

Police

authority

inspection

report

Merseyside Police Authority

June 2010



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Executive summary

- 1 Overall, Merseyside Police Authority (the Authority) is performing adequately. The Authority provides clear independent leadership to Merseyside Police (the Force) and this supports an increasing emphasis on improving public confidence and neighbourhood policing. Priorities reflect the views of local people, with strengths in the way the Authority listens to all communities including those from vulnerable groups. But key plans lack targets and miss opportunities to show how engagement influences decisions. Relationships with the Force are strong, with the Authority striking a good balance between support and challenge. This allows it to add value, contributing to the improving performance of the Force, notably helping to bolster front-line policing, reduce crime, improve public confidence and plan for longer term challenges.
- 2 The Chair of the Authority is strong and committed and uses his influence well to set ambitious priorities and ensure the Force is well led. The Authority ensured that it appointed a new Chief Constable with the skills to deliver its vision and a change in culture. Central to this is delivery of the Authority's 'sacrosanct' areas – which are neighbourhood policing, total professionalism and total policing, partnership working and the estate strategy. The Authority values its independence from the Force, but has more to do to build its capacity in this area – including further skilling up its Executive Office to help tackle future spending priorities and developing a separate identity with partners and the media.
- 3 However scrutiny of key priority services is inconsistent. Authority members have a good understanding of the Policing Pledge, a national set of promises to the public which every force has signed up to, and what drives public confidence and they hold Chief Officers to account to add value in many areas. But there are weaknesses in committee arrangements and some members' skills and contributions. This reduces the Authority's ability to probe and support the Force across all functional areas now and, more significantly if unaddressed, in the future. At present challenge is insufficient in important areas such as the estate strategy, workforce modernisation, partnership working and protective services (which covers complex areas of policing such as terrorism, serious crime and other major challenges to public safety). No members are vetted to receive sensitive information about protective services and this is surprising given Merseyside's comparably high levels of serious and organised crime.
- 4 The Authority is not sufficiently driving the Force or challenging it around value for money and efficiency. It is not doing enough to build risk and value for money into the work of committees. It needs to respond quickly to the changing financial challenges, ensuring members with the right skills are in place and providing options for the future. This includes collaboration and joint working. This is an important weakness as the Authority will face tough choices and will need to decide future priorities as funding tightens.

Executive summary

- 5 Community engagement is a strength. Strong officer support works alongside a genuine enthusiasm from members to listen and respond to the views of local people. This approach helps the Authority to build a strong profile in communities and develop good links with vulnerable groups. The Authority is willing to innovate to reach out to communities and deliver its priorities. The approach is yielding success, helping to set priorities communities want, but also building, reassuring and restoring community confidence following some high-profile incidents.
- 6 The Authority broadly works well with partners, but it is not doing enough to improve its strategic influence on key partnerships. It relies heavily on the local discretion of members rather than a systematic approach and this means it is missing opportunities to work with others to achieve its priorities. There are good links with partnerships, such as community safety partnerships (CSPs) and this allows the Authority to influence local policing priorities. But the Authority has not adequately assessed its strategic influence on key partnerships by examining the costs, benefits and impact of its involvement. The Authority strikes a good balance between local, regional and national priorities, meaning it gives sufficient weight to issues like public confidence and local priorities of gun crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 7 There is a good track record of improving efficiency, with the Authority consistently meeting its own targets. It redesigns services to improve performance and shift resources to high priority areas. The Authority responds quickly if necessary, supporting the Force to redeploy officers from elsewhere to support community concerns or major incidents. There is close alignment between financial reality and performance targets, with stretching goals set on the back of extra funding.

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?	3
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 outcomes on behalf of the public?

