

May 2009



Kent

Police Authority

Pilot Inspection feedback report:
19 - 22nd January 2009

May 2009



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Introduction and approach

- 1 This report summarises the findings from a pilot Police Authority Inspection which took place at Kent Police Authority (the Authority) between 19th and 22nd January 2009.
- 2 The Policing Green Paper: *From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our Communities Together* signalled that police authority inspections, undertaken jointly by the Audit Commission and HMIC, would proceed from April 2009.
- 3 Prior to the publication of the Green Paper, the Audit Commission and HMIC were already working closely in partnership to prepare the framework for police authority inspection. Our view is that police authority inspections should probe the overall governance exercised by authorities, with particular reference to performance scrutiny, HR/people management strategies, understanding of how resources are being deployed and work with communities and partners. In particular, the inspection should evaluate how police authorities make a difference to securing the delivery of policing priorities in an area.
- 4 In recent months we have developed an outline inspection model, striving to align this with the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) approach and the Rounded Assessments of Policing performance framework. We have shared our emerging thoughts on an ongoing basis with the Association of Police Authorities (APA) and an external reference group consisting of representatives from the Home Office, APA, the Association of Police Authority Chief Executives, the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government (IDeA), National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA) and chief officers and members from the three police authorities which have offered to help us to test/develop the methodology.
- 5 At the time of the pilot inspection in Kent, our draft inspection model had four assessment areas:
 - **Promoting good governance** - how the police authority ensures that the Force has the leadership, capacity & capability needed to secure service improvement and the delivery of policing priorities;
 - **Ensuring Value For Money (VFM) and productivity** - how does the police authority promote value for money and productivity? Specifically, does it demonstrate an understanding of how scarce resources are being deployed, exercising scrutiny to ensure that these resources are focused on achieving priority objectives and managing/mitigating risk?
 - **Scrutinising Performance outcomes** - how effective the police authority is in holding chief officers to account for performance improvement and delivery of the quality outcomes that are important to local people;

- **Achieving results through community engagement, partnership and collaboration** - how effective the Police Authority is in working with communities, promoting & engaging in partnership, working collaboratively to deliver ambitions and strategic priorities?
- 6 Our pilot inspection at the Authority was designed to test the robustness of the draft assessment themes building on our learning from the Derbyshire pilot. The inspection team will apply the learning and key messages from Kent to revise and improve the methodology, with a focus on:
- Informing the refinement of inspection probes, guidance and characteristics of performance that would be used to support each of the assessment areas.
 - Streamlining the pre-site analysis and information sought from the Police Authority in advance of the inspection, as well as the scope and structure of on-site interviews and fieldwork.
 - Reviewing the appropriate size and composition of inspection teams.
- 7 We have learnt a considerable amount from the pilot and this learning will help to streamline and deliver a proportionate and focused inspection methodology. This was made possible by the high levels of commitment and cooperation shown by the Authority members and officers and all of the other interviewees and contributors. We extend our grateful thanks to all these participants in the pilot.
- 8 We agreed to provide the Authority with a summary of our findings; these are shown below, structured within each theme around strengths, work in progress and areas for improvement.

