

Police

authority

inspection

report

Lancashire

November 2009



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	3
Setting strategic direction and priorities	6
Performance scrutiny	10
Engaging with communities	13
Ensuring VFM and productivity	15
Next steps	18
Appendix 1 – Context	19
Appendix 2 – Methodology	21

Executive summary

- 1 The Lancashire Police Authority (the Authority) is effective in its scrutiny and oversight of the Lancashire Constabulary (the Constabulary) and holds the Constabulary to account for its performance. The Authority has a robust and confident approach to appointing senior officers and it plays an appropriate leading role in the key strategic decisions which influence policing in the County. Active and often innovative public consultation helps it to scrutinise the impact of these decisions on local people. This has helped it to influence the balance between different demands upon policing at national, regional and local levels and to set budgets to support the Authority's priorities. The Constabulary is nationally recognised for its effective approach to neighbourhood policing and this reflects the influence and leadership of the Police Authority.
- 2 The Authority understands community interests and it makes sure that they are properly reflected in local policing. Lancashire is home to diverse communities. The Authority has a range of effective techniques for understanding diverse community opinions, including conventional approaches such as community meetings and opinion surveys and innovative techniques involving social networking sites, blogs and branded campaigns. This has helped it to understand, for example, young people's perspectives on policing. It provides good feedback on its consultations to help people understand the background to policing decisions.
- 3 The Authority has a diverse membership that includes representatives of key minority communities, particularly the Asian heritage community. This gives it influence which has helped it, for example, to tackle negative publicity surrounding high profile anti-terrorist operations. Authority members actively scrutinise local Constabulary performance review meetings, which builds their understanding of local communities and local policing issues.
- 4 The Authority has driven improvements in the Constabulary's approach to diversity. It has also been influential in supporting diversity groups within the Constabulary. Over the last three years the Constabulary has been able to demonstrate that the recruitment of black and minority ethnic (BME) officers reflects the composition of the economically active population of Lancashire. There are also processes for improved retention and progression for other under represented groups of staff. The Authority scrutinises outcomes to identify whether policing activity has a differential or disproportionate impact on minority communities.
- 5 The Authority has sound policies and procedures and a well thought out committee structure that provides clear decision-making. Members have good access to training and they are supported by sound advice and information from Authority staff and from the Constabulary. It works closely with the Constabulary to produce its annual policing plan and set the budget, informed by a structured assessment of risks. The Authority has agreed a comprehensive suite of challenging targets for the Constabulary and established other performance indicators.

- 6 The Authority holds the Constabulary to account for both performance and improvement planning. Better policing outcomes are being delivered as a result. It has developed an independent performance review process, which focuses effectively on critical performance areas. It uses this to improve performance, for example on call handling times and road safety. It monitors complaints effectively and promotes high standards of behaviour within the Constabulary and among its own membership.
- 7 These processes have helped the Authority to maintain a focus on value for money. It uses its planning process to ensure that expenditure follows priorities, addresses risks and meets community needs. It challenges the Constabulary to demonstrate that it is providing value for money and it has overseen a programme of service reviews to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The Authority has been influential in supporting the Constabulary to provide high standards of policing at costs which compare with those of similar police forces.
- 8 There are two key areas for development, as follows.
 - Firstly, the Authority needs to develop a clear plan, with the Constabulary, to determine the shape of policing in Lancashire in the longer term. Financial savings will become pressing over the next three years. The Authority needs to show how efficiencies, workforce modernisation, collaborative working and changes in service standards can contribute to a sustainable pattern of policing. This will require a clear understanding of costs compared to other forces. It is now starting to make this assessment, but this is still at an early stage.
 - Secondly, the Authority is refining its approach to scrutiny of terrorism, serious crime and other major challenges to public safety (protective services) and a small team of members has been vetted to give them access to sensitive performance information. These are important steps towards effective scrutiny of protective services, but the Authority still needs to establish a clear view of intended outcomes, so that it can be sure that it is getting a good return for its investment in this area.
- 9 There are other areas for improvement. For the most part, they are already recognised by the Authority and it has started to take action to address them. They are as follows.
 - The Authority has scrutinised the Constabulary's assessment of risks and it is now establishing its own risk management. However, these arrangements are new and still need to be integrated into the day-to-day operations of the Authority.
 - The Authority's engagement strategy provides only a general rationale for its active and innovative community consultation programme. It does not show how the programme meets the Authority's objectives and represents value for money.
 - The Authority is not engaging fully with some of its higher risk crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs). A new Partnership Officer is being recruited to help fill this gap.
 - Regional collaboration between forces is becoming increasingly significant in delivering robust and cost effective services. The new Joint Committee is an important step forward, and the Authority needs to extend its scrutiny to cover this area.

Executive summary

10 The Authority is in a strong position to deal with these challenges. It has chosen its independent members wisely to consolidate the skills of its elected members and it has invested in its own capacity. The Chief Executive provides effective support with her executive team. This has helped the Authority to build a strong relationship with the Constabulary and establish effective planning, management and governance processes. It has recruited a high calibre chief officer management team. These are sound foundations for continued improvement.

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?	3
How effective is the police authority in scrutinising and ensuring the force delivers the priority services that matter to local people?	3
How well does the police authority achieve results through community engagement and partnerships to deliver its ambitions and strategic priorities?	4
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	3

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?

- 11 The Police Authority is performing well in this area. It has a strong and constructive working relationship with the Constabulary and it is well represented when the Constabulary meets to make decisions. This has enabled it to provide leadership on policing strategy and to work with the Constabulary to develop clear plans which reflect the Authority's vision. It also helps the Authority give close scrutiny to the Constabulary's decisions. The Authority has sound decision making processes to underpin this work, backed up by a good understanding of national, regional and local issues. It is starting to use its own risk assessment to inform its decisions. The Authority has established an effective recruitment process, based on a clear view of the type of candidate it is seeking to advance the policing plan and complement the chief officer management team. It has built a robust selection process around this. This has helped it build a strong chief officer management team. It has sound human resource (HR) practices that it uses to build capacity both in the Constabulary and also within the Authority. It leads the way on diversity issues with the Constabulary, helped by strong representation from minority communities among its own members. Members are well trained and supported in their roles and the Authority has established high professional standards within the Constabulary and its own membership. The main challenge for the Authority is to build on its policing plan and medium term financial plan to develop a three to five year view of policing in Lancashire and the resources necessary to support it. It also needs to consolidate its own risk management, alongside the more mature arrangements of the Constabulary.

Strengths

- 12** The Authority provides strong leadership on policing strategy and it uses this effectively to influence Constabulary priorities and to establish challenging targets for local policing. It has a clear vision, which embraces effective community engagement and neighbourhood policing. It is represented at all key decision making forums within the Constabulary, but particularly the 'extended planning group' which meets monthly to consider priorities and develop the annual policing plan. This includes senior staff from the Constabulary and Authority members and the Authority has developed an effective collaborative approach to planning and budgeting. The Authority has used these meetings to set stretching targets for services in most areas in the Policing Plan. For example, the Authority has insisted on maintaining targets for contact with the public during major changes in communication centre systems. Recent assessments of the Constabulary by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) show that it is high performing, exceeding the national standard in neighbourhood policing and developing citizen focus. This reflects the influence of the Authority in appointing Chief Officers committed to neighbourhood policing, approving the Policing Plan which gives priority to neighbourhood policing measures, setting targets for neighbourhood policing and monitoring these. The proposed front line policing measure provides an example of a target designed to safeguard resources for neighbourhood policing.
- 13** The Authority has a good understanding of the range of national, regional and local issues that influence local policing and it uses this to drive planning and performance management. It has a well-established business planning process, which involves all Authority members. This is informed by the Constabulary's Strategic Assessment and the Authority's understanding of local community priorities. These feed into the 'Blueprint' process to set Constabulary priorities and budgets. As a result, the policing plan reflects a sensible balance of national regional and local priorities. For example, the Authority has recognised a funding gap in protective services and prioritised resources to tackle this. It has managed to increase the overall resources available for policing in Lancashire, demonstrating leadership and effective community engagement to achieve this strategic objective. Regional collaboration is well articulated in the Policing Plan. The Authority is addressing national and regional priorities and has managed to maintain investment in its local policing agenda.
- 14** The Authority has established a thorough recruitment process for chief officers and it has a good track record of appointing high quality chief officers. The process for appointing the Assistant Chief Constable in 2008 and the current recruitment of the Deputy Chief Constable show that the Authority has a clear picture of the type of officer that it wants to deliver its vision for local policing and to consolidate skills in the senior management team. The Authority has taken account of its changing needs and prepared the job specification to reflect this. It has a clear process for selection and Authority members are closely involved at every stage in the process. The Authority is also consulted by the Constabulary on non-statutory senior appointments, for example the Director of Finance. This shows that the Constabulary recognises the wider importance of collaborative working with the Authority.

