

My proposals for the 2016/17 policing precept

Throughout my term of office I have been keen to set out my plans and thoughts each year on how best to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policing, continue to protect and strengthen local policing, and keep crime low by spending public money wisely.

The government's recent spending review confirmed a good settlement for policing with overall police spending in real terms protected until 2019/20. The Home Secretary has been clear that forces should not become complacent, but to press ahead with their agreed savings plans, continuing to reform in order to meet the challenges not only of today, but also the challenges of tomorrow. As the Police and Crime Commissioner, it is my duty to ensure that the service remains agile and able to adapt to the pace of change, working in the most efficient and effective ways, and strengthening and protecting Neighbourhood Policing - the very bedrock of policing - to keep the county safe. This remains true today.

Policing Challenges

In Hertfordshire, the Police Grant Settlement (2016/17) has had a small impact on funding within the overall budget settlement, taking the policing grant for Hertfordshire down by £0.6 million to £118 million. Our continued collaboration with our neighbouring forces of Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire has generated significant savings and improvements in our capacity and capability. By the end of 2016/17 Hertfordshire will have exceeded £2 million in collaborative savings. We will continue to build on these to provide greater resilience and demand management going forward.

In addition, Hertfordshire has a strong level of reserves, amounting to £48.6 million, to support one off 'investments to save', which I will use for police officer recruitment and enable savings to be phased in over the medium-term. This has enabled reductions in government funding to be absorbed. The Constabulary is in a sound financial position, with a high level of reserves and a well-developed savings plan. Hertfordshire has one of the lowest council tax police precepts, seventh in the country for a Band D property, and as such has been given additional flexibility by government to raise income from council tax due to its excellent financial management. I have asked the Chief Constable to put forward proposals to spend some of the reserves on emerging areas of crime such as Cybercrime, and also to respond to areas that the public tell me are of concern, such as fly-tipping, anti-social behaviour and speeding on the roads.

I have been clear since I was elected that I will only take from the public what is required to provide the level of service needed to meet on-going policing demands. I do not believe it is fair to ask for more money than I asked for last year from hard working taxpayers. The public sector must reduce its costs and policing must play its part. I am confident that excellent services can be delivered without having to put up the policing part of your council tax.

This year I will be asking my officers whether I can make a small reduction in the police element of the council tax so that I do not need to ask the people of Hertfordshire to pay as much for policing as they have done for the last five years. This will ensure that residents continue to receive a first class policing service that protects the public from harm and delivers a service that is value for money.

Your views are important

In summary, I am considering a small reduction in the police element of the council tax for Hertfordshire for 2016/17. Given the favourable policing grant, extended savings from collaboration, and significant reserves, we are able to balance the books without having to ask taxpayers for additional money.

These are my thoughts, but I want to hear from you. I need your views and comments to help determine whether this is the right decision or not for Hertfordshire. This is your chance to have a say on the amount you pay for policing across Hertfordshire.

If you would like to give comments, please send them to the.plan@herts.pnn.police.uk or by letter to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, 15 Vaughan Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 4GZ by 11th January 2016.