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## Essex and Kent police authorities win value for money award

Essex and Kent police authorities have won a value for money award for their collaboration work.

The award was presented at this year's Association of Police Authorities (APA) conference. The APA represents police authorities across England and Wales.

Since April 2007, Essex and Kent police forces and authorities have been working together to join up services and support functions.

The collaboration programme has achieved a number of successes, including shared marine services and joint patrols along the Thames Estuary, a joint procurement unit – which has increased the two forces' buying power – and a pioneering joint IT directorate, the first of its kind in England and Wales.

And Essex and Kent are creating one of the largest joint serious and organised crime units in the UK. The new Serious Crime Directorate (SCD) consists of six key departments dedicated to tackling serious and organised criminality across both counties, including the investigation of murders and serious sexual assaults and the targeting of organised criminal groups, drug dealers and burglars.

More than 1,100 police officers and staff in the SCD are working to provide an enhanced service to the people of Essex and Kent, with a greater and more flexible investigative capacity.

The SCD is due to be fully up and running by spring 2012 and will house police officers and staff at North Kent police station and at other sites around Essex and Kent.

Essex Police Authority chairman Robert Chambers said the authority was delighted with the progress being made with collaboration between Essex and Kent.

"This is just the beginning of an exciting project between two like-minded police forces and authorities," he said.

"We are proving by our actions that large savings can be made but, more importantly, our service to the public is being improved.

"I hope that we will continue with this excellent work to give the people of Essex and Kent an even better policing service."

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