

POLICE AUTHORITY VIEWPOINT

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Dear Colleague

Welcome to the second edition of 'Viewpoint', Lancashire Police Authority's e-bulletin, keeping you informed about policing in Lancashire.

The Authority has just set the budget for policing in 2009-2010 and therefore this issue focuses on resources, illustrating the excellent value for money that policing in Lancashire provides.

In setting this year's budget, we listened carefully to the views of Members of the Authority, Council leaders, MPs, Peers and other local politicians. We also consulted Lancashire people through our Citizens Panel, *Opinion!*, asking them what level of precept increase they felt was reasonable.

We felt that we must protect previous investments in policing while taking the current economic climate into account and agreed that, apart from what is necessary to maintain the current high level of police performance, it was essential that we kept any increase to a reasonable level.

There has been some speculation in the media regarding the possibility that we may see some reductions in officer numbers. We are doing everything we can to maintain frontline police officer numbers, but our overriding priority is to provide the best and most effective police service to the people of Lancashire and keeping the most vulnerable in our society safe.

We would be pleased to brief you further on issues relating to the budget or indeed, any other policing matter within our area of responsibility. If you would like more information please contact the Authority using the details at the bottom of this bulletin.

Malcolm Doherty

Geoff Roper

Councillor Malcolm Doherty OBE
Chair of Lancashire Police Authority

Councillor Geoff Roper
Vice Chair of Lancashire Police Authority

Article 2: The Budget 2009-2010

This year's budget reflects the Authority's commitment to help Lancashire Constabulary sustain its impressive levels of performance without placing excessive burdens on the local taxpayer.

Therefore the budget for 2009-2010 has been set at £270.250M, an increase of 3.1% (£8.179M) on 2008-09 and means that a Band D household will pay a total of £142.08 a year (£2.73 a week) towards policing. This represents an annual increase of 4.5% (£6.12) on the policing precept, less than 12p per week and is in line with the responses from our consultation, which showed that 79% of respondents were willing to pay an increase of £6 or above.

In Lancashire however, the majority of households are Band B or below. The total amount that a Band B household will pay for policing is approximately £2.12 a week, or £110.51 for the year.

We are facing a challenging financial position in a period of great economic turmoil. For example, investment income has been reduced by nearly £1.2M, changes in the tax base have led to an expected reduction of £0.5M and fuel and energy costs are extremely volatile.

The Constabulary's proven track record in delivering efficiency savings over a number of years (over £83M worth of efficiency savings have been found since 2000) has been recognised by The Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabularies. It is on target to deliver the challenging target of £27m (9.3%) efficiency and productivity gains over the 3 year period 2008-11 and in the 2009/10 budget some £3.6m productivity and efficiency gains will be used to support further investment in key strategic priorities.

This will provide necessary investment in key areas including combating serious and organised crime and services aimed at protecting vulnerable people, where an additional £1.3M will be invested in 2009/10. We feel that this budget will enable the current high service levels to continue and allow further investment in critical areas.

We are particularly pleased to see that the developments planned in order to better protect vulnerable people will be funded by the reprioritisation of resources.

Article 3: Previous Investments and Achievements

The Police Authority, when setting the budget for 2009-2010, was keen to protect the investments and achievements in policing made over recent years – balanced against the pressures imposed by the current economic climate.

Previous decisions

Over several years the Police Authority has been working, with the support of our partners and the local community, to increase the policing precept to provide the Constabulary with the necessary funding to improve policing in Lancashire. As a result the resources base has increased significantly and, since 1999, officer strength has risen by 500 officers.

The improved levels of funding facilitated a great many improvements and we believe that we have provided the Constabulary with the funds to increase productivity allowing some reprioritisation, thereby enabling it to provide the same excellent service with less resources.

Although the amount of funding derived from the precept has been steadily raised, the fact remains that the policing precept in Lancashire remains one of the lowest in England and Wales and is the seventh lowest for a Shire police force.

Investments pay dividends

The Authority's decision to invest in policing developments has paid dividends and performance achievements speak for themselves.

In the last twelve months the Constabulary:

- Was the top performing police force in England and Wales;
- Was the only force in England and Wales to 'Exceed the Standard' for both Neighbourhood Policing and Citizen Focus, when assessed by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary;
- Was awarded the highest possible grade in its Police Use of Resources Evaluation (PURE) by the Audit Commission.

Crime reductions:

- Burglary is at a 35 year low;
- Vehicle crime is at its lowest for 28 years;
- Criminal damage is falling significantly

Making a difference

The planned developments for 2009-2010 will build on the progress made in previous years where additional resources have made a real difference, including:

Public Protection Units

Protecting vulnerable people is a key priority for both Authority and the Constabulary. The additional resources provided the divisional Public Protection Units with the capacity to bolster the work on domestic abuse, child abuse and sex offender management. This year, productivity savings will enable further investment in this vital area of police work.

Counter Terrorism

There are now Special Branch officers working in some of the county's most vulnerable communities to reassure the public but also to positively intervene with individuals who pose the most threat. These officers have been active in developing intelligence, linking in with our established Neighbourhood Policing teams and community representatives to provide a more public face to the work of Special Branch.

Serious and Organised Crime

Additional funding in previous years has enabled more detailed mapping of organised crime groups to take place. The Serious and Organised Crime Unit has been able to use that mapping to target resources more effectively and their work has had real results in that a number of significant criminals have been imprisoned and firearms recovered.

Article 4: Priorities for the Year

The overarching priorities this year are to continue to protect the people of Lancashire in a time of great uncertainty and to see a reduction in crime and the fear of crime in the county.

Authority members felt strongly during the budgetary process that consideration should be given to funding developments designed to protect the most vulnerable members of our society such as children, young people and adults at risk of violence or abuse. In

response to this the Constabulary has reprioritised its resources to provide an investment package worth £1.3M aimed at further developing its Public Protection Units.

The budget will also enable additional investment of £360k to tackle serious and organised crime and £250k to target criminals using the roads and reduce casualties.

Confidence and Safety

This year, the Government is setting Police Authorities and their forces a single target of increasing confidence in the police service.

Recent consultation undertaken by the Police Authority shows that the majority of respondents feel safe and have confidence in the police service. In November 2008 the responses to *Opinion!* showed that 85% of the 2,344 respondents felt safe and 93% were confident in the police service.

The measures outlined in the budget this year are designed to help raise the bar still further through the effective delivery of Neighbourhood Policing, protecting vulnerable people and combating the most serious crimes.
