

Annual Audit Letter

December 2005



Annual Audit Letter

Humberstone Police Authority

Audit 2004-2005

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Key messages

- 1 The Authority has overseen significant change during the past 12 months. It has recruited a new Chief Constable and there have also been other changes within the chief officer team.
- 2 Overall, performance in the volume crime area (burglary, vehicle crime, robbery, violent crime) has improved significantly during the year, but much is still to be done to close the gap with the most similar forces (MSF) group.
- 3 Performance against citizen focus objectives (high visibility, improved call handling, customer satisfaction) has not matched improvements in the volume crime area and a significant amount of work is required around managing contact with the public.
- 4 With the uncertainty surrounding reorganisation, members need to ensure that the Force keeps its focus on the significant improvements that are needed to deliver an effective and efficient police service to the public of Humberside.

Performance

- 5 The Authority's primary responsibility is to secure an efficient and effective police service for the Humberside area. It has made significant progress in this objective over the last 12 months.
- 6 Performance in 2004/05 has seen a significant reduction in the volume crime area - measured by the Policing Performance Assessment Framework (PPAF 1 Domain). Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) described this in Baseline 2005 as 'one of the largest percentage improvements in the country'. There has also been a significant increase in the sanction detection rates achieved by the Force (percentage of notifiable/recorded offences resulting in conviction, caution or taken into consideration at court).
- 7 Comparisons with the most similar forces (MSF) still shows that the Humberside is still well below the MSF average. This is a key criterion for both Police Standards Unit (PSU) disengagement and the HMIC baseline assessment. Thus it is imperative that the improvements seen in 2004/05 and early 2005/06 are maintained and further developed.
- 8 Performance in the Citizen Focus indicators has worsened and shows that there is still significant work needed to be done to improve this area of performance. Members need to ensure that during 2005/06 they continue to hold the Chief Constable to account in the delivery of the key programme of work on the Call Handling Project, and also improving the visibility of policing in the Force area.

The accounts

- 9 We gave an unqualified audit opinion on your financial statements on 25 October 2005.
- 10 The Authority needed to re-adopt a revised statement of accounts due to the correction of material misstatements which were present within the original adopted statement of accounts.
- 11 We also needed to report a number of items to those charged with governance to help members to carry out their governance responsibilities.

Financial standing

- 12 Presently, the Authority's financial position is sound overall. However, following the settlement announcement for the next two years coupled with the decision to significantly increase the numbers of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's), the revenue forecast estimates approximately £6 million of support from the investment reserve.
- 13 Added to the above is the estimated funding of the capital programme from the investment reserve of approximately £13 million for the period 2006/07 to 2008/09.
- 14 This leaves an estimated balance in the investment reserve in the region of £3 million.
- 15 Members need to satisfy themselves that the business cases and proposed capital programme put forward by the force for the period to 2008/09 are in line to deliver Authority, Force or National Priorities.
- 16 Members then need to ensure that any further developments agreed at the Priority and Resource workshops in January are linked to these priorities.

Other accounts and governance issues

- 17 Members need to receive positive assurance that the arrangements that they have put in place for the standards of financial conduct and the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption are being applied consistently throughout the organisation, including the National Fraud Initiative (NFI).
- 18 The Authority need to formalise members involvement in force operations and boards, to ensure that the knowledge gained from their involvement is formally reported back to the standing committees and helps the scrutiny of the Force by members.

Other action needed by the Authority

- 19** Members in conjunction with the Force need to ensure that it prioritises the aims and objectives of the Authority. It is important that its priorities lead to the necessary improvements needed to narrow the gap with its MSF group.
- 20** Once the priorities are agreed it may then be necessary to assess what impact this may have on the levels of service that can be expected in the non-priority areas.
- 21** Finances need to be aligned to the priorities to enable the rapid improvement to happen.
- 22** Members need to ensure that through the period of uncertainty, up to and during restructuring, they hold the Chief Constable to account in delivering an effective and efficient police force for the public of Humberside.

Performance

The Authority's primary responsibility is to secure an efficient and effective police service for the Humberside area. It has made significant progress in this area over the last 12 months

Performance in 2004/05 has seen a significant reduction in the volume crime categories (PPAF 1 Domain) HMIC commented in Baseline 2005 'one of the largest percentage improvements in the country'.

There has also been a significant increase in the sanction detection rates achieved by the Force.

However, comparisons with the Most Similar Forces (MSF) still shows that the Humberside are still well below the MSF average.

This is a key criterion for both PSU disengagement and HMIC baseline assessment. Thus it is imperative that the improvements seen in 2004/05 and early 2005/06 are maintained and further developed.

Also, the worsening performance in the citizen focus indicators show that there is still significant work needed to be done to improve this area of performance.

Members need to ensure that during 2005/06 they hold the Chief Constable to account in the delivery of the key programme of work on the Call Handling Project, and also improving the levels of visibility of officers within the public eye.

Crime reduction and detection

- 23 The Force has made significant improvements during 2004/05 in Reducing Crime (PPAF Domain 1). The HMIC Baseline 2005 assessment summary states 'Force performance relative to its peers continues to be poor in many areas. However, Humberside has shown one of the fastest rates of crime reduction in England and Wales during 2004/05'.
- 24 The most recent performance information reported to the Performance Scrutiny Committee on 25 October 2005 shows that all five categories within the PPAF Domain 1 are showing further reductions in crime levels ranging from 9.3 per cent to 19.3 per cent.
- 25 Members need to continue to challenge the Chief Constable to provide further stepped improvements to enable the gap with the MSF to close.
- 26 In addition to reducing crime, the Force has made improvements in investigating crime with the sanction detection rates improving during 2004/05. The sanction detection rates reported on 25 October have also shown a huge increase in violent crime detection of 46 per cent. However, there has been significant percentage falls in the detection rates of burglary, robbery and vehicle crime within this period.

- 27 Members need to challenge the Force as to the reasons for the fall in detection rates and what action is being taking to address the issue, as it is vital for PSU disengagement that the improvements achieved are maintained.

Citizen focus

- 28 The Authority has identified the local objectives to deliver the national priority of Citizen Focus. Although performance in some areas has improved, there are still significant areas where improvement is necessary to meet the local objectives.
- 29 It is clear from the local performance indicators reported in 2004/05 that:
- € customer satisfaction when in contact with the police has fallen;
 - € complaints against officers have risen; and
 - € the percentage of time uniformed constables spend outside the police station in the public eye has fallen during 2004/05.
- 30 Members need to ensure that during 2005/06 they hold the Chief Constable to account in the delivery of the key programme of work on the Call Handling Project, and also improving the levels of visibility of officers within the public eye.
- 31 Members may wish to review the key local objectives they have set to meet the national priorities, because it may not be possible to deliver all the objectives. Furthermore, members may need to prioritise objectives to ensure that the available funds are targeted where they can have most impact.

PSU disengagement criteria

- 32 The disengagement criteria have been agreed with all parties and it is a key part of the Authority's responsibilities to ensure that the Force deliver on the agreed criteria.
- 33 The Police Authority has specific input to the disengagement process in satisfying HMIC that the progress of the force is sustainable, and that there is sufficient capability and leadership in the ACPO team to maintain improvements without PSU involvement.
- 34 The Force will keep all parties informed of progress against the agreed targets via the monthly performance board meetings. Members need to ensure that they are satisfied with the progress against the agreed targets and also critically challenge the force where targets are not met.
- 35 Members need to monitor the delivery of the improvements necessary (via Operation Vanguard) to help to bridge the performance gap between Humberside and its MSF. This operation needs to be integrated into the medium-term financial strategy.

Crime data quality

- 36 We have recently completed the data analysis aspect of the data quality review. The testing found very high levels of national crime recording standard (NCRS) compliance. Whilst this has built on last years performance there is evidence that NCRS compliance deteriorated during the last 12 months of BCU restructuring. However, the changes to call handling and rigorous intervention by the Authority procedures introduced in October have had a very positive effect. It is also hoped that this new approach will allow the force to improve public satisfaction in the long-term. There is already clear evidence of greater incident prioritisation and management. It is vital that the Authority continues to closely monitor ongoing performance to ensure that this level of compliance is maintained.

Performance information

- 37 We are at present completing our audit of the performance indicators and best value performance plan. We expect that we will issue an unqualified opinion by 31 December 2005. At present there are no matters arising that we need to report to members.

Accounts and governance

We gave an unqualified audit opinion on your financial statements on 25 October 2005.

The Authority needed to re-adopt a revised statement of accounts due to the correction of material misstatements which were present within the original adopted statement of accounts.

We also needed to report a number of items to those charged with governance to help members to carry out their governance responsibilities.

Audit of 2004/05 accounts

- 38 We gave an unqualified opinion on the Authority's accounts on 25 October 2005.

Matters arising from the final accounts audit

- 39 The published accounts are an essential means by which the Authority reports its stewardship of the public funds at its disposal and its financial performance in the use of those resources. Members approved the Authority's annual accounts on 26 July 2005. However, these accounts did include a number of misstatements within them which needed amending, this led to members having to readopt the accounts on 25 October 2005.
- 40 The timeliness in producing the accounts will become increasingly important next year as the deadline for completion of the accounts is brought forward to 30 June 2006 in line with the Government's requirement. Whilst the accounts have been prepared in time to meet the requirements this year, the deadlines will become increasingly more difficult to achieve and will require early planning and thoughtful scheduling of key meetings next year.
- 41 The scheduling requirements require a full Police Authority meeting to be scheduled for late June 2006 for the members to adopt the 2005/06 statement of accounts and a meeting in late September 2006 for members to receive the auditors report on the financial statements.

Report to those with responsibility for governance in the Authority

- 42 We are required by professional standards to report to those charged with governance (in this case the full Police Authority) certain matters before we give an opinion on the financial statements.
- 43 We issued a report to those charged with governance on the Authority's financial statements. Whilst we did not qualify our opinion we did make reference to an unadjusted misstatement which was an under-accrual overtime payments of approximately £500,000, we welcome the members recommendation that this be corrected in the 2005/06 statement of accounts.

- 44 We also had to report to you where material misstatements which management had adjusted but in our view were relevant to your governance responsibilities. Members are reminded that have material adjusted misstatements within the statement of accounts approved by members will have a detrimental effect on any results in the use of resources assessment made towards the Authority's baseline assessment in 2006.

Financial standing

- 45 Presently the Authority's financial position is sound overall. However, following the settlement announcement for the next two years coupled with the decision to significantly increase the numbers of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) the revenue forecast estimates approximately £6 million of support from the investment reserve.
- 46 Added to the above is the estimated funding of the capital programme from the investment reserve of approximately £13 million for the period 2006/07 to 2008/09.
- 47 This leaves an estimated balance in the investment reserve in the region of £3 million.
- 48 Members need to satisfy themselves that the business cases and proposed capital programme put forward by the force for the period to 2008/09 are in line to deliver Authority, Force or National Priorities.
- 49 Members then need to ensure that any further developments agreed at the Priority and Resource workshops in January are linked to these priorities.

Revenue fund spending and balances as at 31 March 2005

- 50 The Authority spent to its budget of £150.5 million in 2004/05. This balanced outturn masked some significant underspending on budget heads. These included £4.6 million on pay, £4.4 million on police pensions, and £7.7 million on supplies and services. In addition to these, the capital slippage/underspend also meant that £5.6 million revenue funding for capital was not required during 2004/05.
- 51 The effect of these underspends was that overall the Authority was able to transfer £1.7 million into reserves when it had expected to use £20.1 million from reserves to balance the revenue budget and also to fund the capital programme.
- 52 As at 31 March 2005, the Authority had £36.5 million in reserves. These include some reserves that are earmarked and some that are available for future development through the force business case process and the upcoming members' priority and resource setting day.

- 53 The latest revenue monitoring report received by the Audit and Strategy Committee (22 November 2005) is showing a £3.4 million underspend at period 6 of 2005/06.
- 54 Also reported was the estimated outturn for 2005/06 being an estimated £2.2 million underspend. This should provide additional one year monies that have been included in the latest five year forecast, which shows that the investment reserve at 31 March 2006 should be in the region of £23 million.