- 15** The Authority manages human resources effectively to ensure that the Constabulary is well led. Alongside HMIC, the Authority is an active participant in the performance development review (PDR) process with chief Constabulary officers. It has pressed for changes in chief officers' objectives to reflect its own priorities, for example on its efficiency agenda. This drives the performance of individual chief officers. The Police Authority oversees the production of the costed human resource and training plans and they are reviewed by the Authority on a regular basis. Diversity issues feature strongly in these reviews and the Authority challenges on progress. For example, the Human Resources Committee has tracked the recruitment of black and minority ethnic (BME) staff and it has recently asked for regular reports on the progression of women in the Constabulary. This has helped to ensure that recruitment reflects the make up of local communities and that the Constabulary management team is becoming more diverse. There is now a better representation of women and a slow improvement in the progression of staff from minority communities.
- 16** The Police Authority approach to equality and diversity has set an example for the Constabulary. The Authority has selected independent members to secure a diverse membership with a good range of skills and it has liaised closely with local councils over their representation on the Police Authority. It has set targets for BME recruitment to the Constabulary and it has good monitoring information, for example on policing outcomes and satisfaction among BME communities. This is set out in an annual Confidence and Equality Monitoring Report. The Authority has been actively involved in establishing support groups for minority staff and a member of the Authority leads on the subject of equality and diversity for the Association of Police Authorities (APA).
- 17** The Authority responds effectively to the views of external bodies. For example, members play an active role on divisional Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) and it is clear that that the views of these groups are well respected by the Authority and the Constabulary. The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme (ICVS) reports to the Professional Standards Committee and improvements take place as a result of its reports. For example, custody visitors have had concerns about the standards of accommodation at the Blackpool custody suite. Pressure for refurbishment from the ICVS though the Authority's Professional Standards Committee has produced the necessary investment to improve standards. This shows that the Authority is making the Constabulary more responsive to the views of independent outside bodies.

Setting strategic direction and priorities

- 18** The Authority has high standards of governance and has achieved consistently high Police Use of Resources (PURE) scores. This shows that the Authority and the Force have good financial management, performance management and use of other resources and that the Authority is discharging its governance responsibilities effectively. The recent Annual Governance Statement shows that the Authority has worked hard to consolidate its arrangements and achieve an even higher standard of governance. Committee structures have been revised in the last year and are subject to ongoing review. Terms of reference are comprehensive and clear. The training programme is well documented for both new and established members. Training needs evolve from an annual review for each member with the Chair and Chief Executive. The quality of the Authority's approach is recognised by the recent award of the North West Employers Organisation Member Development Charter. A full PDR scheme has been introduced for Authority staff and it is linked to a comprehensive training plan for each employee. The Authority is thus committed to a well resourced and developed staff group that delivers high quality support.
- 19** The Authority promotes high standards of member behaviour and it has an effective structure to promote governance. The Monitoring Officer ensures that the Authority is kept up to date, for example incorporating recent changes to the handling of standards for members. The Audit Committee maintains an overview of standards and this has a lay Chair, who is entirely independent of the Authority. Two current complaints against the Authority are testing its new complaints procedures and the Authority is making sure that it learns any lessons from this. The Professional Standards Committee actively challenges the Constabulary and keeps its approach under review. It has recently put more robust procedures in place to oversee Professional Standards. These include a revised protocol for choosing a range of cases to sample and a checklist for reviewing the handling of complaints. The Committee reviews civil claims as well as complaints and misconduct and there is a systematic 'lessons learnt' review in place. The Authority liaises directly with the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) to help it maintain proper oversight of complaints.