- 8 The Police Authority is performing adequately in this area. It is aware of the uncertain financial future and difficult decisions ahead and is looking at ways to deliver efficiencies without cutting front-line services. However, the Authority is not doing enough to lead the Force in this area. The Authority will need to make tough choices about financial goals and whether ambitions remain realistic – at present it is not adequately geared up to do this, as plans, risks and impact on performance are not clear.
- 9 The Authority provides clear leadership and listens to local communities to set priorities and targets. This supports an increasing emphasis on improving public confidence and neighbourhood policing. It has a mature and supportive relationship with Merseyside Police, but is willing to challenge and act independently. This approach pays dividends, helping to increase front-line policing, reduce crime and plan for longer term challenges, such as improving public confidence.
- 10 There is an effective member support and training programme, enhancing capability in areas such as community engagement. This helps the Authority to understand vulnerable groups and gives it a high profile in local communities. The Authority uses its influence well, notably in appointing the new Chief Constable with an emphasis on the appointee having the experience and skills to deliver its vision. The Authority has the capacity and skills to act independently from the Force. Governance structures are satisfactory, with a robust joint risk management strategy which identifies distinct Force and Police Authority risks. But there are weaknesses, meaning there is inconsistent challenge in areas such as workforce modernisation.
- 11 Although the Authority has a good understanding of its local communities it could do more to show how it connects with them. It is not providing feedback on how extensive community engagement informs priorities. It is also not providing the public with clearly defined outcomes and targets, making it difficult for local people to judge success.

Setting strategic direction and priorities

Strengths

- 12** Strong, consistent and independent leadership of the Authority has helped to support and improve the Force. The leadership by the Chairman is clear and visible. This is helping to set the direction for policing in Merseyside and ensure the seven priorities identified in the 2009 Policing Plan reflect local needs. This is typified by the priority to deliver neighbourhood policing which responds to long-standing community concerns about anti-social behaviour and low-level crime. The Authority provides clear leadership to support the Force's future direction – including an evolution from the 2006 'Total Policing' strategy to a new policing style. This includes an increasing focus on raising public confidence, preserving police officer numbers and delivering an estate strategy to replace often run-down police stations. Clear long-standing ambitions have made an impact, helping to increase front-line police officers by 480 and police and community support officers (PCSOs) by 466. This has contributed to consistently high levels of public confidence and a 33 per cent ¹fall in overall crime between 2005/6 and 2008/09.
- 13** The Authority has a mature and supportive relationship with the Force's chief officer team, allowing a joint approach to priority setting, such as in the 2009 Policing Plan. The Authority challenges the Force, for example, to set stretching targets on the back of increased funding or to hold the Chief Constable to account in high-profile incidents. This allows the Authority to stay in control and achieve a shared understanding and commitment to policing. Target setting allows the Authority to reflect community concerns, for example adopting gun crime targets in two areas rather than adopting a single Merseyside target. It is maturing, taking more account of competing priorities and achieving greater alignment to local partners. Target setting also closely aligns to the budget, with stretching targets set to match extra funds. For example, the Authority funded 46 extra officers to reduce anti-social behaviour and sought an additional 3 per cent fall in incidents. This means target setting runs parallel to the budget, allowing the Authority to uphold its independence from the Force and add value.
- 14** Authority members show a genuine desire and commitment to their role. This helps members to raise the Authority's profile and make a real difference to local policing priorities. Members spend a great deal of effort ensuring they have a high visible presence across Merseyside. Each of the six policing areas has three 'link' Authority members – allowing them to know the local context and influence divisional priority setting. This enhances the Authority's ability to focus on issues like knife crime and anti-social behaviour and allow it to check delivery against strategic aims and local targets.
- 15** Community engagement and consultation effectively informs the priorities in core policies and plans. The Authority is very good at listening to local communities and uses feedback to influence business, financial and workforce plans. The Authority responded to community concerns about high crime levels, anti-social behaviour and gun crime by channelling more money into police officer numbers, such as dedicated schools officers. This bolsters neighbourhood policing and allows officers to be redeployed to build community confidence.