Setting the scene – Kent Police Authority

- 9 Since 2004, the capacity of the Authority’s Secretariat has been enhanced, with the recruitment of officers covering performance monitoring, media and citizen’s focus. The Authority is beginning to have more clarity on its own vision and strategic objectives. The recent production of an Authority business plan is the first stage in clarifying the purpose, vision and objectives for the organisation and how it will monitor and demonstrate how it makes a difference to delivering local policing priorities in Kent.
- 10 It is clear from the pilot that there is visible and effective leadership within the Authority, and since 2004 it has moved from a structure held at arms length from the Force to an Authority with a modern executive office, clearly mandated to scrutinise and challenge the Force. The Authority recognised in 2004, that the Force focus on the National Intelligence Model and crime detection was at the expense of community engagement and public support. The Authority, led by the current Chair, drove the cultural change within the Force through the appointment of a Chief Constable who has made community engagement a priority. This has been balanced with an appropriate focus by the Authority on Protective Services.
- 11 The Authority have continued to set an ambitious programme for the Force, with the agreed objective of seeking to become one of the top ten forces nationally and in the top two of its most similar group of forces (MSG) within the next three years. The Authority considers the ‘Step Change’ programme to be the vehicle which will best enable the Force to deliver this objective.
- 12 The Authority demonstrates an eagerness to influence and engage with partners and the wider community in the delivery of local policing and community safety priorities. There was evidence of the Authority striving to make services accessible to diverse and hard to reach groups and tackling issues of representation within the Authority and Force of the communities they serve. There have, however, been obstacles to overcome in order to achieve their goals. It was not until August 2008 the Chair became a member of the Local Strategic Partnership and, in common with other Police Authorities, there is no representation on the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB). Both these factors limit the Authority’s impact on strategic partnerships. Police Authority members are, however, represented on all of Kent’s thirteen Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and the Authority Vice-chair sits on the Kent County Council Safer Communities Board.
- 13 The Authority is widely recognised for its collaborative work with Essex Police Authority and this has been largely driven by the leadership of both Authority Chairs. The embeddedness of the joint working practices into everyday operational procedure reflects the success of the collaboration effort.

- 14 Business planning, risk management, and associated strategies are new developments for the Authority, which are yet to be fully embedded within its membership. The Authority already has, however, through the leadership of the Chair and the Chief Executive, a good level of self-awareness of these issues. They are keen to continue to develop at a fast pace and demonstrate a determination to so do. This was clearly evidenced through the work the Authority has done through self-assessment, peer reviews and benchmarking to inform their objectives/priorities.

Promoting Good Governance

How does the Police Authority ensure that the Force has the leadership, capacity & capability needed to secure service improvement and the delivery of policing priorities?

Strengths

- Kent Police Authority have set a clear and challenging vision to become one of the top ten forces nationally and top two in the MSF. There is clear 'buy-in' from the Force, reflected in a high level of awareness of the vision, an enthusiasm to achieve the agreed objectives, and in a positive relationship between the Authority and the Force command team.
- The Chair is clearly a committed and focused individual who has led the Authority through a period of cultural change, both within the Authority itself and the Force. There was clear evidence that the chair has made consistent efforts to raise the profile of the Authority both with the community, partners and the Force. The Chair recognises the need to have suitably skilled members in lead roles and has made a conscious effort to align lead member roles with individual strengths, skills, attributes and development needs.
- The Authority's strategic planning process includes a detailed strategic vision, a three year strategic plan and an annual policing plan. Their ambition is underpinned by appropriate action plans to drive improvement and their objectives are reflected in the policing plan. The 'Step Change' programme, which aspires to deliver the Authority vision and objectives, reflects the strategic planning in place within the Authority.
- Lead Members for HR, Audit and Finance, Performance and Professional Standards are very competent and skilled in their portfolio area. Training for members is regular and the Authority does not overly rely on the Force for its provision; presentations and training from outside bodies have been well attended.
- There has been improved capacity in the last 3 years, driven by the Authority, which has resulted in a stronger secretariat able to better support members in their role. This includes briefing papers prior to key meetings providing a greater analytical capability to members.
- The Chair takes a particular interest in gender issues and promotes equality and diversity in the Force. She is also the gender champion for the APA. Additionally, she has set up within the Force a gender strategy group, chaired by an Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) with six work-streams. Outcomes to date include: improved uniform for female officers; more facilities for women in custody; greater success of women officers at promotion boards; and a greater focus on retention and progression of female and BME officers.

Work in progress

- The current business plan was agreed in May 2008, prior to which the Authority used work programmes. The plan itself is adequate with a good structure that links vision, values and strategies; however, the plan is process driven and contains limited SMART targets. It is not always clear when an action will be completed and how it will ensure delivery of the overall ambition.
- The Authority operates a PDR process for members with annual reviews to identify development need. The Chair increased the accountability of members by publishing member attendance figures on the Authority website and linking remuneration with individual member training and development. This has been effective to varying degrees and the Chair finds the PDR process of limited value.
- The Authority recognises the significance of succession planning for Chief Officers and has purposely retained two temporary assistant chief constables pending the outcome of the current Strategic Command Course in order to have available a greater field of candidates.

Areas for improvement

- Links between the business plan and risk register were not clear, and only limited action plans were evident. The inspection recognises that risks as such are owned by the Police Authority, as identified in the Kent Police Authority Scheme of Delegation, with management delegated to the Authority's Officers. However, it is considered important that members should be seen to lead scrutiny of action plans or work to address identified risks. In addition, despite the plan being eight months old, there was a lack of awareness of the business plan amongst members of the Authority and the Force command team. ***[This finding was similar to that found in the Derbyshire inspection pilot, following which the Audit Commission and HMIC suggested to the Home Office that additional support should be provided to Authorities in relation to business planning and risk management.]***
- Some tension was evident between independent and elected members. There was a perception of a lack of appreciation from independent members as to the demands on elected members' diaries due to their additional political role. Similarly, independent members have a perception of skill gaps in elected members in the execution of their Authority roles.

- The Authority need to set clear expectations on the role and responsibilities of all its members. There is evidence that members need to balance both their strategic and community advocacy role. It is accepted that this is an issue which should be considered at a national level. It is vital that the Chair of the Police Authority is able effectively to hold all members to account for their performance on the Authority in a meaningful way. *[This finding was similarly found in the Derbyshire inspection pilot, following which the Audit Commission and HMIC suggested to the Home Office that all PA members should be required to participate in a robust PDR process, with clear objectives linked to their role and progress reviewed on a regular basis].*

Ensuring VFM and productivity

How does the Authority promote value for money and productivity?

Strengths

- The Authority has good arrangements to secure improvements in value for money (VFM), efficiency and productivity which can be evidenced by its approach to: Best Value Reviews, Authority initiated post implementation reviews and their scrutiny of Force Operational Support Reviews. For example, the Authority is challenging the Force to demonstrate the benefits of the £5M investment in Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR). The inspection team noted evidence of challenge to the boards; Force to demonstrate more obviously the value and outcomes of this technology.
- The collaboration with Essex Police is targeted to identify £1.6m savings in for Kent in procurement alone. Kent Police Authority and Essex Police Authority agreed in December 2008, a three year strategy aimed at maximising the successes of their collaboration and considering additional benefits to be gained.

Work in progress

- The inspection team acknowledge that while ‘Step Change’ is aspirational, it is too early to say if it is also delivering VFM in full, and whether it is achievable, affordable and sustainable. It is important that the Authority continues its regular evaluation of the Step Change benefits in relation to the outcomes and ongoing investment.

Areas for improvement

- There was evidence of a lack of understanding of threat/risk/ harm. For example, the Authority expected that the £5 million cost of policing the Climate camp (Operation Oasis) would be met by the Home Office; however, only £3 million was provided. The Authority Risk Register identifies that such major events put a strain on financial, physical and human resources and assessed this as a medium risk. The control measures refer to a report to the Home Office seeking compensation, but the risk register does not detail the likely impact of the £2 million shortfall in funding.
- Authority investments are managed by Kent County Council, and include £11.2m in Icelandic banks. It was not clear that if the Authority had more control over investment, that would it have made a different decisions about investing in Iceland. Consideration

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should be given to a review of the service level agreement with Kent County Council.

Performance scrutiny

How effective is the Police Authority in holding chief officers to account for performance improvement and delivery of the quality outcomes that are important to local people?

Strengths

- The Authority does hold the Chief Constable to account for delivery of objectives through a robust performance management framework that addresses performance issues at both Force and BCU level.
- There is evidence that the Authority is strengthening the use of data by members to monitor performance (i.e. members are briefed in advance by the relevant policy officers).
- The HR committee demonstrates a high level of skill in scrutiny and challenge. The HR lead member and deputy are experienced in the HR field and this is reflected in their ability to effectively challenge the Force. There were clear examples of effective challenge in areas such as: compliance with the Working Time Directive; PDR completion rates; retention of PCSOs, and efforts to improve the representation of diverse communities.
- The Professional Standards Committee has made an impact over the previous 12 months in raising police standards with a clear and proportionate focus. Issues raised by the Authority and being addressed by the Force include the rise in the number of complaints recorded (up 24% - the total numbers of complaints are now featured in the policing plan with a reduction target); the low number of complaints resolved locally; lack of local supervision of a complaints process which highlights officers who have three individual complaints made over a defined period; and a lack of proper recording of ethnicity in complaints. IPCC reports are regularly monitored with findings being reported to the Professional Standards Committee. An effective and systematic dip sampling process is in place, led by the chair of the Professional Standards Committee and conducted within an agreed protocol, from which lessons learnt are captured.
- The Audit and Finance committee is effective in holding the Force to account. It was identified that the Force has maintained officer numbers under-establishment; the resulting under-spend has been a financial 'comfort blanket' for a number of years. The Authority has insisted that the Force comes up to establishment and this is expected to be achieved by March 2009.
- The Performance Committee is well established and effective and is chaired by a very active and skilled member with a public service background. There is a comprehensive overview of performance

and challenge regarding progress towards targets, questions about the use of data and tactics such use of PND as appropriate.

Work in progress

- The Authority has made good progress in developing its own ability to challenge the Force effectively. However, there is evidence that there remain pockets of resistance within the Force to the scrutiny role of the Authority; an uncertainty about the mandate of the Authority; and an inclination to use 'operational independence' as a barrier to greater involvement of the Authority in specialist areas.
- The Authority Risk Management Strategy was published in November 2008 and there is now a lead member for risk with a risk management background. It is not yet, however, embedded within the Authority, and there is limited awareness within the Authority of its own strategic risks. The Authority does not make its risk register regularly available to the command team and consequently they have a limited awareness it and the impact on Force risks.
- The Authority operates an active Independent Custody Visitor scheme. However, the frequency and timing of visits are variable, for example between July – September 2008 one basic command unit (BCU) (Medway) recorded 11 visits during the period, whilst another BCU recorded only 3 (East Kent). Additionally, 60% of visits during this period were recorded within normal working hours and very few recorded on weekends when prisoner numbers are normally higher and could potentially provide a different insight for the custody visitors. The Authority should review the pattern of custody visits across the force area and consider providing stronger direction to lay visitors.

Areas for improvement

- The KPA appoints lead members to work alongside the heads of profession within the Force's protective services framework. There was some evidence to suggest that heads of profession may exploit this relationship to influence the member to 'champion their cause', potentially impacting on the ability to provide a level of scrutiny on behalf of the Authority. Enhanced awareness of key/critical issues would be beneficial as Police Authorities scrutinise operational delivery and outcomes. ***[This finding was similarly found in the Derbyshire inspection pilot. As a result, HMIC and the Audit Commission may suggest to the Home Office that it consider what additional support can be provided to Police Authorities to enhance member ability to scrutinise in specialist areas.]***

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- Individuals generally have detailed performance briefing material provided to support them in their role of scrutiny or when attending community meetings (eg. Policing and Communities Together meetings). It was noted that direct access to performance data was slightly limited. The Police Authority may wish to review this position as the availability of iQuanta to members would enhance members' understanding of performance data.

Achievements through partnership

How effectively does the PA engage and consult with the community to determine priorities, set strategic objectives and monitor outcomes?

Strengths

- There was evidence that the Authority responds effectively to the views of the community. For example, following concerns from the community, about charging for police presence at events, the Authority took the view that the public had already paid for policing within the precept for community events and further charging would not be appropriate. As a result the Authority challenged the Force position and although initially resistant the Force changed its approach.
- The Authority ensures that local policing services are accessible to diverse and hard to reach groups (eg. The Authority has designed a card for autistic people to assist them with accessing policing services). The Authority has also identified the elderly, the young, and areas of deprivation as further areas for development.
- There is consistent evidence of good collaboration with Essex Police Authority and Essex Police, a significant achievement not least because the authorities are in two different regions. The development of this collaboration was clearly driven by the Authority Chairs and built on their existing positive relationship. Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) that share deployment of specialist resources and support in order to reduce abstractions from the frontline have been used effectively to the benefit of both forces.

Work in progress

- There is clear evidence of consultation in setting the Annual Policing Plan (eg. road shows, crime surveys); however, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate how community views are reflected in the decision-making on an ongoing basis (eg. regular information flows from CDRPs' and community groups outside the annual planning process). The variety of consultation and engagement processes appear to be focussed on informing the annual plan and budget setting.
- The Authority has been a member of the Kent Partnership (LSP) since August 2008 following consistent efforts by the Authority to secure membership, in the face of initial obstacles. The Authority is not a member of the LCJB. As a result, strategic partnerships are under-developed. Membership of the LCJB has been deemed a low

priority for the Authority as the Chair considers that her role as a magistrate enables her to influence this area sufficiently at this time. However, the influence on the LCJB in her capacity as a magistrate rather than as the Chair of the Authority may be a contributing factor in the lack of awareness of some partners of the distinctive role of the Police Authority (see area for improvement below).

- The inspection team noted a strong focus on collaboration with Essex. This has generated some negative perceptions with other Authorities in the South East and Eastern Regions. However, it is clear that within Kent Police Authority there is an appreciation of potential benefits from collaboration with the South East region and these are being considered. In addition, the Chair of Kent Police Authority is now chair of the South East Region Group.

Areas for improvement

- The Authority need to deploy a coherent consultation and community engagement strategy, with the Force and local public service partners. This should clearly demonstrate how the Authority leads and influences and how it uses community views in shaping policing priorities. The current strategy, published in January 2009, more closely resembles a practitioner delivery plan. There is no reference to the Government's PREVENT strategy (which offers guidance for local authorities, police and partners working to stop the spread of violent extremism). The current strategy is process-oriented and actions are not linked to outcomes. Monitoring timescales are non-specific (eg. ongoing, to be confirmed) and actions lack prioritisation.
- A lack of clarity amongst partners is evident as to the role of the Authority itself. A number of external partners could not articulate what was the distinctive role of the Authority, typically conflating it with that of the Force, and were unclear therefore as to what added value the Authority could bring to their business. It is acknowledged that the Authority Vice-chair is a member of the KCC Cabinet and sits on the Safer and Stronger Communities Board thus providing an opportunity for the Authority to influence local partnerships in setting policing and community safety priorities within LAAs. It was unclear however, whether partners were able to distinguish in what capacity the vice-chair was acting during these meetings.
- Although each CDRP has an allocated Police Authority member attendance is 'patchy' and information is fed back inconsistently to Police Authority policy officers. The policy officer for this area is stretched over a number of CDRPs and consequently is unlikely to be able to fill these gaps.

Next steps

- 15 Our pilot at Kent Police Authority has been invaluable in helping us to shape and take forward the Police Authority Inspection methodology.
- 16 This report is not published and has been issued to provide the Authority with feedback on the key messages from the pilot inspection. It is for the Authority to agree how it wishes to take forward the summary findings contained in the report although we hope this is useful to inform any improvement planning work.
- 17 We will be using the learning from the pilot to refine and update the Police Authority's inspection methodology, working in partnership with the Home Office and the Association of Police Authorities, and drawing on the advice and assistance of the police authority inspection reference group. Following the Kent Police Authority inspection a further pilot of the inspection methodology was conducted in West Yorkshire Police Authority. During the consultation phase an additional pilot will be conducted with Staffordshire Police Authority in April 2009; this is aimed at consolidating our learning from the first three pilots and undertaking a final evaluation of the methodology.