



Protecting Local Policing for the Future Statement from the Police and Crime Commissioner

Last year, I issued an open letter. It stressed the importance local policing holds for me and asked serious questions about how we can protect it for the long term. I have been asking these questions at events across the county as well as hearing direct from residents and organisations who have written to me. People have told me that they agree with my strategy to protect the local teams and partnerships that have cut crime and kept Hertfordshire safe.

The Chief Constable and I are in full agreement that the first name on the policing team-sheet must be neighbourhood policing - not only because you have consistently told me that you value the Hertfordshire way of policing but because it cuts crime. We have worked hard to meet the financial challenges that all police forces face. At the same time we have been protecting the services that the public most value - and which have the best chance of delivering results. In my first year in office I have been able to protect frontline local policing whilst making substantial savings (in fact savings of around £35 million will have been secured over the four years to 2014/15). In contrast, many areas of the country have either had to centralise policing services or to raise taxes (or in some cases to do both). For Hertfordshire, I was reluctantly considering for a 3.4% increase in the policing element of council tax (called the precept) this year and potentially next but was ever mindful of the need to minimise the burden on hardworking families and residents.

Now, due to careful financial planning and a better than expected overall settlement from central government, I am pleased to confirm my intention to freeze policing taxes for the fourth year running. In doing so, I am confident that the future of Hertfordshire's local policing model can be safeguarded. At the same time I am committing to funding the vital partnership work across the county which keeps our communities safe in each district and borough.

I will continue to relentlessly search for the savings which need to be made to protect the frontline and I may need to look again at the precept next year. As I said in my letter, some tough decisions need to be made which will impact on the back office. Efficiency will be found by collaborating with neighbouring forces; I have signed a deal with Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire that will make this a reality. I will also boost work with councils and other local services as well as looking at outsourcing, where this makes business sense. In parallel, I will invest in mobile technology which helps frontline officers stay out on patrol and 'virtual' courts and case-tracking tools to improve speed and accessibility. I am committing to keeping a physical policing hub in each of Hertfordshire's ten districts and boroughs, staffed by dedicated local teams. Rigorous assessments will be made to make sure residents are getting the best value elsewhere within the costly police estate.

The vision that I have set in my Police and Crime Plan is for a real improvement in outcomes: a system centred on victims and the public; a rebalancing of the responsibility for the costs of crime; services that work well together and make business sense. This vision needs excellent local leadership and strong teams across the county to become a reality. And I am confident that the Chief Constable and I have the plans in place to make it happen.