

Appendix K

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary Response to HCC Consultation – 14 August 2025



HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT

CONSTABULARY

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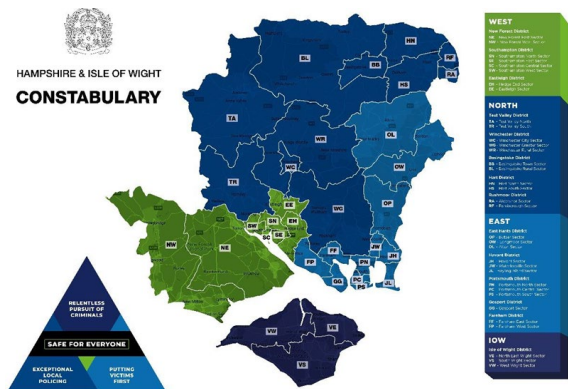
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Dear Antonia,

Please find below considered views from Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary in relation to options you shared with us as part of your consultation exercise on Local Government Reorganisation. There may be aspects from our lived public service experience that help shape decision making within your organisation and beyond, for the benefit of all communities in our local area. We will be responding with the same points to others seeking our views on this matter and we are supportive should you choose to include this in any response to government.

Views on geography

The graphic below shows policing areas under the current Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary (HIOWC) operating model.



The police force is divided into three command areas on the mainland and a separate Isle of Wight (IoW) area command structure. This operating model was adopted in mid-2023 and has contributed to significant public service improvements, as recognised within the force's recent HMCFRS PEEL inspection. This is benefitting communities and enabling the force to achieve its Police and Crime Plan requirements and the Government Neighbourhood Guarantee.¹

You will note that the force's geographical delivery structure is not completely in line with any options in your consultation proposals but there are notable similarities with options B1 and B2. The closer the alignment between policing structures and local government the better. Historically, the constabulary made changes to be co-terminus with local authorities. You will note in the graphic the naming convention that we use in relation to our policing areas.

Our lived experience of two different 'area' models, a more centralised model and 14 independent districts, is that having command/ governance structures with three relatively equal-in-size mainland areas (geography and population) and a separate Isle of Wight area has a benefit of greater consistency and scale of economy, balanced with local focus to reflect community needs and respect local views.

There would be a cost and change implication of policing having to move its command structures to accommodate more than three mainland areas. Fragmentation of this nature would result in the constabulary facing either additional command and support service costs or having a significant misalignment of leadership/ structure compared with local government structures. Both would likely impact our ability to deliver the Government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee and the Police and Crime Plan.

¹The Neighbourhood Guarantee is a Home Office-led initiative linked to the Labour Manifesto. The five pillars of this programme are as follows: 1. Police back on the beat, a neighbourhood police team in every area. 2. Community-led policing, a named, contactable officer in every neighbourhood, responsive to local problems. 3. Clear performance standards and professional excellence. 4 Crackdown on anti-social behaviour. 5. Safe town centres. To deliver this we need to work with partners at the right level to engage communities, tackle vulnerability and solve problems in a multi-agency environment.

Building blocks

Despite having four policing areas, the building blocks of our policing model are very local, deliberately linking officers and PCSOs with communities at beat and ward level. We break the four policing areas into 95 neighbourhoods. In line with our Crime Plan and the Government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee requirements, Local Bobbies (locally focused neighbourhood police officers) are identified to each neighbourhood and are now well embedded, working with local partners and communities. We could not support proposals that split up the smaller neighbourhood building blocks (the practical link between us and local people) as this risks fragmenting local accountability and impacting community confidence. This view extends to severing the geography of the current 14 districts (i.e. a current district, ward or beat being divided between two or more of the new authority areas).

Balance between policing our city, urban and rural communities

HIOWC has to police everyone, with statutory responsibilities and the requirement for consistency regardless of background, demographic or geography (rural or urban). Achieving this balance is something that requires us to have the right command structures and resources aligned to our communities. Geography should never prohibit access to services.

There are 44 "local super output areas" identified across HIOWC (19 in Southampton, 15 in Portsmouth, six in Havant, three on the IoW, and one in Gosport). These bring higher demand and vulnerability and an increased requirement for partnership working. The force's current geographical model ensures that these high-demand locations are not based in one single area and that the load is shared across our teams.

Our experience has shown that having a large urban conurbation (Basingstoke, Portsmouth, Southampton) in each of the mainland policing areas brings a more effective ability to service demand. It also encourages sharing of knowledge and understanding for the benefit of the wider community. To give one example, certain serious crime types are more prevalent within city environments but do occur in other districts. Expertise is developed and practised, which is then leveraged by area commanders to support responses where such crimes are less prevalent.

In practical terms, having a policing area without a large urban conurbation within it would result in an imbalance; fewer overall resources (as profiling shows higher demand in urban areas) and a greater risk of resources being drawn across into other areas that do have larger cities or towns. Keeping Southampton and Portsmouth separate in command terms is a strategic decision by the force to ensure that one area is not so dominant as to render our policing operation less effective elsewhere, and to the detriment of smaller or rural communities. Their needs are of equal importance, and we must protect that. Having a custody facility in each policing area is also important (Southampton, Portsmouth, Basingstoke and Newport on the Isle of Wight). Police custodial estate is a significant investment and building anything additional would come at very considerable cost.

One of the features of our local policing success is our ability to surge resources between the different geographical areas, often in a dynamic way. This requires joined up working between area command teams, a clear commitment to respect central coordination and governance, and some services being delivered at a force-wide level. This team mentality is important to achieve consistency of public service.

Isle of Wight

Historically, the constabulary had a three-area local model that saw the Isle of Wight (IoW) combined with Portsmouth, Fareham, Gosport, Havant and Waterlooville. This then moved to the IoW having a separate district-led command. In 2023, careful consideration was given to the IoW in our restructuring. It was decided that, despite moving back to a model with bigger geographical areas, the IoW should remain an area of its own right.

In terms of community trust and confidence, having a clear identity for the IoW – with an accountable police commander – was felt to be important. There are unique challenges with policing the IoW (i.e. practicalities of moving people between the island and mainland) and there are requirements for effective close working relationships with key agencies locally, such as adult and child social care. It is worth noting that attaching the IoW to just one Hampshire policing 'area' had historically created some barriers to the IoW receiving support from across the full constabulary resource on the mainland (for example during peak summer periods).

Service demand increases for the constabulary by 10.6 per cent every summer (July, August and September). The demand surge is acute on the IoW during the holiday season, and we have seen an increase in overall demand across a more prolonged period. Service demand is impacted by tourism and day visitors, as the IoW has a far larger population during certain periods. Noting the government guidance on population, it may be worth decision makers considering the population of the IoW in its fullest sense rather than its resident population in any decision making regarding the merits of a separate IoW area.

How it works in practice is as important as structure

Much of the devil is in the detail. It is not for policing to determine local government structures but there are questions that we would ask all decision makers to consider.

Joined up local services are crucial. Via our distract commanders, the force benefits from alignment with local leads in other agencies and this supports cohesion towards the objectives of the respective Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs)2 to "formulate and implement strategies to tackle crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in communities"3 both at a tactical and strategic level. We would not wish to lose the positive close working relationships or any traction that has been gained. The current force structure introduced in 2023 has better enabled this partnership working, bringing improved performance and a reduction in most crime areas, including anti-social behaviour, as well as enhanced community engagement. This was recognised within our recent PEEL inspection (2025).

A key question from our policing perspective is which local leader in the new authority set-up our local police commander would work with on a day-to-day basis to ensure community safety issues are robustly dealt with at the very local level? The same point goes for the practitioners who support those leaders. Clarity on this is very important at the go live of any new structure. The current 14-district model provides this clarity, and the constabulary would not want to lose this.



Statutory partnership working

The importance of partnership working is critical for our communities. This comes in the form of key legislation (e.g. Working Together to Safeguard Children), through tackling crime and ASB via our CSP in a cohesive way, and by reducing harm via the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs, etc. As a key statutory safeguarding partner, an evaluation of demand for adult and child social care needs to be considered, as there is a need to preserve good collaborative work in this space. Avoiding a future geographical disparity in terms of need and capability is important. Any major restructure of geography also needs to be supported by early clarity on current systems and ways of working in this partnership space. Practical considerations go as far as to include the location and ownership of the buildings co-located teams are to be based within under future arrangements.

HCC currently employs the coronial service, yet coroners are independent judicial figures. The Isle of Wight has its own coroner. Agreements exist between the coroner, HCC and the five NHS trusts for the use of hospital-managed mortuaries. Any reform will need to protect the effectiveness of this service, or it will be detrimental to policing's ability to function effectively, as the constabulary acts as coroner's officers and conducts investigations. A consistency of service is required to protect the dignity of the deceased and ensure a timely response to sudden or unexpected deaths.

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight has a Local Resilience Forum, with emergency plans that are in place under the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. HCC owns the land that is designated for an emergency mortuary (if required). The future practicalities of this will need to be considered in any structure as it is the only one earmarked for the two counties.

Conclusion

The force understands the desire to deliver changes to local government, and our own experience and geographical set up demonstrates a similar mindset in terms of getting the balance right between larger scale governance/ efficiencies and protecting the local focus of our public service. We hope that sharing our experience is helpful.

As a final point, it is worth stating that there is no additional funding for policing to support change or transitional work related to these matters. We will be working closely with our Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and partners to ensure continuity of service. We encourage all decision makers to involve policing, not just in the decision making but also in the detailed planning that will be required to ensure the full benefit of any change is realised for those we serve.

Yours sincerely,

Ben Pratt

Assistant Chief Officer
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary
cc: Gary Westbrook, HCC cc: Kate Gunson, OPCC