¹ Home Office crime statistics 2005/06 to 2008/09

- 16** The Authority uses its influence effectively to ensure the Force is well led. It developed a robust process to appoint the Chief Constable, using members to agree four key expectations for the Chief Constable to protect and deliver. The Authority also ensured the Force kept a strong chief officer team during the appointment period. So the Authority is confident it maintained senior capacity and appointed a leader with the capability to deliver its vision.
- 17** The Authority's approach to tackling inequality and improving outcomes for vulnerable people is good. Authority members and staff have a genuine commitment to engage with all communities and to deliver relevant services. Lead members have strong commitment and skills which they use to challenge and promote equality and diversity. The Authority uses a variety of methods to engage with local communities, via the website, press links or face-to-face events, such as with young people, and this helps to set direction and priorities.
- 18** There is an effective and well managed independent custody visitor scheme. Authority members have good oversight of service quality and provide active challenge to improve services, such as to address concerns about prisoners' property going missing in custody suites. The scheme provides direct access to detainees and ensures the Authority fulfils its custody monitoring and scrutiny role. Member challenge is improving the service, for example leading to the purchase of extra equipment to improve basic conditions for those in custody.
- 19** Governance structures are satisfactory. Committees have clear terms of reference, with the Authority using a Standing Chairs Group to co-ordinate their work. The Performance Scrutiny committee is effective, making a measurable impact, though weaknesses exist elsewhere. Effective governance has helped put extra police officers into high-profile events like the 2008 capital of culture, delivered efficiency savings during the installation of IT in vehicles and added specialist support during a restructuring of certain Force support functions.
- 20** Members are sufficiently skilled to carry out many of their roles, but there are gaps which hinder their ability to support future challenges. They build good areas of expertise, using their lead roles across many areas such as young people and domestic violence. The Authority uses joint police and member sessions to improve teamwork and enhance knowledge on strategic issues such as public confidence. The member training and development process is effective, allowing members to identify and receive relevant training to fulfil their roles, such as ethics, standards and risk. As a result, members are able to effectively review complaints against Police Officers.
- 21** The Authority has an effective Executive Office which operates independently from the Force. It is valued by members and provides good capacity and skills in treasury management, business planning, consultation and engagement, and performance scrutiny. The office continues to develop its own identity following a move in July 2009 for greater independence from Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. This is delivering around £80,000 annual efficiencies though some of the structural changes are still bedding in, such as ability to support major organisational change and assist members in making informed decisions about future spending priorities.

Areas for improvement

- 22** The Authority plans adequately for longer term strategic challenges. It has good awareness of local, regional and national issues and balances competing demands and risks – using a joint strategic risk register for the Force and Authority. This is helping it to respond well to national priorities such as the Policing Pledge and improving public confidence. However, the Authority is not doing enough to lead the Force to respond to the uncertain financial future and difficult decisions ahead. It is looking at ways to deliver efficiencies without cutting front-line services, but plans, risks and impact on performance are not clear. This is an important issue, as the Authority will need to make tough choices about financial goals and whether ambitions remain realistic.
- 23** The Authority has strong ambitions for policing in Merseyside, but is missing opportunities to improve local accountability and understanding. The effectiveness of the Policing Plan is limited by important omissions, for example, the seven policing priorities are not adequately supported by clearly defined measures. Targets exist, but are in other documents and difficult to find on the Authority's website. This reduces the realism of the vision 'to provide the best police service in the UK' and limits the ability of the public and members to hold the Force to account.
- 24** Community engagement is strong and influences policing priorities, but the Authority is not adequately explaining how important plans use this community intelligence. This is particularly the case in the 2009 Policing Plan and Authority Business Plan. Plans lack detail, meaning residents cannot clearly see how their views shape priorities. For example, plans do not show how the Authority will address gaps in satisfaction and confidence across Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities and between the white and BME communities in general. While more residents than those from similar areas are satisfied with the service they receive from the Police, there is a difference in satisfaction between white and BME groups, with the latter 11.2 percentage points less satisfied.
- 25** The Authority is not consistently challenging the Force to ensure it reflects the communities it serves. The Authority is well sighted on issues such as police race, gender and disability schemes and also staff well-being initiatives. It provides challenge around police officer diversity, helping the Force to exceed targets for recruitment of female police officers and BME recruits. Currently, 3.2 per cent of police officers are from BME communities, ahead of target. However, the Authority could do more to ensure the diversity of police support staff reflects local communities. The Authority supported the Force in restructuring certain police staff support functions, but it provides insufficient oversight on police officer workforce modernisation. Strengthening member challenge in this area will help to improve service delivery and potentially release efficiency savings.