Areas for improvement

- 20** The main challenge for the Authority is to build on its policing plan and medium term financial forecast to develop a three to five year view of policing in a very challenging financial climate. This issue is explored later in the report in the section on Ensuring VFM and Productivity at paragraphs 45 to 47.
- 21** Risk management is in place, but it is still developing within the Authority. The business risk assessment process has been based upon on a joint assessment of risks with the Constabulary and scrutiny of the Constabulary risk matrix. The Authority adopted a separate risk register in June 2009. This is not yet embedded in its practice, or mature as a process. For example, a key risk for the Authority is the need for the Constabulary to make savings to meet anticipated resource shortfalls in the medium term. The risk register does not identify mitigation measures if the Constabulary is slow to meet this challenge. This means that there are important risks which are not formally considered and addressed.

Performance scrutiny

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

- 22** The Authority is performing well in this area. Lancashire is a high-performing force, and has been so for almost a decade. The Authority continues to hold the Chief Constable and the Constabulary to account and has built a culture that encourages challenge. Members are well trained and supported in this role. The Authority is helping to drive improvement by setting challenging targets and also through active scrutiny at county and local level. The Authority has given a high profile to the Policing Pledge and it is now working to improve its scrutiny of protective services and regional policing arrangements.

Strengths

- 23** The Authority holds the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of policing to the diverse communities of Lancashire. It has worked with the Constabulary to establish a culture that encourages challenge. The Constabulary characterises the Authority as a critical friend, it responds to challenge and helps provide good information to the Authority to facilitate this. There are many examples of effective challenge. The Authority challenges the Constabulary on a range of operational outcomes, particularly those which are of special concern to local communities. These include the frequency of stop and search, anti-social behaviour and burglary. It scrutinises public perception and satisfaction, examining differences between communities and Constabulary Divisions. It also challenges on business strategy, for example workforce planning. It presses the Constabulary on the need to deliver efficiencies and on collaboration arrangements. The Authority has held the Constabulary to account over call handling times, leading to a reallocation of resources and improved performance. It has set challenging performance indicators and targets across a wide range of policing activities. For example, it has set stretched targets for serious road accidents and the Constabulary has responded, leading to reductions in casualties. The Authority keeps targets under review and it continues to develop new targets, though this is still at an early stage in protective services.
- 24** Members understand their performance management role and they are well supported by the Authority officers to deliver it. The Authority provides Member Role Statements, which set out an individual member's role, responsibilities and expectations of conduct. They also specify the support to be provided by the Chief Executive and her team. Members make effective use of their own skills, experience and knowledge and they are supported through the Authority's comprehensive member performance development process. This includes thorough appraisal and training. All members have training in the use of performance information to provide challenge and drive improvement.

Performance scrutiny

- 25** The Authority has effective structures in place to help it scrutinise the performance of the Constabulary and drive improvement. The Annual Scrutiny Plan determines the work programme of the Authority by prioritising issues for consideration by its committees. It also provides a comprehensive log of scrutiny issues and ensures that improvement points are tracked. A Scrutiny Bulletin reports against all other objectives in the Local Policing Plan. The Improvement and Scrutiny Working Group and Planning and Performance Review Committee receive very clear performance information, particularly through the Quarterly Performance Reviews, which focus on targets agreed between Constabulary and Authority. This is augmented with good advice from Authority officers. Members make effective use of the working groups to allow more detailed scrutiny ahead of consideration by the main standing committees. The standing committees, with senior officers of the Constabulary, provide a good forum for constructive challenge and explanation.
- 26** Members also attend and take an active part in local Constabulary performance review meetings. This is good practice. It has enabled the Authority to identify and understand critical local performance issues and to maintain its challenge to secure improvement. It has, for example, helped it to understand and support a reallocation of resources to manage a spate of gun crime in Preston.
- 27** The Local Policing Plan contains a range of performance indicators and challenging targets for 2009/10. These include statutory performance indicators alongside local indicators agreed with the Constabulary through the planning process. The Authority is able to demonstrate effective links between its community engagement activities, planning process and the setting of individual targets. It can show that target setting has helped the Authority and the Constabulary to improve performance. For example, it has set challenging year-on-year road safety targets in response to community priorities.
- 28** The Authority has given a high profile to the Policing Pledge and recent inspections show that the Constabulary is performing very well in this area. Members have a good understanding of the Pledge through workshops and seminars. It has agreed a reality testing programme, involving enquiries to test performance against the Pledge. These are carried out by the Constabulary and the results are scrutinised by the Authority. In September 2009, it assigned responsibility for oversight of the Pledge to its Professional Standards and Citizen Focus Committee. In this way it has tried to prevent the Pledge commitments being lost in the Authority's wider scrutiny of performance information at the Planning and Performance Review Committee. It is too early to say how these arrangements will work, but the Authority is in a good position to support the Constabulary in its response to the Pledge.

