

Contact: Mr Ron Hogg  
Direct Tel: 03000 264634  
Fax: 0191 3834206  
e-mail: ron.hogg@durham-pcc.gov.uk  
Your ref:  
Our ref: RH



Roger Baker, QPM, MBA, MA  
HM Inspector of Constabulary  
Unit 2 Wakefield Office Village  
Fryers Way  
Silkwood Park  
Wakefield  
West Yorkshire  
WF5 9TJ

27 August 2013

Dear Roger,

**Publication of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's (HMIC)  
Valuing the Police Thematic Report**

Many thanks for your letter dated 17th July 2013 which provides me with the opportunity to respond to the above report and to your report entitled 'Durham Constabulary's response to the funding challenge'.

As we have come to expect here in Durham, your work reflects well the financial situation in which we find ourselves and provides an accurate assessment of the steps that I am taking, together with the Force, to address current and planned reductions in Central Government funding, for both policing and community safety in County Durham and Darlington.

I share your confidence that we will achieve our saving target however, it would be remiss of me not to reiterate that this unlikely to be without some impact on service delivery and front line numbers, as we move forward into the CSR2 period. Clearly, the focus for the Force is to minimise this impact and I will work closely with the Chief Constable in this regard.

As is the case across all forces, around 80% of our total budget is accounted for in pay related expenditure. You note that Durham plans to make 80% of its spending review savings from the pay budget and that there may be opportunity to further reduce the non-pay expenditure, which is proportionately higher than

Office of the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner  
County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL  
03000 264631 Minicom (0191) 383 3802

Website: [www.durham-pcc.gov.uk](http://www.durham-pcc.gov.uk)

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in the average force. This is an area that I will scrutinise closely during the 2014/15 budget round, however from our discussions, I know that you also recognise that in 'getting ahead of the spending reduction curve', Durham has reviewed expenditure with a fine toothcomb and the opportunities for further reduction are become more difficult to identify and more painful to deliver. It is pleasing to note that further work and research is already underway by the Force in respect of additional collaboration; as well as looking at the sharing of back office services and premises, the results of which will be fed into the budget cycle as and when appropriate.

You refer to the importance of engaging staff in the necessary changes and you note the success of the deliberately open dialogue and engagement with the staff associations and the staff union. This is an area that I am also focusing upon as PCC, with a view to further developing the open and trusting relationships that exist as we move into more difficult financial times that will inherently test the strength of these relationships.

With regard to the 'impact of the changes on the public', it is interesting to note that police officer visibility in Durham is broadly in line with the rest of England and Wales and that despite Durham's 6% reduction in visibility from 2010, there has been a significant increase in the public's perception of visibility over the last 12 months. Nevertheless, I will be working closely with the Chief Constable to optimise police visibility, whilst at the same time focusing on the public's desire to see their officers in visible roles.

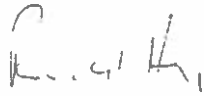
Turning to Crime, you make note of Durham's favourable trends in terms of reducing crime numbers and of increased detections. Nevertheless, the number of incidents of anti-social behaviour per 1000 population remains above the national average and this is something that I will be pursuing further with the Force.

In your conclusion, you refer to the increase in time taken to attend a call or incident, which is a disbenefit of the new policing model introduced in Durham in 2011. This is being addressed by the Force through the new 'borderless' approach of directing police officers to where and when they are most needed. It is noted that you will continue to monitor performance in this area and I can give you my assurance that I will pick this up through my performance monitoring, which will hopefully ensure that the picture is an improved one when you next visit. I would also intend to use the recommendations on pages 23 -24 of the national study as the basis of discussion with the Chief Constable moving forward.

I hope that you find this response helpful, but please do let me know if there are any specific areas of the national study or the Durham report that you would like me to respond to in further detail.

As requested, a copy of these comments has been sent to the Home Secretary and a link to this letter on my website is provided below:  
<http://www.durham-pcc.gov.uk/Your-Police/Inspections.aspx>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. C. H.', is positioned below the 'Yours sincerely' text.

Police and Crime Commissioner