

Welcome to the latest edition of the Police Authority's e.newsletter designed to keep you informed about policing developments across the county.

At our recent meeting, the new Chief Constable Alf Hitchcock gave members a brief overview of his first few weeks in the Force. He has certainly been busy, meeting with many local organisations to look at future policing needs across Bedfordshire. In a run down of the some higher profile policing issues that have occurred since he joined us, he praised the professionalism of the officers and staff who policed the recent EDL demonstration so successfully alongside partners, community mediators, cadets and external Forces.

Peter F Conniff, Chair, Bedfordshire Police Authority

Stephanie McMenemy, Chief Executive, Bedfordshire Police Authority

Police Part of Council Tax Frozen for 2011-12

At its meeting held on February 18th, 2011, members of Bedfordshire Police Authority unanimously agreed to freeze the proportion of council tax local people pay towards policing next year.

The decision was in recognition of the financial hardship many households in the county face in the current economic climate. As a result, the Authority now qualifies for a Government grant, equivalent to a council tax increase of 2.5% to make up for any lost revenue generated from council tax.

Residents will therefore pay £144.77 per annum (which works out at 40p a day) in 2011-12 for a Band D property, which is the same rate as last year.

The Budget for Policing Bedfordshire in 2011-12

Next year's budget for policing Bedfordshire was approved at a figure of £103.115million, which takes into account the funding shortfall from the Government of £3.970million.

During the next four years, the Authority's funding from the Government will reduce by approximately £19million and two-thirds of these savings must be made over the next two years, which means the Authority needs to save £6.2million in 2011/12 and a further £5.6million in 2012/13.

Fortunately we have plans to handle this situation as a result of our previous efficiency programmes and contingency planning.

Both the Force and the Police Authority have spent many months considering internal processes and structures to seek out less expensive and more effective ways of working. We have set out to introduce new ways of working that will not damage performance or threaten the services that matter most to our communities, reorganising several key aspects of our service so that we can still deliver a quality policing service.

Local Policing Plan Fights Crime and Protects Public

The budget approved by the Authority has been developed to ensure that all resources are used to maximum effect where they are most needed. The way in which resources are deployed is agreed with the Authority and the Chief Constable, which results in the production of the Local Policing Plan.

The Police Authority has approved an overarching four year plan which incorporates more specific information for the coming year. The plan clearly states that Bedfordshire Police will focus on Fighting Crime and Protecting the Public, which is the primary purpose of the Force.

The plan aims to deliver four key outcomes:

1. Protection of Life
2. Protection from Violence
3. Protection of Property
4. Protection from Disorder

As we explained in the last newsletter, we are introducing new ways of working that will remove managerial layers and make the force more efficient by providing a highly localised service. A new centralised structure will provide local policing teams assessing local requirements before calling for support from experts in areas such as crime investigation.

Naturally, resources must be allocated to meet demand but we are clear that every area will have its own local policing team.

Both the Authority and the Force are clear that the focus in terms of performance should be targeted on those areas that cause the most harm to our communities and require improvements. Therefore the Police Authority will concentrate its scrutiny on key areas for improvement over the next twelve months.

The full plan can be found [here](#)

What Local People Said

To ensure that the way we use our resources reflects the views of local people, once again we asked people what they thought. Our online survey asking how people would like to see our resources used was completed by 1,445 people, including 76 businesses.

We were pleased to learn that two thirds think that the Police provide good value for money, which verifies the views of Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and the Audit Commission.

We also asked people to prioritise the use of police resources. People felt that it was more important to have a higher focus on the protection of life and protection from violence than disorder issues, although 83% felt that resources should be targeted on areas where crime and anti social behaviour are higher. The vast majority (87%) confirmed that they would be happy to see different a workforce mix as long as their policing needs were still met.

Several people also told us that in their view the role of the police has become too broad, suggesting that a "back to basics" would be more effective.

Looking Ahead

While it is likely that directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners will replace Police Authorities by May 2012 there remains a lot to be achieved before then.

The ongoing funding cuts will mean that we will need to make some difficult decisions to ensure that we can balance the budget for 2012-13, while ensuring that the quality of policing does not suffer. We are planning to focus our efforts on scrutinising areas that have had recent investment to ensure that performance improves while costs are cut.

Our forward planning and preparation for the new landscape mean we are well placed to meet the challenges ahead and ensure a smooth transition to the new governance processes.

Over the next few months we will gain greater clarity on these issues and will keep you informed.

Go ahead for joint road policing unit

Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Police Authorities have approved a new joint unit to deal with all road policing issues (including traffic patrols, the deployment and development of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology, investigations into serious road collisions and road deaths, traffic management and vehicle recovery) across the two counties.

The move will provide increased resilience and greater resources at peak times, as well as efficiency savings. In its first full year, the joint function will save both forces around £654,000 and this is expected to increase in subsequent years to almost £700,000 per annum.

The move follows the establishment of a number of successful collaborative initiatives for the two forces over recent years, including a joint Dog Unit, Scientific Services Unit and Major Crime Unit, which are currently delivering savings of £3million per year.

In addition, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire are moving towards establishing a Strategic Policing Partnership with Cambridgeshire which will enable the three forces and police authorities to work together to establish further collaborative units in due course, including a three-force road policing function.

Our collaboration projects are designed to help us protect the local policing service that our residents have told us is very important to them. We will continue to work with our local partners to ensure that local people receive the type of service that matters most to them.

And finally...

If you know of anyone who may like to receive a copy of this, please forward this email - and please copy us in so that we can include their address on our distribution list.

If you have any questions about any of the articles in this newsletter, or indeed any other area of our responsibilities, then please get in touch.

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