29 The Authority is preparing to improve its scrutiny of protective services. The Authority has considered models of accountability operating elsewhere and intends to mainstream protective services within its formal committee structures. This will give greater public access to the governance and accountability work of the Authority in this critical area of policing. A Protective Services Panel is in place to provide a basis for scrutiny. The Authority has an appropriate vetting policy to give members access to performance information. All members and Authority staff are vetted and a number are vetted to an enhanced level to enable them to handle more sensitive information in connection with protective services. This is helping the Authority and the Constabulary to have a constructive dialogue on protective services.

Areas for improvement

- 30** The next step is for the Authority is to consolidate its new arrangements for scrutiny of protective services. Although the Authority has invested substantially in protective services to reflect the Constabulary Strategic Assessment, it has not yet established clear expectations of the improved outcomes it expects. The Policing Plan identifies some targets, but performance indicators are not well developed. This means that scrutiny of performance and value for money in protective services is less effective than in other parts of the service.
- 31** Scrutiny of regional policing arrangements is also under developed. A formal governance structure is now in place through the North West Regional Collaboration Joint Committee, but this is recent and members do not yet have a clear understanding of its role and its relevance to the work of the Authority. The Authority has plans to address this weakness, but they are not yet in place.

Engaging with communities

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

- 32** The Authority performs excellently in this area. It has a sustained and innovative approach to engagement, which gives it a very good understanding of local needs and aspirations for the police service. It has good information on local communities and local police performance. It uses the results to inform planning and performance management and it regularly feeds its findings back to local people. Its knowledge of opinions in minority communities has helped it to provide reassurance when high profile police operations have threatened to increase community tensions. The main challenge for the Authority is to develop a more strategic approach to engagement to help it evaluate its overall effectiveness. It also needs to build its capacity so that it can provide consistently strong support as responsible authority for local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs).

Strengths

- 33** The Authority has developed an innovative and sustained programme of engagement, research and consultation which helps it understand the needs of Lancashire's diverse communities. Engagement is planned jointly with the Constabulary, with some activities commissioned jointly. The programme is clearly set out in the Authority's Business Plan. The Authority uses a small engagement team very effectively to support members in their engagement role. The Authority carries out extensive consultation on its own and in conjunction with the Constabulary. The Investors in Policing campaign is an innovative approach to engagement, showing the public that they are an investor with the ability to shape policing priorities. The branding and marketing of this initiative, using a golden coin icon, shows good communication and supports effective engagement. The Authority has also been instrumental in developing a website which engages with young people and challenges stereotypical views of them. Called 'Typecast', it uses established social networking sites used by young people to enable them to give their views. It is an ambitious project, initiated by the Authority and the response shows that it has captured the imagination of the target audience and associated partnership groups. These engagement techniques are helping the Authority to understand the views of groups that are normally harder to reach. This is best practice.
- 34** The Authority provides active, regular and transparent feedback to highlight the results and associated outcomes of consultation. It is highly committed to an open dialogue with its communities and this is demonstrated by the extensive and sustained way it feeds back to the community on its engagement. It has made feedback accessible in a variety of formats such as its recently redesigned website, newsletters and bespoke reports from specific consultative events. The results from this are clearly set out in the Authority's 2009/10 Business Plan. Effective feedback is helping the Authority to build its relationship with its communities.

- 35** The Authority has ensured that the outcomes of community consultation and engagement are reflected in policing and business plans. For example, feedback to the Authority identified the need for positive engagement with young people and this is reflected in its own Business Plan and the Local Policing Plan. The Typecast Project has explored young people's perceptions of policing and public perceptions of young people and it has resulted in a range of actions to raise the profile of these issues within the Constabulary.
- 36** The Authority engages effectively across the diverse communities of Lancashire to improve the effectiveness of local policing. It consults extensively through regular focus groups. There is also strong input from the diverse membership of the Authority, which has helped to provide a comprehensive understanding of local communities. Members show a good understanding of local policing issues through meetings at local level and through work in CDRPs. This has allowed the Authority and the Constabulary to plan and respond sensitively to local situations. This was demonstrated following a high profile anti-terrorist operation where the Authority worked hard with the Constabulary to provide reassurance to the community. The Authority has also promoted a public information programme to help people deal with the crime and safety risks associated with the annual Hajj pilgrimage. Police Authority members have been closely involved in designing the programme and delivering its messages. The Authority's engagement with its minority communities is sustained and it has improved community confidence in the Authority and Constabulary.
- 37** The Authority has good information on its local communities from a range of social and demographic data, backed up by surveys and feedback from focus groups. It uses performance data broken down by locality, gender and ethnicity to understand the impact of policing within minority communities. For example, the Authority's annual Equalities and Confidence Report analyses issues such as recruitment, differential offending and arrest patterns and community satisfaction as a way of refining its approach to reflect community needs and concerns. This has helped it to be sure that policing is fair and equitable.
- 38** The Authority has a strong partnership ethos. This has helped it to gain influence at a community level. For example, it works closely with Blackpool Council and CDRP to improve joint working between public and voluntary sector organisations and to deliver integrated neighbourhood services to deprived parts of the town. At a strategic level, it has taken a leading role in the Safer Lancashire Board to bring public bodies together to address community safety priorities in the County. This improves cooperation on areas such as youth offending, domestic violence and road safety.

Areas for improvement

- 39** The Authority should further develop its strategic approach to engagement to ensure that it is both fully comprehensive and effective, and represents the best use of its resources. The Engagement Strategy provides only a general rationale for the programme and does not prioritise engagement activity. The Authority's Business Plan 2009/10 sets out the engagement programme, including performance measures for each proposal, but it does not assess potential gaps in provision.

Ensuring 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?

- 40** The Authority's performance in this area is satisfactory. It has established a strong planning process, which helps to ensure that expenditure follows priorities, addresses risks and meets community needs. The Authority has moved resources to address priorities. It challenges the Constabulary to demonstrate that it is providing value for money and it has overseen a programme of service reviews to improve efficiency and effectiveness. It is now starting a reassessment to see how it can address policing challenges and potential resource reductions over the next few years. This requires fundamental decisions about what type of police service it needs and can afford. This work is in hand but it is not yet very advanced.

Strengths

- 41** The Authority has provided strong support to the Constabulary in its aim to make Lancashire a safer place - recognising gaps, risks and threats and maximising its resources. It has established a sound planning process with the Constabulary and it builds up its Annual Policing Plan to establish priorities based on a thorough assessment of risks and threats and local community priorities. It has used this process to allocate funds to protective services and maintain support for an excellent neighbourhood policing service. In recent years, this has been achieved through higher-than-average precept increases. This policy has been tested through a consultation with residents which showed that they were prepared to pay more to avoid a reduction in neighbourhood police services. The Authority has ensured that protecting vulnerable people, for example Asian women in forced marriages, is given consideration alongside organised crime. This approach ensures that both national and local priorities are considered when allocating resources. Overall, the Constabulary delivers very good services at costs which compare with similar forces.
- 42** The Authority has recognised the financial challenges in the medium term and it has started to work with the Constabulary to make the changes to accommodate these. It has agreed a five-year financial forecast with the Constabulary and it is starting to consider how it can plan in a more challenging economic climate. In the meantime, the Authority has challenged the Constabulary on proposed expenditure growth and this has helped it to curb budget pressures.

