

For the attention of Devon, Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Council Leaders

11 January 2019

Dear Colleagues

I am writing to update you on our budget preparations for Devon and Cornwall Police for 2019/20 and to draw your attention to an online poll which I launched on Wednesday to seek the public's views on council tax precept levels for the coming year.

The Chief Constable and I are currently working together to finalise the budget ahead of its submission to the Police and Crime Panel for their meeting on 8th February.

As you will be aware there was much debate at the end of last year regarding police finances due in particular to announcements in September 2018 regarding additional pension liabilities that were forecast to be placed on police forces for the coming year. The financial impact on Devon and Cornwall of these additional contributions is significant at £7.7M and when combined with other unavoidable cost increases, such as the nationally agreed pay award would have resulted in a need to halt recruitment and reduce our policing strength.

Given the rise nationally and locally, in levels of recorded crime and the demands we face through issues such as mental ill health there is a need for greater investment in policing. I have been working hard with police and crime commissioners from across the country to make the strongest possible case to government for the need for additional investment in policing.

In December the government set out its spending proposals for policing for the coming year. The provisional 2019/20 settlement offered approximately £813m of additional funding for "local policing" £509m of which is available from council tax and £143m of which is provided to part-cover the costs of pension changes and a further £161m addition to police core funding. The previous limits on council tax precept levels are proposed to be amended with the potential for a £24 per annum increase on a Band D council tax.

I have welcomed the government's recognition of the pressures and demands currently facing the service and the steps they have taken in the provisional settlement to seek to address some of these issues. However, I am acutely aware of the fact that in order to deliver this funding communities will need to increase their contribution to the policing budget in terms of the council tax precept. This additional funding is vital if we are to maintain and strengthen our policing resources in light of the additional national costs arising from issues such as police pensions and pay awards. Some further savings are available from efficiencies and we are pursuing these but alone they will not be sufficient to address these inflationary costs and support investment.

In 2018/19 following a positive response from the public to my precept survey the policing precept was increased by £12 per annum for a Band D property. This increase enabled us to make some important investments in policing, in particular to:

- fast track police officer recruitment to 3015 police officers by March 2020
- recruit new blue light officers into our communities
- roll out body worn video across our police force to improve evidence collection and protect our officers
- develop fit for purpose operational policing headquarters for both Cornwall and Devon.

These investments have been critical in helping us to protect our communities. We have seen an increase in 38 armed response officers, an expansion of our roads policing capacity and new multi-agency blue light officers will be in communities from next month following the completion of their training. However we need to go further to meet the expectations of our communities.

An increase of £24 per annum to Band D council tax for 2019/20 will enable us to make further important investments as well as meeting the nationally imposed costs from issues such as pension contribution increases and pay awards.

It would allow us to recruit an additional 85 police officers, bringing our police officer strength to 3100 by the end of 2020 – the highest number since 2012 and since the inception of Police and Crime Commissioner. This investment would allow the Chief Constable to:

- place an additional neighbourhood police officer in every policing sector
- recruit more detectives to investigate crimes and bring more criminals to justice
- recruit more response officers so we can get to more incidents, more often and in better time
- maintain our investment in roads policing

I believe that this additional strength will make a real difference to our communities. In addition, 30 experienced officers are being released to the front line from back-office

functions at Devon and Cornwall Police HQ (Middlemoor) to further strengthen policing in our communities linked to my decision to not go ahead with the proposed merger with Dorset Police. This will increase capacity across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly by more than 100 operational police officers.

An increase of £24 per annum on the police precept for the majority of households in Devon and Cornwall (where 60% of households are Bands A-C) will equate to an additional 41p a week. I am fully aware of the financial pressures that many households face and do not take this issue lightly. As you are well aware there are fundamental issues with the way that police funding is currently allocated and I will be continuing to work with you and with PCCs from across the country to seek to remedy this through the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review and the long promised police funding formula review. However for now we must operate within the current funding parameters to deliver the best possible policing service for the people of Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

I would ask you to encourage your communities to engage with my precept survey which went live on 9th January to share their views with me on this important issue. The survey is available online at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/GXPM5LX> or hard copies can be obtained by contacting my office on 01392 225555.

I will be presenting my draft budget and council tax precept proposal to the Police and Crime Panel, at which your council is represented, at the end of January for consideration at their meeting on 8th February. If you would like to discuss this issue with me before that time please contact me on 07769996066.

Yours sincerely



Alison Hernandez
Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly