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To
Members of Parliament
The Police and Crime Panel
Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executive Officers
Community Safety Partnership Chairs
Health and Wellbeing Board Chairs
The Lord Lieutenants
The High Sheriffs
Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board

By email

13th January 2016

Dear Roger,

Policing Priorities and Budgets for 2016/17

I am writing to update you on recent developments, my plans for the next few months and my intentions regarding my Police and Crime Plan. I also wanted to include thoughts on police funding and our way ahead following the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and the police grant settlement, which was announced just before Christmas.

Police Funding

Like all public sector organisations we faced considerable uncertainty over the past few months. These uncertainties were compounded by the government's proposals to reform the police funding formula which would have cost Devon and Cornwall a further £15 million per annum against our expectations that long standing arguments on tourism and rural access should result in an uplift in our share of national funds. Taken together with the government's requirements for departments to demonstrate a minimum of 25% reduction in their spend, this led us in the late summer to plan for a savings requirement of £54million. This level of saving would have decimated policing as we knew it and caused me to explore ways for the public to offset this threat through a significant precept rise.

Over the past eight weeks we have witnessed dramatic developments. Firstly, Ministers decided to delay the funding formula review for 12 months due to gross errors in the review process discovered by my office. Secondly, the Chancellor announced in the Autumn Statement that overall policing budgets would receive “real term protection”.

Both of these announcements were most welcome and the funding outlook is undeniably more positive. However policing still faces considerable challenges and some tough decisions as we move forward. We estimate that, to break even, we will need to save £13m over the next four years; only then with further savings can we plan to invest in transformation to address emerging threats with less resources.

While the Government has committed to protecting police budgets, national police funding will need to accommodate over £2bn worth of national projects. Locally, we will be indentifying considerable savings to support investment to address key threat areas such as counter terrorism, cyber crime and child sexual exploitation.

Uncertainty over the future of the police funding formula from next year remains a significant risk factor. A negative or neutral result will fail to acknowledge the long-standing unfairness faced by Devon and Cornwall, which I referred to above. We are also looking to put enablers in place, such as alignment of ICT and HR terms and conditions within our major collaboration initiatives, in order to help us transform policing to meet the demands of the future. We should not under-estimate the complexity of these projects.

Given these challenges the Chief Constable will be continuing his current work to identify core policing tasks and to look at ways in which the police can better manage demands on them. Some of the latter work could be world-class in terms of better addressing “customer” needs at the first point of contact.

We will also continue to be more effective and reduce costs by working more collaboratively with other police and blue light services and with local authorities and other partners. There is intense activity in our Strategic Alliance with Dorset Police and our collaborative work with the three other southwest police forces is set in a regional context.

Following the publication in late December of the local police grant settlement for 2016/17 we are working now to finalise our budgetary situation for the coming year.in the unusual context of a one-year, not 4-year, settlement from the Government. Our budget proposals will be presented to the Police and Crime Panel at the start of February 2016. You may be aware of recent statements by the Chancellor and the Home Secretary over the past few weeks on the importance of preserving police funding levels. In order for PCCs to deliver this it is necessary to increase their local

precept. I will set out my plans regarding the precept for 2016/17 as part of my budget proposals to the Panel.

Police and Crime Plan Priorities

My existing Police and Crime Plan was put in place in 2014 and refreshed in April 2015. That Plan, which is informed by the Peninsula Strategic Assessment, sets out my six Priorities for Devon and Cornwall:

- To make our area a safer place to live, work and visit
- To reduce the crime and harm caused by the misuse of alcohol
- To make every penny count to protect policing in the long term
- To promote an effective Criminal Justice System for our area
- To deliver a high quality victim support service
- To encourage and enable citizens and communities to play their part

With the Police and Crime Commissioner elections due to take place in May 2016, I will not be formally updating my Police and Crime Plan for 2016/17. It will be for my successor, when taking up office next year, to put in place a new policing plan for Devon and Cornwall.

My existing Plan, which runs until 2017, will remain the focus for policing over the coming months and I will continue to work closely with the Chief Constable and colleagues across the Peninsula to drive forward progress against those priorities. In reaching this decision I have given careful thought to new or emerging issues.

I already place a strong emphasis on protecting the vulnerable in our society. There has been significant progress this year with the roll out of a new vulnerability screening tool and the launch of our new Victim Care Unit, but there remains much work to be done. I have also taken account of the most recent Peninsula Strategic Assessment for Devon and Cornwall prepared by the Community Safety Partnerships. This identifies two key threats for the Peninsula – domestic abuse/sexual violence and alcohol related harm. Both of these are already key priorities within my Plan.

In 2015 I updated my Plan to increase the focus on tackling safeguarding, child sexual exploitation and cyber crime, and to embed a stronger commitment to crime prevention. I also recognised the increased importance of local action to tackle extremism and counter terrorism. These issues will require considerable focus and investment over the coming year. We need to continue to work closely with national and local partners to examine these issues over the coming months and ensure we provide a robust and appropriate response within Devon and Cornwall.

Finally, it is vital that the public are able to access and contact the police and I will not let up in my efforts to ensure that the 101 service is improved. While the police

continue to develop alternative contact pathways I must ensure that waiting times on the 101 service are reduced. Over the past 12 months, despite clear direction to the police, there has been little progress. I will be taking steps in my final months of office to change this.

As candidates for the role of PCC emerge before the May election, my team and I will be doing all we can to brief them and ensure a smooth transition.

I would be interested to hear any feedback on my planned approach, in particular if you believe that there are matters not covered by my existing Plan which need to be added for the next few months. It would be helpful to have your response by 3rd February 2016.

Yours sincerely

Yours ever
Tony

Tony Hogg

Police and Crime and Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly