority services that matter to local people?

- 18** The Authority is performing adequately in this area. It has appropriate and improved governance procedures, and performance scrutiny has improved over recent months. Authority meetings are broadcast live and previous meetings can be viewed via the website. This is making the Authority and its public scrutiny of police performance more accessible. It is clear in these meetings that the Authority holds the Force to account and challenges its performance. The Force's performance has improved in the last two years and the Authority has been influential in this. Authority members have built strong relationships with police officers, especially those delivering local policing, and this is helping them effectively monitor and improve performance.
- 19** The Authority does not set sufficiently challenging targets to drive continuous policing improvement in all priority areas. Force performance in most, but not all, areas is generally in line with, or better than, similar forces. The Authority has an established supportive relationship with the Force based on consensus and dialogue. It does not always openly challenge and drive Force performance; this aspect of its work is still developing. The Authority does not have clear role descriptions for its members and does not have a structured training programme for all members to help ensure that its scrutiny and challenge is consistent and corporate. The Authority monitors protective services (tackling terrorism, serious crime and other major public safety challenges) but it is not yet driving improvement.

Strengths

- 20** The Authority's scrutiny of performance has led to improvement in some areas. Noticeable improvements in Force performance which have clearly been influenced by Authority members include reducing crime, improving detections, better quality public call handling, improved neighbourhood policing capacity and improved recruitment, staff retention and reducing sickness absence. In all these areas Authority members have identified the key issues and worked well with the Force to deliver significant improvement.
- 21** The Authority effectively monitors delivery of the Policing Pledge, a national set of promises to the public which every force has signed up to, through its Neighbourhood Policing Scrutiny Committee and the Force Strategic Pledge Group. The Authority now works effectively with the Force and has good capacity to deliver improvements for the public through its Policing Pledge. The Chair of the Authority's Neighbourhood Policing Scrutiny Committee is an active member of the Force's Strategic Pledge Group. This helps the Authority drive improvements which it then monitors through the Force's Pledge action plan. The Authority's involvement has led to improvement for example in how the Force deals with reports of dissatisfaction from the public.

Performance scrutiny

- 22** The Authority was influential in setting policing priorities in the Local Policing Plan. It has set targets within the Chief Constable's Personal Development Review and these are used by the Authority to hold him to account. It selected and appointed the Chief Constable in 2007, with clear direction to focus on improving the quality of local policing services. The Force, supported by the Authority, has delivered improvement. Crime in the Sussex Police area has reduced by more than 15 per cent in the two years to February 2010. The Force's performance has improved in key areas such as reducing serious acquisitive crime and violence. The appointment of the Chief Constable and senior management team by the Authority has been an important factor in this.
- 23** The Authority's governance structure, although still developing, is improved and appropriate. It has recently been revised to align scrutiny committees to Force strategic meetings and focused on the three key delivery areas of neighbourhood policing, protective services and resources. Chief Officers attend scrutiny committees and provide good updates and information to members. Scrutiny committee meetings are open to the public and, for those not able to attend, webcasting makes the discussions and decisions available to everyone who has access to the internet. Meetings are broadcast live and previous meetings can be viewed via the website. This is making the Authority more accessible to the public and the Force. Webcast meetings regularly attract in excess of 100 viewings. Authority members meet regularly with their respective strategic leads, divisional and departmental heads. This gives them the opportunity to discuss and monitor performance against the Policing Plan and local priorities. Members also monitor very effectively local policing performance by attendance at the Basic Command Unit (BCU) divisional accountability meetings. This engagement gives members good current knowledge of local policing.
- 24** The Authority effectively monitors aspects of the Force's protective services. Its lead member and the Deputy Chief Executive are vetted to receive more detailed briefings on sensitive matters and are members of relevant Force strategic groups. Responsibility for individual elements of protective services is clearly allocated to lead members. Between 2006 and 2009, the Authority provided £7 million for the Force to strengthen its capability and capacity within protective services. More officers now work on child abuse and domestic abuse investigations. The Authority has scrutinised and influenced how the Force is dealing with domestic abuse victims and has improved its capacity to deal with the potential increase in reported incidents during identified high risk periods. The Authority is leading in improving road safety. Too many people are killed or seriously injured on Sussex roads. This is a complex issue across the three areas of local government in Sussex. The Authority has improved its engagement with local strategic partnerships to set and drive collective actions designed to improve this.

