

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

1. The Funding Cuts
2. Local Policing is Top Priority
3. Police Numbers
4. Improving Services, Cutting Expenditure
5. Collaboration and Partnerships
6. Local Services for Local People
7. Elected Police and Crime Commissioners
8. Ways to Contact Us

As you will be aware, the weeks ahead represent some of the most challenging we have ever faced and we intend to keep you updated as matters progress. If you have any questions about any of the issues in this newsletter, or any other matter that is within the Police Authority's area of responsibility, please do contact us.

Peter F Conniff, Chair, Bedfordshire Police Authority

Stephanie McMenemy, Chief Executive, Bedfordshire Police Authority

1. The Funding Cuts

In December 2010, the Government announced details of police funding for the two financial years from April 2011 and indicative figures for the following two years.

In total, the reductions equate to approximately £19M over the next four years, with £6.3M of this needing to be found in 2011-12 and £5.5M in 2012/13.

We have been bracing ourselves for this for some time and a great deal of groundwork has already been undertaken so that we can minimise the impact on operational policing.

However, there is no getting away from the fact that the Police Authority and Force will now need to make difficult decisions to protect frontline policing services as far as possible.

2. Local Policing remains top priority

We have been exploring a range of options which will reduce the organisational structure of the Force but fundamentally maintain the local policing teams which are valued by the public. In the following articles you will see how we intend to do this.

In the meantime we are working to set the budget, agreeing where our resources should be used and seeing how we can extend our collaboration work with other forces and partners to stretch our funding further.

You can give us your views on our budget from January 13, by visiting the website www.bedfordshirepoliceauthority.co.uk and completing our budget survey.

When the grant was announced we were disappointed that, despite the support of our MPs, Bedfordshire is still not receiving the full grant relative to its needs. On the positive side, however, the Government agreed to retain the Neighbourhood Policing Fund for another two years which helps to fund PCSOs.

3. Police Numbers

In order to meet the required reductions in funding, we will be changing the way in which some services are

delivered. As a result it is anticipated that there will be both police officer and staff cuts.

We expect that in 2011/12 police officer numbers will reduce by 60, but both the Authority and Force are committed to minimising the impact on frontline services and any unnecessary expenditure will be cut.

We are determined that with the new ways of working, due to be in place by April 1st this year, the public will receive an improved service that is excellent value for money – delivering real savings.

4. Improving Services, Reducing Expenditure

The funding cuts have meant that we have had to look at new ways of working – ways that focus on the provision of a quality policing service that best meets the needs of our communities.

Following the decision not to progress with a merger between ourselves and Hertfordshire Constabulary attention was therefore focussed on a project called Programme 2011, looking at different ways of working, both in terms of visible policing and support functions, to see how these can be provided more efficiently.

The changes include the delivery of local policing services. There will be no geographical divisions: instead, there will be a Chief Superintendent in charge of Local Policing and another directing the work to tackle crime.

There will be three local policing districts who will work with the Community Safety Partnerships in each unitary area and Local (Neighbourhood) Policing Teams will be given additional resources to help them to tackle more crime.

The result of this is that policing will be more localised, which is what the public have said they want to see.

There will also be one countywide team to respond to incidents, with bases spread across the county. The single team will bring economies of scale and with the aid of the Authority's investment in new technology, is intended to speed up response times.

Improvements in the way the Control Room is operated will lead to more issues being resolved by telephone. The appointments system is already improving the service we give to the public. Improvements to technology will help us have the right resources in the right place at the right time.

Programme 2011 will also see a more centralised approach in terms of criminal justice, intelligence work and public protection, increasing our resilience and providing economies.

The Crime Management team will focus on the most serious crimes which have the greatest impact. This team will increase the number of support staff in specialist roles to make it more efficient.

All support services will be reviewed to ensure that the appropriately skilled people are in the right posts. This will enable us to preserve frontline policing services.

5. Collaboration and Partnership Working

Already acknowledged nationally as the leaders in collaborative working with our police partners, we are delighted that Cambridgeshire has recently agreed to join the strategic partnership between Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. This three way programme will bring greater economies of scale and help us all become more efficient.

Current collaboration projects include policing services which deal with specialist operations, such as major incident investigation, roads policing and forensics. In addition, we are also collaborating on certain 'back office' services including Information Technology and Procurement.

The Collaboration programme is already delivering savings amounting to £3m per year, and we have ambitious plans for the future. However, it is clear that this alone will not be enough.

Therefore we are exploring new ways of working with our partner agencies to see where a more 'joined up' approach can be adopted. This includes areas such as improved access to services, offender management, property and business services.

6. Local Services for Local People

Our overall priority is to maintain the services that matter most to local people and we are fully committed to keeping the public, partners and stakeholders fully informed and consulted on the changes to services.

As part of this, the Authority is undertaking a series of presentations at Community Safety Forums across the county over the next few weeks, when people will be able to ask questions and give feedback on our plans.

7. Elected Police and Crime Commissioners

The recent Police Reform Bill sets the way for Police Authorities to be replaced by Police and Crime Commissioners. There will be one Commissioner for the county of Bedfordshire who will be elected by the public in May 2012. Further details will be provided in a future communication when the transition arrangements and their implications on the public and partners have been clarified by the Coalition Government.

For further information or to contact us:

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