- 43** The Authority is pressing the Constabulary to demonstrate it is providing value for money. It has pushed for efficiency gains through its Efficiency and Productivity Strategy and Efficiency Plan and the Constabulary delivered 3.5 per cent savings in 2008/09. The Authority has set 10.4 per cent savings targets for the three years to March 2011, exceeding the three-year target of 9.3 per cent set nationally. The Authority is encouraging the Constabulary to collect information about how it uses its resources, for example from activity analysis and vehicle and person location technology. It is working with the Constabulary to develop a 'frontline' policing measure to show it how staff resources are being applied, particularly to customer focused neighbourhood policing. It has promoted and scrutinised Organisational Support Reviews as part of the Sustaining Excellence Programme. These are looking incrementally across services to increase efficiency and effectiveness and use comparison with other forces to identify good practice and benchmark costs within services. The Authority has ensured that savings from these reviews are spent on budget priorities. The Authority promotes the use of new technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness. These measures help to give the Authority assurance that resources are being used effectively and help it to plan for the future.
- 44** The Authority is challenging the Constabulary on workforce change to achieve efficiency and effectiveness. It recognises that efficiency savings alone are not sufficient to bridge the potential funding gap in coming years. The Authority is working with the Constabulary to get an understanding on the appropriate balance between warranted police officers and civilian staff. For example, it has agreed areas where trained civilian staff can be used more cost effectively in place of warranted officers and where Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) can add capacity. Workforce modernisation pilots have been concluded and evaluation reports prepared. Workforce modernisation will take time to develop and the Authority is establishing a Board to oversee its development. This aims to help it ensure that workforce change can deliver savings on the scale required in future years. This is an appropriate first step, though it is too early to say how effective it will be.

Areas for improvement

- 45** The next step for the Authority is to agree a longer term strategy with the Constabulary to match its approach to policing with anticipated falling resources. Some difficult decisions still need to be made soon on workforce mix and the balance between different types of policing. Lancashire has a high proportion of warranted officers on its staff and this may not be sustainable. The Authority and Constabulary need to agree future staffing plans and understand what efficiencies these can produce.
- 46** Financial benchmarking is limited. There has been some cost comparison at an operational level through individual service reviews and through activity analysis, but the Authority does not have a strategic overview of value for money. Detailed value for money profiles will soon be made available from HMIC and these may help the Authority assure itself that the Constabulary is cost-effective across all service areas and that efficiency targets are achievable.

Ensuring VFM and productivity

47 The Authority does not yet have a clear view of the contribution that regional collaboration can make to overall efficiencies in the medium term. The Authority has had a pragmatic approach to collaboration between forces and it has, or is developing collaboration, in eight areas. These include cross border crime, motorway policing and counter terrorism. It does not, however, have a strategic approach, built upon a clear understanding of the potential benefits of collaboration and the way that this can help the Authority meet the financial and policing challenges that it has identified. Without this, the Authority cannot be sure that the operational and financial opportunities of collaboration are being effectively exploited. The new Regional Joint Committee provides an opportunity for members to develop a more structured approach to collaboration.

Next steps

- 48** We expect Lancashire Police Authority to address the areas for improvement identified in this report and secure targeted and continuous improvement. In doing so, the Police 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.
- 49** We will publish an interim national report by the end of February 2010 drawing on the findings from the first ten inspections. It will identify 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