Areas for improvement

- 25** The Authority has not set sufficiently challenging targets to drive continuous improvement and hold the Force to account in all policing priority areas. Force performance in most areas is generally in line with or above similar forces, but the Authority does not set stretching targets to challenge the Force to higher levels of performance. Targets in some areas of this year's Local Policing Plan were below the level of performance already achieved. The overall crime reduction target was set at only 3 per cent when the Force had achieved 20 per cent reduction over the past two years. Its 'ease of contact' target was left at 90 per cent rather than being increased to reflect the Force's 94 per cent achievement. The Force has a well established process for priority and target setting and the Authority is represented and involved in the Local Policing Plan board. Relationships between the Authority and the Force senior management team are based on consensus and dialogue. The Authority influences and supports the Force but it is not yet fully effective in holding the Chief Constable to account for all aspects of performance.
- 26** The Authority's scrutiny of performance information is developing. Performance information is provided to members by the Force in its monthly performance pack. This, following representations by the Authority, has become more concise and is now providing better and more relevant performance information. Authority officers provide support to members, but there is insufficient analysis of performance or detailed exception reporting to enable members to better target their scrutiny work and then challenge performance. Committee members tend to rely on the Force's own performance report and have insufficient focus on areas of poor or deteriorating performance or comparison benchmarking with other forces.
- 27** The Authority's oversight of all elements of the protective services programme, although improving, is not yet comprehensive. The Authority has not clearly identified links between public confidence in policing and the delivery of protective services. Its protective services improvement plan lacks sufficient detail to challenge performance and does not clearly identify areas of risk. Some areas of protective services in the improvement plan, such as investigation of serious and organised crime, protecting vulnerable people and public order policing, have improved. The Authority accepts updates from the Force in areas where it is not performing well, rather than challenging the Force to improve. The Authority monitors protective services but it is not yet driving improvement.

Performance scrutiny

- 28** The Authority does not keep track of the impact its scrutiny has had. The Authority's tracking and recording of its scrutiny and subsequent outcomes for local people is under developed. Some robust challenge is evident in scrutiny committees, but the Authority does not systematically monitor or capture activity, recommendations and, most importantly, the outcomes resulting from its scrutiny. Its scrutiny committee minutes do not capture this information. This makes it difficult for the Authority as a whole to identify key performance risks for the Force and the public. For example the Authority cannot show that it effectively challenged the Force's low detection rate for serious acquisitive crime or its low vehicle crime detection rate. It is clear from talking to members and officers that they are active in improving local policing, especially through their good engagement with local policing units. However, there is no formal evidence of the Authority effectively challenging weak performance or of the strategic actions it takes as a result of its engagement in local policing.
- 29** Members are not all clear about their collective role in performance scrutiny. Members' roles are also not made clear to the Force. The Authority does not have clear role descriptions for its members and does not have a structured training programme to ensure scrutiny and challenge functions are consistent and collective. It has successfully recruited high quality members who bring much experience and expertise to the Authority. A 'code of conduct' is in place but some members and some people working in the Force are not clear about the role of members, particularly in scrutiny. Training for all members in performance management and scrutiny, including those leading on this aspect, has not been provided. Individual members identify their own training or development needs but this is ad hoc and not centrally driven to make sure it is providing value for money, based clearly on needs and delivering the desired outcomes. This means that in this important function the Authority may not be acting as one.

Engaging with communities

How well does the Police Authority achieve results through community engagement and partnerships to deliver its ambitions and strategic priorities?