Performance scrutiny

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

- 26** The Authority is performing adequately in this area. It has a good understanding of the Policing Pledge and what drives public confidence, with members using their knowledge of public confidence and satisfaction to good effect. Members scrutinise performance and hold chief officers to account in a professional, robust manner. This ensures the Force is delivering services which matter for local people. Member scrutiny adds value in many areas, such as overseeing financial performance and trying to drive down sickness absence, though sickness remains above the average for the police sector.
- 27** A weakness in committee structures and some members' skills reduces the Authority's ability to consistently scrutinise and challenge the Force now and, if unaddressed, in the future. Improving these areas will enhance member challenge and the Authority's ability to support delivery in priority services. Members have not given full approval to the £155 million estate strategy which highlights weaknesses in the way the Authority agrees and challenges important decisions.
- 28** Members are not adequately involved in setting priorities or monitoring delivery of protective services – which includes terrorism, serious crime and other major challenges to public safety. No members are vetted to receive sensitive information in this area and this restricts challenge. This is surprising given the context of Merseyside's comparably high levels of serious and organised crime.

Strengths

- 29** The Authority effectively holds the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of objectives, priorities and quality outcomes. It makes sure the Force is delivering against Policing Plan objectives and Policing Pledge targets and is increasing public confidence. Individually members are strong characters and will ask chief officers searching questions in Police Authority meetings and seek further clarification to stay focused on driving improvement. This approach broadly works – helping the resources and strategy committee to proactively oversee financial performance and allowing members to drive down sickness absence through the systematic use of scrutiny, internal audit and external consultants.
- 30** Authority officers provide good support to members. This strengthens members' ability to scrutinise performance, make informed decisions and hold chief officers to account. Officers have access to and use good products to help scrutinise performance, and analyse data including crime, financial, sickness and complaints information. This approach strengthens decision making, for example to set the 2010/11 annual budget and help members to task the Force to find an extra £600,000 in savings. Officer support also assisted members in tackling governance issues about redundancy policy, tackling domestic violence and improving call handling.

Performance scrutiny

- 31** Members hold senior officers to account using an effective balance of support, scrutiny and intrusive challenge. Members use a good awareness of delivery on the ground to add extra credibility to their probing – often gained through the strong links with local policing areas. This helps members to oversee performance against key policing targets – referred to as tier 1 targets – such as gun crime, knife crime and anti-social behaviour. As a result there is sufficient challenge to police performance in the areas of public confidence and satisfaction, the Policing Pledge, anti-social behaviour and high-profile incidents such as murder.
- 32** Members understand the Policing Pledge and what drives public confidence and satisfaction. Members receive effective briefings and training around factors which influence public confidence, such as the media and community engagement. Robust member challenge adds scrutiny in this area, for example the equality and diversity subcommittee is focusing on narrowing the gap in confidence between BME communities and other groups – though it remains too high. Another example is using the Performance and Scrutiny review committee to scrutinise the Force's delivery against the ten promises contained within the Policing Pledge. There are signs of impact; the expansion of Safer Schools Officers reduced anti-social behaviour around schools where officers are based. Merseyside Police is one of eight forces assessed as 'Good' in its delivery of the Policing Pledge, and the Authority is striving to improve further by targeting improvement in three areas assessed by HMIC as 'Fair'.
- 33** The Authority adequately reviews and assesses progress around some more complex areas of policing, such as terrorism, serious crime and other major challenges to public safety – referred to as protective services. Members take an active role in high-profile policing issues, such as premiership football, European Capital of Culture events and gun crime. They strike a good balance of support for local communities and challenge where appropriate, for example following the fatal shooting of a boy. The Police Authority secures private funding for additional posts, such as airport policing, and supports police deployments, critical incidents and port and border controls including Liverpool John Lennon Airport. Authority members receive good updates of risks and critical incidents – using the well regarded 'In Touch' system to communicate important messages. This keeps members informed and enhances their ability to support local communities during major incidents or following serious and organised crime.

Areas for improvement

- 34** The Authority's ability to scrutinise and hold the Force to account is hindered by weaknesses in committee structures and gaps in member skills. While the performance scrutiny committee is effective, overall committees provide inconsistent challenge and oversight and are unlikely to be fit for purpose to scrutinise and challenge the Force as finances tighten. Weaknesses in committees and member skills include partnerships, collaboration, value for money, audit and risk, and protective services. Member challenge is often insufficient due to weaknesses in members' skills, committee terms of reference, committee chairs and membership, and timely decision making. Reviewing these weaknesses will place the Authority in a stronger position to support future priorities.
- 35** There are gaps in formal member involvement in the ambitious £155 million estate strategy which aims to build a series of new command centres across Merseyside, starting with the Wirral. Many existing police stations are in poor condition and need refurbishment or replacement. Members have received several briefings on this issue, but they have not financially evaluated or formally approved the estate strategy or the proposed Wirral area command centre. The Authority has committed itself to preparatory spend such as buying land without members agreeing a clear strategy which balances any long-term costs. This indicates gaps in the process to gain full Authority approval. Also questions remain as to whether the strategy is feasible in light of the financial challenges.
- 36** Members are not adequately involved in setting priorities and targets and monitoring delivery of protective services. Apart from the Chair of the Authority, there is limited member involvement in protective services. No members are vetted to receive sensitive information about protective services and this restricts their ability to challenge. This is surprising, given Merseyside's comparably high levels of serious and organised crime. The current system relies too much on goodwill and trust and may limit the ability of members to set priorities and provide challenge.

Engaging with communities

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

- 37** The Authority is performing well in this area. Community engagement is a strength. Members show a genuine enthusiasm to listen and respond to the views of local people. The Authority uses extensive and often innovative community engagement to reach out to communities and deliver its priorities – helping to build, reassure and restore confidence. Policing priorities and targets closely reflect community aspirations – with good links with most community groups including marginalised, vulnerable and BME communities.
- 38** The Authority works well with partners. This helps it set priorities that balance local, regional and national issues, such as confidence measures and local priorities of gun crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 39** There are areas for further improvement. The Authority needs to further develop its separate identity from the Force and improve its influence on key partnerships across Merseyside.

Strengths

- 40** The Authority is good at listening to the views of local communities and vulnerable groups. Members and staff are enthusiastic to engage communities with the genuine aim of understanding the views of local people. Detailed statistical and other data helps the Authority to understand its different communities and this underpins engagement. The Authority uses a wide range of often innovative methods to capture and take account of community and partner views – such as holding events in supermarkets and using ‘speed dating’ with partners and communities to decide spending. The Authority not only uses the output of these events, but also gives the results back to the community.
- 41** The Authority effectively responds to local neighbourhood concerns and links them to policing priorities – thereby helping to improve public confidence. Authority members use good links with local communities to influence on the ground action, for example, building closer alignment with CSPs and local policing priorities. This is exemplified by the Authority's investment in a taskforce to respond to community concerns about anti-social behaviour. The impact was clear, with a 19 per cent fall in anti-social behaviour in 2008/09 and an increase in public confidence. Ongoing consultation identifies anti-social behaviour as a continuing community concern so it remains an important part of neighbourhood policing.

- 42** Improving public confidence is a key focus for the Authority. Community engagement is used to build, reassure and restore confidence, such as after a high-profile fatal shooting of a boy. The Authority reacts to negative feedback from communities, using it to address complaints about police rudeness and intolerance. Here the Authority used the Professional Standards and Complaints committee to challenge the Force to reduce complaints while also improving public confidence. Members also responded to community dissatisfaction with its call handling, using a review to invest resources and closely monitor service improvements.
- 43** Public consultation effectively supports annual target setting. Despite an overall drop in the number of thefts, consultation showed that crimes such as burglary and vehicle crimes remain a priority for the public and local partners. The Authority responded to this and has set challenging improvement targets and regularly monitors progress.
- 44** The Authority provides regular feedback to communities on important issues and the results of engagement. The Authority understands the important role of the media to help communicate messages and raise its profile. It uses newsletters, feedback meetings and the annual policing plan summary to provide feedback to communities and partners. The Authority adapts communication methods to suit different communities, with different languages available to improve access to budget decisions, policing priorities and important local issues. The Authority recognises it can do more to develop its media identity, but there are signs of success such as highlighting concerns about racist abuse targeted at Muslim girls travelling to school.
- 45** The Authority has a strong commitment to tackling inequality and disadvantage. It successfully engages with marginalised, vulnerable and BME communities to improve local policing services. Good examples include providing community reassurance in response to policing operations, working with schools around the Prevent agenda² and continuing work with young people around the disproportionate use of Stop and Search powers. This supports the Authority's efforts to improve public confidence including addressing gaps between the BME and white population.
- 46** The Authority has a good profile on key partnerships such as CSPs and it makes a good contribution. This includes a co-ordinating role in target setting and helping to join up the results of consultation. The Authority hosted an event for Merseyside CSPs on effective engagement and developed an engagement toolkit for CSPs. As a result, Authority members have a good understanding of the balance between local, regional and national issues, for example in managing the tension between nationally prescribed measures and local targets such as the single confidence measure and local priorities such as knife crime, gun crime and anti-social behaviour.

² The Government's counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST is based on a policy that can be summed up in four words: Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare.

Areas for improvement

- 47** The Authority is not doing enough to improve its influence on key partnerships, such as local strategic partnerships. It has not adequately evaluated the benefits and impact of partnership working. There are some good examples of engagement in partnerships, but it is inconsistent and not guided by a clear rationale. The Authority has not used the community partnership committee to review partnership working and this is a weakness. As a result, it is missing opportunities to strategically steer partnership working and link to wider engagement and collaborative opportunities across Merseyside. This is important, as the Authority increasingly needs to demonstrate that partnership working is an effective use of its time.
- 48** The Authority has more to do to build a separate distinct identity for itself and communicate this to the public. This will ensure it improves the public's awareness of its role – helping to maximise its ability to reassure the public, set strategic direction and hold chief officers to account.

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?

- 49** The Authority is performing adequately in this area. It has a good track record of improving efficiency, consistently meeting its own efficiency targets. The Authority influences the shifting of resources to high priority areas and consistently delivers within budget.
- 50** The Authority works closely with the Force and takes a balanced view of resources to secure a good deal for the public. Resource decisions take account of risks and threats thereby allowing the Authority to reflect the changing needs of communities. This approach allows the Authority to respond quickly if necessary, for example to support the redeployment of officers across Merseyside in response to community concerns or major incidents.
- 51** The Authority has a good awareness of the expected economic constraints and is responding, though more urgent action is needed. There are some gaps in the Authority's approach to value for money and productivity which includes its ability to consistently challenge efficiency, risk and collaborative working.

Strengths

- 52** The Authority effectively redirects resources to address operational risks and threats. Decisions on resource use, such as staffing, link to risk and threat assessments and are jointly managed with the Force. There is a robust joint risk management strategy which the Resources and Strategy Committee reviews yearly. Strengths in treasury management and budgeting link funding decisions to priorities, risks and other pressures. This allows the Authority to react quickly to the changing needs of communities. For example it redirected officers from across Merseyside to Knowsley and Croxteth following two high-profile cases and community concerns around gun crime. The Authority's approach to gun crime is yielding success – with a 39 per cent fall in the number of times guns were fired between 2007/08 and 2008/09.
- 53** Members and officers add value by influencing decisions and adding specialist advice, for example through involvement in a restructuring of non-operational police staff (called Structures and Ratios). Areas restructured included communications, finance and personnel and led to about £2 million of savings with no fall in performance. It helped to increase professional skills, release 12 police officers to the front-line and reduce 50 police staff jobs.

VFM and productivity

- 54** The Authority has a track record of meeting budget and efficiency targets through service redesign and moving resources to high priority areas. It has a good understanding of costs, and uses benchmarking and unit cost data to improve performance and address weaknesses. This approach helped to review and improve the force medical examiner service, with the potential to reduce costs by over £200,000. The Authority also reviewed the forensics budget leading to a decrease in spending and increased performance. Financial monitoring arrangements are sound, allowing the Authority to track progress. As a result, the Authority made around £12 million of efficiency gains in 2008/09 and is predicting similar levels in 2009/10.
- 55** The focus on improving efficiency helps to support the delivery of front-line policing. Service efficiencies have contributed to the Authority's drive for extra police officers, increasing from 4,302 in 2006 to 4,494 in 2009. This means more than 63 per cent³ of employees are police officers, which is greater than the national average and confirms the Authority's commitment to increasing police officer numbers. The Police Authority has targeted the extra police officers into front-line policing, such as the 69 extra officers for neighbourhood policing in 2008/09.
- 56** The Authority and Force have started to look at how they will respond to expected economic constraints, but it is early days. The medium term financial plan includes future financial scenarios, and a Force Strategic Options Group is developing solutions to bridge any future funding gap.

Areas for improvement

- 57** The approach to value for money and risk could be improved further. Value for money and evaluation of risk are not fully built into the work of committees and not all members have the skills to review and challenge costs and quality of services. In particular, the Authority does not consistently evaluate whether spending delivers better outcomes or the long-term cost of its actions. Improving this will put the Authority in a better position to support the future financial and efficiency challenges. The Force has previously delivered back-office efficiencies, but wider opportunities for savings will be needed, particularly as the cost of policing per head of the population is higher than similar areas.
- 58** The Authority is responding to the future financial challenges, though this remains a crucial area for continuing attention. The medium term financial plan includes future scenarios, and a strategic options group is developing solutions. The Authority will need to react quickly to reassess and develop its capacity and ability to lead, challenge and oversee delivery of future challenges. It needs to ensure all of its members have the skills and appropriate support to help steer change, disinvest from non-priorities and provide a critical review of changes. The Authority will need to make tough decisions to deliver efficiencies and this may challenge delivery of key priorities, such as protecting front-line services and the estate strategy.

³ ADR 601 (as at 31 March 2009)

59 The Authority does not have a strategic approach to collaboration and joint working. It could do more to lead, promote, support and evaluate this important area – including with other public sector partners. There are examples of collaboration with other forces and these are helping to achieve some savings, such as motorway policing, forensics, serious crime and joint buying. But the Authority's approach is still in its infancy, though efforts to assess the benefits of joint working are encouraging, such as in motorway policing. The Authority is adding impetus to collaboration across North West police forces, but progress remains slow. The Authority increasingly needs to show it is getting more for less and it could be missing opportunities to improve services or deliver efficiencies across the police and with other public sector partners.

Next steps

- 60** We expect Merseyside 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.
- 61** 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

The region

- 1 The metropolitan area of Merseyside covers 250 square miles and is home to around 1.4 million people. About 10 per cent are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. The Police Authority uses the term 'black and racial minority' (BRM), but this inspection uses BME, the preferred term of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Merseyside is divided into five local authority areas. Liverpool is the city centre, with outlying areas of the Wirral in the South, Sefton in the North and Knowsley and St Helens in the East. Liverpool itself has a population of 435,000 which makes it the eighth largest city in the UK. Merseyside borders Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Lancashire.
- 2 Merseyside is diverse economically, racially and culturally. The area has a large transient population for various high-profile sporting events in the region, including two Premier League football teams, as well as the city's four institutes of higher education attracting a student population of almost 47,000.
- 3 Following a long-term decline in Merseyside's population, there has been a period of sustained economic growth. This was bolstered by Liverpool's year as 2008 European Capital of Culture and 'Liverpool 1' – the biggest retail development of its kind in Europe opened in May 2008. The port of Liverpool is situated on the Mersey, between Bootle and Seaforth, and is the main UK port for container trade with the USA. This helps to support many local jobs, but also has an impact on crime.
- 4 Liverpool remains the most deprived local authority in England, and, within Merseyside, one other local authority district falls within the most deprived 10 per cent nationally – Knowsley, ranked fifth. Other Merseyside local Authorities have seen significant improvement on their ranking since 2004.
- 5 Merseyside has good transport links both regionally and internationally. Major transport links include the M6, M62, M53, M57 and M58 motorways which run through the area – making road safety an important issue. International access is provided through John Lennon Airport, which is one of the fastest growing regional airports in Europe.