Five-year financial forecast

- 55 The ACO (support) uses the five-year financial forecast to project future spending needs compared with recently announced settlements.
- 56 The five year forecasts tries to balance the ongoing revenue spending year-on-year and the level of the investment reserve available for development in future years.
- 57 The latest estimate is that the investment reserve balance will be in the region of £23 million at the 31 March 2006. However, the forecast suggests that by the end of 2008/09 this reserve will be in the region of £3 million.
- 58 The estimates for the revenue account for 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09 suggest that a substantial amount of the reserve (£6 million) will be needed to balance the revenue budget in these years.
- 59 In addition, contributions to fund the capital programme from the investment reserve over the period to 2008/09 is in the region of £13 million, leaving an estimated £3 million in the reserve which is available for members to allocate towards their priorities.
- 60 Therefore, members at their priority setting and resource allocation days in January need to scrutinise the assumptions and growth requirements that the Chief Constable has identified as being necessary to deliver the force priorities, alongside the planned capital programme to ensure that wherever possible the spend is directed to the priorities of the Force and Authority.

Systems of internal financial control

- 61 We have not identified any significant weaknesses in the overall control framework; however, the Authority has found that the improvement agenda has stretched the current secretariat in terms of capacity and in places expertise. Members have identified the needs and the Secretariat has sought to recruit two senior officers to meet requirements.
- 62 Members now need to ensure that the Secretariat now implement the actions identified within the Internal Audit action plans to ensure that the control environment continues to develop.

Internal Audit

- 63 Our assessment is that Internal Audit provides an effective service overall.
- 64 Members need to assess their future needs for Internal Audit with the New Director of Resources and Performance.
- 65 We suggest that this review be carried out in conjunction with the requirements of the Force Audit Board and the audit resources that they have available. This joint approach should be carried out to maximise the impact that all available audit resources can have on the organisation as a whole.

Standards of financial conduct and the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption

- 66 The Authority adopted an anti-fraud and corruption statement in October 2004. This has begun to establish arrangements to ensure good governance, although further work will be necessary to embed the processes throughout the organisation.
- 67 Within the Force, there is not a corporate response to the recording and documentation for gifts and hospitality. This leads us to believe that although the high-level policy is in place, further work is needed to embed these arrangements throughout the organisation.
- 68 In addition, the control weaknesses identified in the timesheet investigation within the Authority demonstrates that the policy has not fully embedded in the organisation.
- 69 Members need to consider how they will obtain assurance that the anti-fraud and corruption statement adopted in October 2004 has been implemented and is embedded throughout the organisation.

Legality of transactions

- 70 We have not identified any significant weaknesses in the framework established by the Authority for ensuring the legality of its significant financial transactions.

Risk management

- 71 The Force has continued to develop its risk management arrangements through the Force Audit Board. However, members need to develop their own risk management arrangements.
- 72 Formal reporting arrangements are needed between the Force Audit Board and the Audit and Strategy Committee on the strategic risks. Members can then align the strategic risks to those risks faced by the Authority.

Other work

Bichard review

- 73 The then Chief Constable of Humberside Police declared that activities to respond to the recommendations resulting from the Bichard Enquiry were completed on schedule by the end of December 2004. Following that deadline, we undertook a short review of the action taken.
- 74 Humberside Police have undertaken significant review work in order to provide evidence for the Bichard Enquiry and then respond to its recommendations. Operations Winter and Vanguard have been key to this process.
- 75 The Police Authority has also been reviewing how it undertakes its oversight and scrutiny activities in response to the Force process and specific issues highlighted by the Bichard report.
- 76 The findings show that extensive work has been done at Humberside Police to produce evidence for and respond to the findings of the Bichard report. The key areas of response have been in identifying, collecting and reviewing information and in providing improved systems to search Force systems in a co-ordinated way. This work was done so as to enable all the key data sources to produce a comprehensive information response in a way that was not possible before the work was undertaken.
- 77 Further work was in hand to enhance the monitoring and auditing of the information collection and review process and to implement national systems and protocols being delivered as part of the national response to Bichard recommendations.
- 78 Our key recommendation from the review was that the Police Authority needed to formalise members involvement in force operations and boards, to ensure that the knowledge gained from the involvement is formally reported back to the standing committees and helps the formal scrutiny of the Force by members, this is in line with the overall recommendations in the report from the Clerk to the Authority of September 2004.

Grant claims

- 79 The Home Office has recently confirmed that it has removed the requirement for audit certification for police grants for 2004/05 and beyond.
- 80 This follows a review of arrangements to obtain adequate assurance about grant monies in accordance with a request from HM Treasury. The key principle from the HM Treasury request is that the audit for grants should be carried out in a way proportionate to the amounts involved and the associated risks. Recipients will need to account for their claims but further certification through formal audit is not always necessary.