- 30** The Authority is performing adequately in this area. It seeks the views of the community through a range of mechanisms and the use of technology. The Authority acts on some community concerns with resulting positive outcomes, such as improvement in neighbourhood policing capacity and better custody facilities. It engages well with its known minority and vulnerable groups to gain a good understanding of these groups. The Authority tackles inequality and diversity and works to improve outcomes for its most vulnerable people. Members are enthusiastic, visible and active in working with local communities.
- 31** Coordination to make sure that the Authority's engagement with the public has maximum impact is under developed. It currently makes insufficient use of the information it gains from all its consultation and engagement to make sure that its actions are clearly based on public views. A key challenge for the Authority is to develop its community profiling, consultation, engagement and feedback arrangements to help it take a more efficient and effective approach to informing strategies, actions and plans. The Authority misses opportunities to increase its impact through working in partnership to better engage with communities. Feedback to the community after consultation to inform participants of what has changed and public visibility of the Authority are both areas for development.

Strengths

- 32** The Authority actively engages with its communities and uses technology and a range of approaches to improve engagement. It has led the development with partners of a 'virtual town hall' for East Sussex residents to share their views on public services including the police. The Authority takes the opportunity to meet residents in shopping centres and at local events such as the South of England Show and leads an annual Leaders and Chief Executives Stakeholder Conference. It successfully webcasts its meetings, and stakeholders appreciate this form of contact with the Authority, the information and the ability to respond and feedback that it gives to them. The Authority's website has recently been updated and now gives easy access to a wide range of useful information. It also uses social networking tools to gain valuable information about public views. All this is giving the Authority a good range of information on the views of local people.
- 33** The Authority has acted on community concerns in key areas. It identified that local people wanted higher visibility local policing and therefore set neighbourhood policing as a key priority for the Force. This included responding to the public's wish to see more uniformed police officers on the streets. It also increased funding to bring in more Police Community Support Officers and to improve community research and survey work in the Force. In response to community concerns, and working with partners, the Authority has improved facilities for people placed in custody under mental health legislation. It has also improved training for police officers following complaints from Muslim residents in Crawley about police procedures which may have in the past resulted in the loss of dignity for some Muslim people using the airport. Local communities have been consulted and the Authority is actively addressing local concern about tackling extremism in Crawley. The lead member is effective in raising awareness of equality issues internally with the Force. These are important areas where the Authority has acted effectively to address community needs.
- 34** The Authority tackles inequality and diversity and works to improve outcomes for its most vulnerable people. It has a robust equality scheme and its members are proactive in their engagement with diverse groups. Equality is an integral part of each of its committees, and its scrutiny of policing includes ensuring that groups are treated equally through sampling and investigation when necessary. For example, the Authority worked well to address policing concerns with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in Brighton and with the Polish community in Bognor Regis. It has a lead member and strong focus on rural issues and the policing of dispersed communities. The Authority works closely with the Gypsy and Traveller Advisory Group to address their needs and local people's concerns. Safer Neighbourhood Grants, approved by local police commanders and the Authority, are used to support some voluntary groups working with vulnerable communities. The Authority works effectively to ensure equality in local policing and to achieve consistent 'user satisfaction' across all community groups.

35 Authority members are visible and active in their communities and in local policing. Members are enthusiastic about working with and engaging the community. The Authority is well organised to do this. Members are aligned to neighbourhood policing teams in each geographical area. The Authority's membership is largely representative of the local community in terms of gender and ethnicity. Links between local police officers and Authority members are strong in each area. Members also engage in some joint consultation with the Force in some local areas. This all gives the Authority some good local knowledge, and allows members to feed back issues and good practice in local engagement to the Force's management and to help ensure that knowledge is shared across teams.

Areas for improvement

- 36** The Authority does not take a strategic approach to consultation and engagement. Its use of consultation to inform its vision and priorities is not effective or well coordinated. Authority members are asked to identify areas and groups for consultation but it is not clear that the resulting overall consultation effort addresses or informs the strategic priorities of the Authority. A community engagement strategy is in place but it is not clear to the public how their input will influence policing priorities, why the consultation is taking place or what the purpose of the consultation is. As a result the Authority cannot demonstrate that its community engagement and consultation is systematically used to set direction and drive improvement.
- 37** The Authority's understanding of public confidence in policing and in user satisfaction in Sussex is improving but not yet complete. The Authority has supported the formation of a consultation team and this team has undertaken some local public confidence surveys. However, it does not use its consultation and engagement to effectively find out more about the public and then to target its actions. The percentage of people in Sussex who agreed that the police and local councils seek people's views about anti-social behaviour and crime issues in their area is one of the lowest nationally. The Force has not improved in its overall user satisfaction over the last two years. The satisfaction rate for Sussex is low when compared to similar forces. The Authority needs to use its consultation and engagement to better understand these issues and then to target action for the Force to address them.
- 38** The Authority does not yet have a complete and accurate profile of its communities. The Authority works well with the Force in sharing consultation information. However, the Force, the Authority and partners are aware that community profiling is inconsistent and in need of continuous update. The Authority and the Force acknowledge that there is more to do to achieve systematic and complete profiling of communities. This means that community engagement may not be effective and inclusive. In addition it is not always possible for the local policing service to ensure that they are genuinely accessible and responding appropriately to all, including marginalised, diverse and vulnerable people and groups.

Engaging with communities

- 39** The Authority does not systematically use consultation results and let people know how their views were used. There is insufficient analysis of the information gained from consultation. For example, surveys of young people undertaken in summer 2009 have still not been analysed and brought to an Authority meeting for discussion and action. Feedback is sparse and inconsistent and not sufficient to inform the public on how the results from community consultation have been used to set policing priorities. This means that local communities are unable to understand what action has been taken in their area as a result of their concerns. Communicating feedback to communities on achievements and actions taken on local concerns is not being used by the Authority to help improve people's confidence in policing.
- 40** The Authority does not know how effective it is in partnership working. It is committed to working in partnership to improve local policing and community safety. It has appropriate membership of the key partnerships across its large and complex geographical area. However, its engagement in and impact on partnership working is not consistently monitored and evaluated. This makes it difficult to assess the actual impact of the Authority's input to local community safety partnerships and local strategic partnerships. Local partners broadly assess the Authority's impact in these partnerships as 'variable'. The Authority is now developing an approach to its engagement with partnerships to ensure a consistent corporate approach. This work is not yet completed, and the roles and responsibilities in partnership working are not yet clear for members or partners.
- 41** Partnership working to engage in joint public consultations with other strategic partners is under developed. A partnership project to share consultation and community profiling is at its early stages. The Authority's current consultation arrangements are not yet fully efficient and effective and do not take full advantage of collaboration with other public sector partners. Although there is some joint partner consultation with some local representative groups it is inconsistent. This inconsistency means that opportunities for joint working are being missed.

VFM and productivity

How effective is the Police Authority in ensuring a clear and sustained focus on VFM in order to secure a good deal for the public?

- 42** The Authority is performing adequately in this area. It has a good approach to annual financial planning and managing its budgets and a good understanding of the need to deliver value for money (VFM). The Authority has a strong annual financial planning process and effective budget management, monitoring and reporting processes. The Policing Plan is clearly linked to and supported by a medium term financial strategy. This helps to ensure that spending follows priorities and the needs of its communities. This is clear, for example, in the additional funding allocated by the Authority for neighbourhood policing in 2010/11. The Authority has supported the Force in keeping costs lower than many other forces and delivering efficiency savings.
- 43** The Authority's medium to long term strategic, resource and financial planning arrangements are under developed in some key areas. The Authority is not yet setting a clear outline of what type of police force it wants and needs for the longer term to deliver future value for money and to meet future budget challenges. It is committed to and engaged in collaborative working within the South East Collaboration programme, although this is not yet delivering significant savings. It is beginning now to identify the financial challenges it faces and to look at how future policing challenges and spending need to balance with likely future resources. However, it does not have a full and comprehensive understanding of its costs compared to other forces through benchmarking, and its management of risk is under developed. The Authority therefore is not yet able to demonstrate that it is planning effectively to maintain and deliver future value for money.

Strengths

- 44** The Authority is effective in influencing and setting the annual policing budget to allocate resources to the Force. Authority members have been very influential in the setting of the level of reserves for 2011/12 and the precept, and in re-prioritising the capital programme. The agreed minimum level of reserves was increased by 3 per cent to 4 per cent. An effective annual financial planning process is in place; budget monitoring and financial scrutiny is robust. Members have challenged potential overspends and underspends within the Force in areas such as vehicle use and overtime costs.
- 45** The Authority has a good track record in delivering efficiencies to meet government targets. It has been influential in setting efficiency targets and has supported the Force effectively in reducing its costs and making savings. It delivered over £12 million in efficiency savings in 2009/10 (4.3 per cent of total spending – the highest level of savings in its most similar force group). The Force's overall costs compare reasonably well with other similar forces.

VFM and productivity

- 46** The Authority manages and coordinates efficiency projects to good effect. It's Challenge 2010 and involvement in Operation Quest was well managed and has improved Force efficiency. Operation Quest delivered improvements in incident management and deployment and crime recording, which resulted in savings of over £1 million over two years despite an overall year on year increase in demand. The merging of two previously separate CCTV monitoring stations and the upgrading of CCTV monitoring equipment has led to recurrent savings of £312,000 per annum. The Authority has influenced changes to how the Force uses its staff. Its shift pattern review resulted in savings of £2.1 million in overtime costs between March 2008 and December 2009. The Authority has challenged staff sickness levels and the Force has achieved a reduction in sickness absence. The Authority with the Force have taken the decision to make efficiencies by reducing the workforce by almost 100 staff, in order to contribute to meeting the funding gap of £5 million in 2010/11. These are positive indications of the Authority being prepared to take difficult decisions to achieve better value for money.
- 47** The Authority is committed to collaboration and joint working both locally and regionally. It has supported the Force to develop collaborative arrangements with others in some areas, although it recognises that in financial terms these, while important, are small scale. It has jointly funded posts for counter-terrorism and has integrated some activities within protective services. It has recently signed an agreement for collaboration on witness protection services, covert surveillance, technical support and forensic sciences and is developing collaborative arrangements for Air Support. The Authority is also seeking collaborative work in some of its business areas, such as information technology, joint procurement and some aspects of regional HR services. The Authority is committed to and engaged in further potential collaborative working with the South East Collaboration programme, although this is not yet delivering significant savings or efficiencies.

Areas for improvement

- 48** The Authority does not give the Force a strong strategic lead in deciding the longer term shape of policing for Sussex. Longer term financial and resource planning are not yet in place. It does not yet have a comprehensive strategic plan for delivering an efficient and modern police service within future budget challenges. Key decisions, such as efficiency savings, are not taken by the Authority as part of a coordinated plan. Long term financial planning is currently hampered by the lack of a clear resourcing model for the Force. This is required to set how the Force needs to use its people and assets for the next three to five years. The Authority manages its annual finances well, meeting all past annual budget pressures, and has an agreed clear financial plan for 2011/12. However, to plan for the longer term the Authority has only recently set up a working party with the Force to formulate its plan to meet the financial challenges from 2012 onwards. It has not yet set a clear longer term direction for the workforce and the use of buildings. As a result it is not yet clear for the Force or the public what direction and what type of policing and Force it wants and needs in the longer term. This lack of a comprehensive strategic approach is also preventing the Authority from reducing the risks presented by the current and future economic climate.
- 49** The Authority is not taking the strategic lead in ensuring that it and the Force are taking the necessary hard choices on priorities and resourcing to assure value for money. The Authority has been able to fund short term growth in priority services through efficiencies, for example additional resources for neighbourhood policing and protective services. The Authority does not have a robust process for reviewing and reallocating scarce funds from low to high priorities or for identifying services or activities it may have to discontinue. Staffing costs make up nearly 90 per cent of the Force budget, but the Authority has not yet led the difficult decisions about identifying options for future service delivery, workforce mix and the balance between different types of policing.
- 50** The Authority does not have a full and clear understanding of all risks and threats to policing. It has its own risk register, but awareness of this is low and it is not easily accessible to members. Key decisions about the long-term direction of the Force and about meeting the priorities that reflect community concerns are not therefore informed by a full threat and risk assessment.
- 51** The Authority does not have a full and comprehensive understanding of its costs in some areas. Authority members have a broad understanding of the Force's costs, but comparative financial data is not always used for decision-making. The Authority has used some good benchmarking examples, such as to scrutinise and compare fleet management costs, but benchmarking is not routinely or consistently used by the Authority to understand the costs of policing and to inform priorities. It therefore is not able to demonstrate that it systematically compares itself with other authorities to ensure it is delivering value for money.

Next steps

- 52** We expect Sussex Police Authority to address the areas for improvement identified in this report and secure targeted and continuous improvement. In doing so, the Authority should have regard to the wider improvement planning, support and intervention set out in the Home Office's performance framework and landscape for policing.
- 53** We published an interim national report in March 2010 drawing on the findings from the first ten inspections. It identified thematic issues relevant to all police authorities, helping to secure improvement and sharing of good practice. The Police Authority should refer to and use this report in shaping its improvement planning.

Appendix 1 – Context

- 1 The Sussex Police Authority and Force serve a population of approximately 1.5 million people and cover a total area of 4,779 square kilometres. This includes the two counties of East and West Sussex, one of the UK's busiest international airports at Gatwick and the unitary authority area of Brighton and Hove. The population is significantly supplemented by the seasonal influx of visitors to the south coast holiday resorts, particularly Brighton and Eastbourne, and more than 35 million passengers pass through Gatwick Airport each year. There are sea ports at Littlehampton, Newhaven, Shoreham, Eastbourne, Brighton Marina and Rye. The area includes Hastings in the east and Chichester in the west and large areas of rural and down land, including much of the new South Downs National Park and many dispersed rural communities. Across the whole Sussex area, resident earnings are below the South East average. Unemployment rates are higher than average in both West Sussex and Brighton and Hove. In East and West Sussex, the Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate and working age unemployment rate remains below the national average, with Brighton and Hove above average. Sussex Police is one of the largest employers in Sussex
- 2 West Sussex's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population is at the national average at 10 per cent. Crawley has the highest proportion of BME residents in the county at 19 per cent. The East Sussex BME population is slightly lower than the national average at 9 per cent. The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in Brighton and Hove is estimated to be about 1 in 6 people in the city. (BME – defined as all ethnic groups other than White, British and White, Irish, and the data quoted is Office for National Statistics published 2007 estimates)

The Police Authority

- 3 Sussex Police Authority is one of 43 Police Authorities in England and Wales. It is responsible for securing an efficient and effective police force for Sussex and holding the Chief Constable to account.
- 4 Sussex Police Authority consists of 17 members. Nine are councillors, elected to East and West Sussex County Councils and Brighton and Hove City Council, and appointed to the Police Authority to reflect the political balance of those authorities. The remaining eight posts are filled by independent members appointed by the councillor members of the Authority following public advertisement, short-listing and interview. At least one of these independent members must be a magistrate; currently Sussex Police Authority has three magistrates. The Chair of the Police Authority is an independent member and was appointed Chair in July 2009, having served as vice chairman since 2007. The Authority has 14 staff: the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive, Treasurer, Solicitor and nine other policy and support staff.

Appendix 1 – Context

- 5 The work of the Authority is spread across seven committees: Resources, Neighbourhood Policing, Protective Services, Professional Standards, Standards, Corporate Governance, and Chief Officers Appointments and Remuneration.
- 6 This year the Authority set a budget of £253 million for 2010/11, an increase of 3.24 per cent over 2008/09 (£245 million). The approved budget requires Sussex Police to make £7.5 million efficiency savings in the year ahead. Gatwick Airport Limited pays for the policing operation on its property.
- 7 The Authority's Policing Plan for 2009-2012 is structured against the three business areas or 'pillars' of Sussex Police, which are:
 - Neighbourhood Policing;
 - Keeping People Safe; and
 - Best Use of Resources.

The Force

- 8 Total Sussex officer and police staff strength comprises 3,196 police officers, 399 Police Community Support Officers, 2,080 police staff, 16 designated detention/escort/investigation officers and 32 Traffic Wardens. The Force is managed by a senior management team comprising the Chief Constable, a Deputy Chief Constable and three Assistant Chief Constables plus the Directors of Finance and Human Resources. Policing is delivered by 4 Divisions – West Downs, North Downs, Brighton and Hove and East Sussex – each commanded by a Chief Superintendent. There are a total of 77 neighbourhood policing areas across Sussex. Within the two tier authorities of East and West Sussex policing districts are aligned with district council areas, each commanded by a Chief Inspector.
- 9 The Force, supported by the Authority, has delivered improvement. Crime in the Sussex Police area has reduced by more than 15 per cent in the two years to February 2010. The Force consistently records a crime rate below the average for similar forces. Sussex performs particularly well in relation to serious acquisitive crime and violent offences where the crime rates are lower than in similar forces and low nationally. Overall sanction detection rates dipped during 2009, below the average for similar forces, but recent improvement has been achieved and the latest rate of almost 29 per cent is in line with the average. However, the Force is still performing poorly for solving vehicle crimes compared to similar forces and nationally. It achieves a sanction detection rate of only 6.6 per cent. The Force also has a higher number of people killed or seriously injured on its roads than in similar forces, and one of the highest rates nationally.
- 10 The British Crime Survey results show that the Force may not meet its 2011 milestone target for the Single Confidence measure (confidence that agencies are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues), but it is currently performing in line with similar forces. The Force continues to report improving performance that is in line with similar forces for public confidence in both the effectiveness and fairness of the criminal justice system.

Appendix 2 – Methodology

- 1 This report summarises the joint Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary findings from the inspection of Sussex Police Authority which took place in March 2010.
- 2 In July 2009, the Audit Commission and HMIC published the Police Authority Inspection framework.
- 3 The inspection framework comprises four assessment areas:
 - Setting strategic direction and priorities – How does the Police Authority ensure that both it and the Force have the leadership, capacity and capability needed to deliver good quality service outcomes on behalf of the public?
 - Scrutinising performance outcomes – How effective is the Police Authority in scrutinising and ensuring that the Force delivers the priority services that matter to local people?
 - Achieving results through community engagement and partnership – How well does the Police Authority achieve results through community engagement and partnerships to deliver its ambitions and strategic priorities?
 - Ensuring value for money (VFM) and productivity – How effective is the Police Authority in ensuring a clear and sustained focus on VFM in order to secure a good deal for the public?
- 4 The Inspection team drew on a range of evidence to form judgements against each of the four assessment themes. This included key documentation that the police authority uses to run its business, interviews, focus groups, observations and reality testing with key police authority partners and stakeholders.
- 5 Each assessment theme was scored separately on a scale of 1 to 4 and is combined into an overall score. The scores of 1 to 4 for each theme represent the following descriptors of performance.

Score	Descriptor of performance	Public reporting
1	Police authority does not meet minimum requirements for this theme	Performs poorly
2	Police authority meets most of the minimum requirements for this theme with some exceptions and areas of concern	Performs adequately
3	Police authority exceeds minimum requirements for this theme	Performs well
4	Police authority significantly exceeds minimum requirements for this theme	Performs excellently

Appendix 2 – Methodology

- 6 An accredited peer member inspector and a senior officer from a police authority supported the joint inspectorates during this inspection.
- 7 We have integrated quality assurance throughout the planning, fieldwork and reporting stages of the inspection. In particular, a quality assurance panel of the joint inspectorates ensured the consistency and robustness of the inspection teams' judgements before the publication of reports. A suitably qualified peer joined the quality assurance panel as an observer.
- 8 HMIC and the Audit Commission are grateful for the support and co-operation of the Police Authority, its staff and officers during the inspection.

If you require a copy of this document in large print, in Braille, on tape, or in a language other than English, please call: **0844 798 7070**

If you require a printed copy of this document, please call: **0800 50 20 30** or email: ac-orders@audit-commission.gov.uk

This document is available on our website.

For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:

Audit Commission

1st Floor
Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4HQ

Telephone: **0844 798 3131**

Fax: 0844 798 2945

Textphone (minicom): 0844 798 2946

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

HMIC

For further information about HMIC, visit our website at:

www.hmic.gov.uk



Audit Commission

1st Floor
Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4HQ

Telephone: **0844 798 1212**
Fax: 0844 798 2945
Textphone (minicom): 0844 798 2946

www.audit-commission.gov.uk



HMIC

Ground Floor
Ashley House
2 Monck Street
London
SW1P 2BQ

Telephone: **020 7035 2001**
Fax: 020 7035 2176

www.hmic.gov.uk