

Policing by numbers

Forces will hit hard times with budget cuts but plans to slice as third of senior ranks in Surrey alongside massive closures of police stations could have ramifications nationally. Paul, Yearwood, chairman of Surrey, writes



Surrey Police is now entering the final planning stages of a major strategic review that will see inspecting and superintending ranks cut by a third, the disposal of half of its police stations coupled with an ambition to increase frontline constables by up to 200. The drive for change has been largely around finance and how Surrey Police is going to fill a budget gap of around £23million over the next three years and also an uncertainty regarding future public spending cuts. Surrey has a higher number of police staff than any other force and this may leave them more vulnerable to spending cuts than other forces.

Surrey Police Federation has been pressing for a review of the make up of the force for some time, concerned about the almost unending 'civilianisation' of roles and the lack of resilience this gives us. In April 2000 we had 2100 police officers and 760 police staff. In April 2009 we had 1900 police officers and 2380 police staff. Police staff numbers are now reducing and this is likely to continue over the next few years.

The new model will see the force move away from a divisional structure to a functional one. The divisional structure is seen as duplicating management functions on a geographic basis. The functional model removes this duplication. Four headquarters-based chief superintendents will head up four areas of business, these being:

1. Response (including incident handling, contact centre and operational support.)
2. Neighbourhoods (borough policing, partnership and community safety.)
3. Investigation (proactive and reactive CID, forensics, public protection, custody and criminal justice)
4. Tasking and Coordinating (including special branch, covert ops, ops planning and intelligence.)

The main business of response, reactive investigation and custody will be operated from three strategic police stations. Neighbourhood teams may be based at those stations but the majority will be based with Local Authorities or

in shops or libraries. This will allow around 22 police stations and other buildings to be sold off or leased raising capital and saving significant running costs.

The senior management and central functions will largely be based at two headquarters centres. Numbers are still not finalised and may change but currently a 30 per cent reduction in managers is being proposed. The preliminary figures are as follows: The ambition to increase officer

	Current Numbers	Proposed Numbers	Reduction %
Chief Superintendent	7	4	43%
Superintendent	16	12	25%
Chief Inspector	30	12	60%
Inspector	100	80	20%
Totals	153	108	30%

numbers is welcomed as is the aim to have all officers working from modern premises that are fit for purpose, as long as Neighbourhood Teams and public contact points are maintained at a local level. The force has assured the Police Authority that police stations will not be closed until a local alternative is in place.

For superintending and inspecting ranks there is serious concern regarding command resilience and the workload and pressures that managers will be placed under with large numbers of staff, broad responsibilities and other demands such as on-call and secondary skills.

Promotion prospects within the force will be severely curtailed for the next three to five years and reduced after that. The force has said that not all promotions will be stopped but realistically, only a select few will be considered. A carrot has to be dangled, no matter how small it is. This may result in reduced morale and performance. There is also concern that managerial workloads will be pushed down to sergeants.

The plan is to put the new structure in place by April this year although some elements will be introduced after that with full implementation by April 2011. For up to 18 months after that there will be an excess number of inspectors

and an excess of chief inspectors for up to five years. Chief inspectors may be asked to perform the roles of inspectors until the numbers reach the required levels. The force is considering implementing Pension Regulation A19, which requires officers to retire at 30 years service in the interests of the efficiency and effectiveness of the force although they have made it clear they wish to avoid this if at all possible.

The force is encouraging some

managers to seek secondment or other opportunities now to reduce the numbers of managers sooner rather than later. Some managers are already taking these opportunities and we already have some superintendent vacancies, those chief inspectors may fill.

The Federation is working with the Superintendents' Association to influence the plans and try and overcome concerns particularly regarding command resilience. This is a worrying time for many managers within Surrey Police. Concerns regarding managers being overburdened, loss of promotion opportunities and reduced morale and productivity may lead to disillusionment, apathy and increased sickness. The force acknowledges it is expecting more for less but anticipates managers will continue to perform at existing levels.

The functional model will undoubtedly be taken up by the NPIA and other forces encouraged to consider it. I would encourage Federation representatives to make themselves aware of the model and plan within their own forces how they may manage the process within their own force.