The Region

- 1 Lancashire is in the north west of England. It is bounded by Merseyside and Greater Manchester to the south, Cumbria to the north and the Yorkshire Pennine area to the east. It covers about 3,000 square kilometres and has 200km of coast. With a population of around 1.5 million, it incorporates communities with a wide variety of social, economic and cultural characteristics. Twenty per cent of Lancashire's population live in rural communities. The Police Authority area covers two unitary boroughs, Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen. The major population centres in the county area are the cities of Lancaster and Preston with smaller towns at Burnley, Chorley, Morecambe, Nelson and Colne. The transportation network includes over 400km of motorway, the west coast main railway line, seaports at Heysham and Fleetwood and a growing regional airport at Blackpool.
- 2 There are large variations in prosperity in Lancashire. Although parts of the county are affluent, 6 of the 14 local authorities in the Police Authority area are in the 50 most deprived in the country.¹ There are significant minority ethnic communities, mainly in the older industrial areas in the east of the County and in Preston. They make up nearly 7 per cent of the population across Lancashire, rising to 27 per cent in Blackburn with Darwen. In recent years a growing number of Eastern European migrants have settled in the area. There are two University cities, Lancaster and Preston and the student population is large and growing. The proportion of older people in the population is rising.
- 3 Lancashire presents particular policing challenges. The diversity of the county requires a varied and sensitive approach. Asian Muslim communities sit alongside older working class communities in east Lancashire. Rural communities present different challenges to urban ones. Blackpool, as a major resort, has particular problems of crime and anti-social behaviour. It is also home to a large gay community. East Lancashire is a focus for anti-terrorism activity and Preston has experienced a spate of gun crime. The County is vulnerable to mobile criminals, using the County's extensive motorway network, and also to cross border crime, particularly from Merseyside and Greater Manchester.

The Police Authority

- 4 Lancashire Police Authority is one of 43 Police Authorities in England and Wales. It is responsible for securing an efficient and effective police force for Lancashire and holding the Chief Constable to account. The Authority supports the Lancashire Constabulary in its ambition to 'consistently be the best police force in the country'. It has 17 members, including 9 councillors nominated by local councils and 8 independent members, one of whom is a lay justice. The Authority is chaired by the former leader of Blackburn with Darwen Council. Members are served by 14 staff led by the Chief Executive.

¹ Department Of Communities and Local Government Index of Deprivation 2007

- 5 The core values of the Authority are as follows.
- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.
 - Focusing on the purpose of the Authority, the outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.
 - Having clear responsibilities and arrangements for accountability.
 - Good conduct and behaviour.
 - Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and risk management.
 - Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective.
- 6 The Authority has a clear vision set out in the Lancashire Local Policing Plan 2009-2012. This sets out policing policy and it is agreed annually by the Authority with the Constabulary. Priorities are neighbourhood policing; quality; diversity and protecting people. The plan emphasises the importance of partnerships in delivering improving services. These include the Lancashire Strategic Partnership, the Lancashire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and the 14 local CDRPs. There is also a new North West Regional Collaboration Joint Committee, overseeing a strategic regional partnership to develop collaborative policing. The Authority was closely involved in the abortive merger plans with the Cumbria Constabulary and it has carried this experience forward to build collaborative arrangements with other forces. These include a joint procurement of forensic services and collaborative arrangement for motorway policing. The Local Area Agreements, with public sector partners, set some stretching crime and disorder targets.
- 7 The Constabulary is a consistent high performer. In 2008/09, it was the only police force in England and Wales to be assessed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary as 'exceeding the standard' in two areas of particular importance to the public: neighbourhood policing and developing citizen focus. It is regularly at the top of its peer grouping for overall crime levels and rate of detection and also for performance against the national 'single confidence' target. It deals with about 2,000 incidents per day. It is a large employer with over 6,000 staff made up of about 3,700 police officers and 2,500 police staff and over 1,000 Special Constables and community volunteers.
- 8 The Authority has maintained a particular focus on neighbourhood policing as a way of addressing its priorities and reassuring local communities. It has worked to respond to the national funding gap in protective services by increasing the police council tax precept above the capping limit. It now faces a longer term challenge to align police expenditure to anticipated resource shortfalls in the medium term, while responding to national initiatives, such as the Policing Pledge.

Appendix 2 – Methodology

- 1 This report summarises the joint Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary findings from the inspection of Lancashire Police Authority which took place in September 2009.
- 2 In July 2009, the Audit Commission and HMIC published the Police Authority Inspection framework.
- 3 The inspection framework comprises four assessment areas, as follows.
 - **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	
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

- 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 team's 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.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic



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
Allington Towers
19 Allington Street
London
SW1E 5EB

Telephone: **020 7035 5713**
Fax: 020 7035 5184

www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic