

THE BEAT

Tackling criminality is never easy but it becomes more complicated when there is scarce funding to deliver any meaningful solutions. Nottinghamshire once again faces a new year with a substantially reduced budget which means we cannot possibly support every 'improvement' required to keep our streets safe. Difficult decisions will need to be made to allocate resources based on risk and harm however we are already identifying new patterns of working which promise to enhance our response without straining our finances. The public can rest assured that the changes we implement now will safeguard future frontline policing and that their safety will remain our focus in the year ahead.




Budget 2015-16

Protecting the visible style of policing favoured by our communities is becoming more difficult to achieve and as we face our toughest budget yet, difficult decisions are required to balance the pressures of demand and risk against our dwindling resources.

This year, a cut in our funding allocation will see us worse off than 2014-15, a loss that is actually around £11m taking into account inflation. With less money coming in, we have no option but to set the revenue budget for 2015-16 at £189.6m - a lower level than last year.

The Police and Crime Panel has agreed to support my plans to increase the police portion of the council tax bill - known as the precept - by 1.98%. This small rise amounts to £3.42 a year for an average household, taking the total amount of council tax paid towards policing for a Band D property to £176.40.

With less money available, we have reluctantly had to accept that our recruitment plans need to be put on 'hold' for this year. However, we will review the position after the General Election and the next Comprehensive Spending Review due to be held in the autumn. Nevertheless, this budget does provide the resources for new and different ways of achieving safer communities, including prevention work which aims to reduce demand and a renewed focus on the needs of rural areas.

The Chief Constable and I remain committed to protecting the community safety budget, and we are determined to ensure the policing service in Nottinghamshire is fit for the future.



Supporting vulnerable women

As Nottinghamshire's specialist victims' advocate, Chris Cutland, my deputy, has been working hard to forge new links with our community and charitable partners to strengthen the support we provide victims of violence.

One specific area of interest has been Female Genital Mutilation, a largely underreported and unpunished act of violence which is placing significant numbers of young women and children at risk. Chris's close working with FGM support charity Mojatu Foundation recently culminated in a national conference highlighting the plight of survivors and identifying more effective ways of protecting young girls at risk. The event, hosted by the Foundation and held at Nottingham's Hyson Green Youth Club on February 12, drew experts from a variety of backgrounds to discuss how protection for survivors could be strengthened. The ideas exchanged will now be fed into the Foundation's formal action plan to tackle FGM.

As the county's specialist lead on domestic violence issues, Ms Cutland is at the forefront of efforts to improve support services and deliver effective justice for victims of crime. She has recently overseen the implementation of the Victims Code locally which provides victims with a legal right to information about their case and is pursuing numerous intervention strategies to safeguard vulnerable individuals before they become a victim of violence, including the recently introduced Clare's Law, which allows police to disclose details of a person's abusive past to a potential partner. This particular scheme safeguarded 66 potential victims in the county in the six months following its implementation in March last year.



Hate Crime top of the agenda

A multitude of partners gathered at Nottingham Trent University in December for a major conference focusing on hate crime. The event, organised by the Safer Nottinghamshire Board, was aimed at identifying current best practice in tackling hate crime, setting future strategy and outlining ways in which improvements can be made to improve the experience of victims.

Community groups, councils, the police and other public and voluntary sector groups attended the event to listen to a range of experts and practitioners, including Ruth Hyde, Safer Nottinghamshire Board's Hate Crime Champion. Topics included overcoming barriers to report hate crime and improving governance and victim representation. It also concentrated on the victim's perspective by presenting a number of case studies.

There is significant under-reporting of hate crime both locally and nationally and we are working hard to provide reassurance to victims that support is available. This conference was the latest step in our unified efforts to increase awareness of this crime.

We will shortly be publishing a plan of action in partnership with Nottingham Citizens. More of this in the next edition.



Stop and Search

As part of my ongoing commitment to tackle issues of imbalance and disproportionality within policing, I am continuing to monitor and evaluate Stop and Search figures and build a picture of how these powers are being utilised across Nottinghamshire. During this scrutiny I learned that the Force has one of the lowest rates in England and Wales for Stop and Search per 1,000 people.

The engagement activities we have undertaken during the past 12 months, which have captured the views of more than 4,000 residents, continue to show us that Stop and Search remains an area of concern among the wider public. A total of 33% of all those interviewed during the various surveys cited 'Stop and Search' as an important business area while 46% of interviewees described it as 'important'.