Appendix 1 – Context

The Police Authority

- 6** Merseyside Police Authority is one of 43 Police Authorities in England and Wales. It is responsible for securing an efficient and effective police force for Merseyside and holding the Chief Constable to account. The Authority supports Merseyside Police in its ambition 'To provide the best police service in the UK'. This vision is supported by 2009/10 policing priorities which are as follows.
- Delivery of the Policing Pledge.
 - Improving confidence in Merseyside Police.
 - Reducing gun crime.
 - Reducing serious violent crime.
 - Continue to reduce anti-social behaviour.
 - Improve satisfaction in the police for victims and witnesses.
 - Provide protective services for the people of Merseyside.
- 7** The Police Authority is made up of 17 members. Eight are independent members, appointed through an open recruitment process. Nine are local authority elected members, including the Chair. These reflect the division of seats held by the political parties across Merseyside. Independent members are appointed for a period of four years and local authority elected members for a one year term – though they are often reappointed for longer periods. Of the 17 members, ten are male and seven female. The Authority works closely with the Force and its partners, including Merseyside's five Councils, community safety partnerships (CSPs) and other agencies in the criminal justice system.
- 8** The Authority's Executive Office, led by a joint Chief Executive and Treasurer, supports the work of the committees and members. Treasury and internal audit functions are carried out within the Executive Office. It also engages with communities, stakeholders and partners across Merseyside. In July 2009, many of the functions of the Executive Office were given greater independence from Knowsley Council. As at 2009, the Authority employed 24.6 whole time equivalent staff working for the Authority.
- 9** The budget for the Authority and the Force for 2009/10 totalled £360 million⁴ (net revenue expenditure), of which the Authority received £2.2 million for its own budget. The main sources of funding are £267 million from Police Grant, Non-Domestic Rates and Revenue Support Grant, £59 million from Council tax, £32 million from specific grants, such as the crime fighting fund, and £2 million from reserves.

⁴ CIPFA Statistics 2009/10 Estimates

The Force

- 10** Merseyside Police is a Metropolitan Force and is one of the largest forces in the country. It employs around 4,494 Police Officers, 442 Police Community Support Officers and 2,221 police staff⁵. The number of Police Officers is high compared to other similar areas, and is equivalent to 3.33 Officers per 1,000 population. The Force operates through six basic command unit areas which align with the local authority boundaries – with the exception of Liverpool which encompasses two. There has been a recent change in leadership of Merseyside Police, with a new Chief Constable, Jon Murphy, appointed in February 2010.
- 11** Crime in Merseyside is falling. Between 2005/6 and 2008/09 overall crime reduced by 33 per cent, violent crime by 45 per cent and burglary by 27 per cent⁶. In 2008/09 the Force received 308,000⁷ emergency calls, answering 95.4 per cent on time which is better than the local target of answering 92 per cent within 10 seconds.
- 12** The confidence level – people who 'believe the police and local council are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in the local area' was 56 per cent as at September 2009 – this means Merseyside is performing well. Eighty-seven per cent of residents are satisfied with the service they received from the Police which is better than the average for similar areas. But, there is a difference in satisfaction between white and BME groups, with the latter 11.2⁸ percentage points less satisfied.

⁵ ADR 601 (as at 31 March 2009)

⁶ Home Office crime statistics 2005/06 to 2008/09

⁷ ADR 441

⁸ APACS 2008/09

Appendix 2 – Methodology

- 1 This report summarises the joint Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary findings from the inspection of Merseyside Police Authority which took place between February and April 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

- 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.

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