- 81 The Home Office have concluded that taking all factors into account they are content to proceed from and including 2004/05 on the basis of annual assurance from the Chief Financial Officer and the Chief Constable.

National Fraud Initiative

- 82 In 2004/05, the Authority took part in the Audit Commission's National Fraud Initiative (NFI 2004/05). The NFI, which is undertaken every two years, aims to help identify and reduce fraud by bringing together data from NHS bodies, local authorities and government departments and other agencies, to detect a wide range of frauds against the public sector. These include payroll and housing benefit fraud, with the details of housing benefit fraudsters being passed back to the employing body to allow them to consider the implications and take action as appropriate.
- 83 Where little or no such fraud is identified then the Authority can gain assurance about internal arrangements for preventing and detecting fraud.
- 84 The NFI 2004/05 results were distributed on CD-ROM on 31 January 2005 and participating bodies are required to provide savings returns reporting progress made as at 31 May 2005, 30 September 2005 and 31 December 2005.
- 85 The Force in association with Internal Audit have taken the full details from the CD and investigated all the matches identified within the various categories. The Force has made the necessary returns to the Audit Commission detailing any savings made from their work.
- 86 To date, the Force has not identified any savings in these returns. This provides the Authority with some assurance that the arrangements in place within the various systems are working.
- 87 We recommend that members are involved in the process in the future to enable the force to provide assurance to members that the policy on anti-fraud and corruption is being followed and is embedded.

Looking forwards

Future audit work

- 88 We have an agreed plan for 2005/06 and we have reported in this letter those aspects that have already been completed. The remaining elements of that plan, including our audit of the 2005/06 accounts and the delivery of the police data quality audit, will be reported in next year's Annual Letter.
- 89 We have sought to ensure, wherever possible, that our work relates to the improvement priorities of the Authority. We will continue with this approach when planning our programme of work for 2006/07. We will continue to develop our relationship with HMIC to ensure a co-ordinated approach to regulation.

Revision to the Code of Audit Practice

- 90 The statutory requirements governing our audit work are contained in:
 - € the Audit Commission Act 1998; and
 - € the Code of Audit Practice (the Code).
- 91 The Code has been revised with effect from 1 April 2005. Further details are included in our Audit Plan which was agreed with Audit and Strategy Committee on 24 May 2005. The key changes include:
 - € the requirement to draw a positive conclusion regarding the Authority's arrangements for ensuring value for money in its use of resources; and
 - € a clearer focus on overall financial and performance management arrangements.

Working with HMIC

- 92 HMIC currently undertakes a baseline assessment of every police force. The methodology is similar to that of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for local authorities and it includes an assessment of financial management and financial standing. (October 2005 baseline findings are included in Appendix 4.)
- 93 In the past, this assessment has been undertaken by a member of HMIC staff. To reduce potential for overlaps and secure greater consistency in reporting it is proposed that in future the Audit Commission would develop and produce a Use of Resources judgement for all police forces and that HMIC would rely on this judgement and incorporate it into the baseline assessment.

- 94 Negotiations are at an early stage but we would aim to have the new arrangements in place for the 2006/07 audits which would mean that a Use of Resources judgement would be given in July/August 2006 to feed into the HMIC baseline assessment reports which are published each October.

Closing remarks

- 95 This letter has been discussed and agreed with the Chief Executive and ACO (support). It was presented at the Police Authority meeting on 13 December 2005.
- 96 The Authority has taken a positive and constructive approach to our audit and I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the Authority's assistance and co-operation.

Availability of this letter

- 97 This letter will be published on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk and also on the Authority's website.

Michael Newbury
District Auditor
December 2005

Appendix 1 – Background to this letter

The purpose of this letter

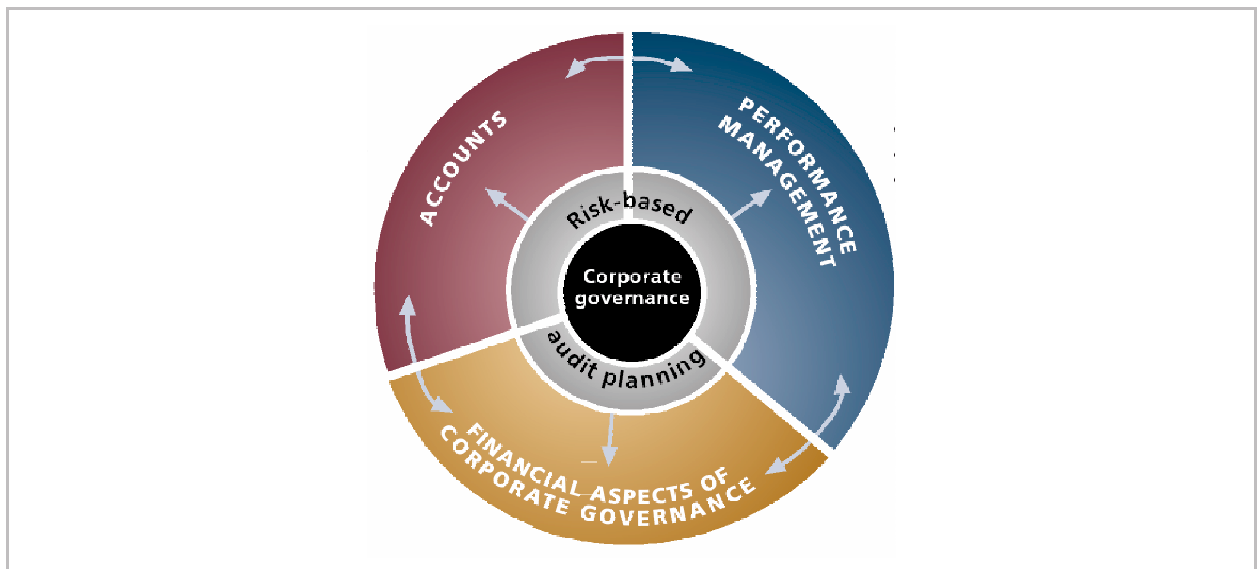
- 1 This Annual Audit Letter summarises the conclusions and significant issues arising from our recent audit of the Authority.
- 2 We have issued separate reports during the year setting out the findings and conclusions from the specific elements of our programme. These reports are listed at Appendix 2 for information.
- 3 The Audit Commission has circulated to all audited bodies a statement that summarises the key responsibilities of auditors. Our audit has been conducted in accordance with the principles set out in that statement. What we say about the results of our audit should be viewed in the context of that more formal background.
- 4 Appendix 3 provides information about the fee charged for our audit.

Audit objectives

- 5 Our main objective as your appointed auditor is to plan and carry out an audit that meets the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice. We adopt a risk-based approach to planning our audit, and our audit work has focused on the significant risks that are relevant to our audit responsibilities.

Figure 1 Code of Audit Practice

Code of practice responsibilities



- 6 Central to our audit are your corporate governance arrangements. Our audit is then structured around the three elements of our responsibilities as shown below.

Accounts

€ Opinion.

Financial aspects of corporate governance

€ Financial standing.

€ Systems of internal financial control.

€ Standards of financial conduct and the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption.

€ Legality of transactions.

Performance management

€ Use of resources.

€ Performance information.

€ Best value performance plan.

Appendix 2 – Audit reports issued

Table 1

Report title	Date issued
Audit Plan	May 2004
Accounts	
Opinion - Accounts	October 2005
Final Accounts Memorandum	November 2005
Report on the 2004/05 Financial Statements to Those Charged with Governance (SAS 610)	October 2005
Financial Aspects of Corporate Governance	
Bichard Review Progress Assessment	May 2005
Budgetary Control Report	September 2005
Performance	
Best Value Opinion	December 2005

Appendix 3 – Audit fee

Table 2 Audit fee update

Audit area	Plan 2004/05	Actual 2004/05
Accounts	£18,020	£18,020
Financial aspects of corporate governance	£36,270	£36,270
Performance	£24,119	£24,119
Total Code of Audit Practice fee	£78,409	£78,409
Additional voluntary work (under section 35)	Nil	Nil
Total	£78,409	£78,409

Appendix 4 – HMIC baseline October 2005

- 7 In October 2004, HMIC published its baseline assessment of Humberside Police Service. This represented a baseline against which Humberside's improvement will be monitored against.
- 8 In October 2005, HMIC published an up-to-date baseline assessment. For each of the areas graded there have been two assessments, the grade achieved, and the direction of travel.
- 9 Table 3 below details the 2005 assessments and the directions of travel against the 2004 assessment.

Table 3 HMIC baseline assessment 2005

2005 headline scores

Area assessed	2005 assessment	Direction of travel
Citizen Focus (Domain A)		
Fairness and Equality	Fair	Not given
Neighbourhood Policing and Community Engagement	Fair	Stable
Customer Service and Accessibility	Fair	Improved
Professional Standards	Not given	Not given
Reducing Crime (Domain 1)		
Reducing Hate Crime and Crime against Vulnerable Victims	Fair	Improved
Volume Crime Reduction	Poor	Improved
Working with Partners to Reduce Crime	Fair	Stable

Area assessed	2005 assessment	Direction of travel
Investigating Crime (Domain 2)		
Investigating Major and Serious Crime	Good	Not given
Tackling Level 2 Crime	Fair	Not given
Investigating Hate Crime and Crimes against Vulnerable Victims	Fair	Stable
Volume Crime Investigation	Poor	Improved
Forensic Management	Fair	Improved
Criminal Justice Investigation	Fair	Improved
Promoting Safety (Domain 3)		
Reassurance	Fair	Improved
Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour and Promoting Public Safety	Fair	Stable
Providing Assistance (Domain 4)		
Call Management	Poor	Improved
Providing Specialist Operational Support	Fair	Stable
Roads Policing	Fair	Improved
Resource Use (Domain B)		
Human Resources Management	Good	Stable
Training and Development	Poor	Stable
Race and Diversity	Fair	Not given
Resource Management	Good	Stable
Science and Technology Management	Good	Improved
National Intelligence Model	Fair	Improved

Area assessed	2005 assessment	Direction of travel
Leadership and Direction		
Leadership	Fair	Not given
Strategic Management	Fair	Stable
Performance Management and Continuous Improvement	Fair	Improved

Source: HMIC baseline assessment 2005

- 10 The baseline assessment is split into seven sections which are then split further, the headline messages concluded by HMIC for each of the sections are below.
- € Citizen Focus: Force delivery within this area is sound, however there is scope for greater collaboration with other forces and key partners to enhance equality of service provision. Scope exists to further develop systems to monitor and promote fairness and equality.
 - € Reducing Crime: Over the past 12 months, working in partnership, the Force has made very significant commitment to reduce crime levels. Substantial reductions across priority crime areas have been delivered. However, the Force is still bottom of its Most Similar Forces (MSF) comparison group. HMIC recognises the effort and progress made and is greatly encouraged by the achievements to date. Continued focus within this critical area of business is essential.
 - € Investigating Crime: The Force has made advancements in detection levels within the priority crime categories. However, the improvement has not altered its position in its MSF group. Once again HMIC acknowledges the effort and progress made and is encouraged by the achievements delivered.
 - € Promoting Safety: The approach to local policing is producing positive feedback particularly, with regard to levels of concern about the fear of crime and public safety. While advances have been made in the use of ASBO legislation, greater scope exists to make more effective use of this approach to address anti-social behaviour.
 - € Providing Assistance: There is some evidence that the actions taken following the 2004 baseline assessment are beginning to provide benefits. Specialist resources such as the ARVs and the dog section have been recentralised. A road crime unit has been introduced under the auspices of the operations branch, and impressive results have been seen. The delivery of the operational roads policing remains devolved to the four divisions. There is evidence of inconsistencies of approach to service delivery and of issues around the deployment of these resources corporately to address the intelligence-led demand across the Force area.

- € Resource use: Although evidence that critical human resource policies are in place, their application to support operational policing requirements has been highlighted as an area that requires examination. Major concerns about the organisation and delivery of 'in-force' training provision. The Force's approach to race and diversity is assessed as being sound. The management of financial and physical resources within the force is recognised as a strength. Though fully administratively NIM compliant, the Force is not operationally compliant, although progress has been made.
- € Leadership and direction: The ACPO team has been in a state of flux recently. The Chief Constable is newly into post, and the DCC has recently left the force on promotion. The immediate effect was two officers 'acting' within temporary ACPO ranks. The policing vision is clear, and strong evidence emerging of the direction in which the Chief Constable is trying to take the Force. The Force recognises that in terms of the development of the critical strategies there are significant gaps. A robust, structured approach to performance management was in place and continues to be developed.