So far this year, there have been 3,549 stop and searches undertaken across the county of which 76% of individuals were white, 16.9% were non-white and 7.1% were not disclosed. Of the non-white individuals, 8.5% were black and 4.6% were Asian.



Of those individuals stopped and searched, positive action was taken against almost 26% (13.1% were arrested and 7.1% received a cannabis warning). The majority of searches related to controlled drugs (58%).

Nottinghamshire Police is one of many forces which publishes Stop and Search data online, revealing the location of stop and searches for purposes of openness and transparency. I will continue to monitor Stop and Search trends to identify any perceived imbalances so that I can swiftly act upon them with the aim of increasing confidence in community policing.

Nottinghamshire gets tough on shoplifting

Shoplifting has a major impact on the local economy and affects all of us in the form of higher prices. I'm determined to challenge the view that shoplifting is a victimless crime and have recently invested funds into proactive work which will help us to increase our intelligence on repeat offenders.

In addition to working in partnership with a number of major supermarket chains, I have committed £10,000 to Police and Business Crime in Nottinghamshire (PABCIN) – a public/private sector partnership, which manages and analyses intelligence relating to low-level crime and promotes the sharing of information between shopkeepers. A further £10,000 has been set aside from the Prevent funding stream to help fund three dedicated PCSOs to the project to feed information into the system's database and improve detection capabilities. Early results suggest detections are already improving.

The investment comes on top of the funding of 20 extra electronic tags specifically for shoplifting prevention purposes.

New funding for grassroots crime prevention

There are a variety of organisations throughout Nottinghamshire dedicated to reducing crime and antisocial behaviour. My Community Safety Fund provides financial support to many localised projects which address my priorities for public safety and protecting victims, witnesses and vulnerable people from harm.

This year, small community groups which can demonstrate positive outcomes from their work will share a total of £250,000 to enhance their contribution to community safety. We have received over 50 applications for grants of up to a maximum of £25,000 to help towards innovative crime reduction initiatives, particularly those which address BME issues. We are now assessing grant applications and will be making formal awards in early March to projects which make a real difference to people's lives and help vulnerable people, while also delivering reductions in criminal behaviour for the benefit of the wider community.



Tackling rural crime

With so much talk of funding cuts and resource scarcity, it is only natural that local residents become anxious about the level of police protection they will receive in future. The financial climate is tough and we have to think very carefully about where we allocate funding to manage risk and threat effectively. But we are not turning our backs on anyone, least of all our rural communities which are facing some significant challenges of their own.

My refreshed Police and Crime Plan stresses the importance of rural policing and reflects my commitment to meeting the needs of those living within our rural communities. There have been detailed discussions about how best to provide rural policing in the future and a number of initiatives are planned including the establishment of a Rural Issues Group and a Wildlife Group involving a multitude of partners.

We are also pressing ahead with plans to recruit extra Special Constables and Police Support Volunteers, make better use of new technology and digital communications such as text messages, expand the take-up of community SpeedWatch schemes across Nottinghamshire and increase the deployment of automatic number plate recognition cameras in rural areas.

There are indications nationally that rural crime is becoming more targeted to the individuals who live in these areas, with increases in the theft of high-value farming machinery, and equipment such as Land Rovers and fuel theft. With this in mind, there is a need for more preventative action through an alerts system for rural communities and this is something we are exploring. I want every Nottinghamshire community to feel safe and confident in the ability of their local policing team to protect them and we will continue to work with rural residents to ensure this is achieved.



Bulwell leads by example on shoplifting prevention

Prevention work is key to reducing prolific offending of any kind and I was most impressed by the work being undertaken by police and partners in Bulwell to address shoplifting through this approach.

Police officers, local beat teams and Community Protection in Bulwell have successfully applied for eight CRASBOs against violent offenders in the area which prevent them from entering specific stores or Bulwell altogether. The partners specifically target offenders who travel from other districts into Bulwell for the purposes of offending and have also strengthened relationships with local retailers to increase intelligence-gathering.

As part of a holistic strategy, offenders are offered support to reverse their problems from organisations such as alcohol services Compass and Last Orders. The strategy is already delivering positive outcomes.

'Listening to the public' is the path to a better police service

Nothing is ever achieved standing still and it is in this vein that I look back on my first two years as Nottinghamshire's Police and Crime Commissioner. The first half of my leadership has certainly been characterised by change, some of which has been forced upon us by the difficult financial challenges we have faced, but I genuinely believe our local communities now have a stronger, more coordinated response – and it's all because we are listening to what they are telling us.

The ongoing conversations we are having with local people are helping to steer decision-making at its highest so that we can protect them in the way that they want. We have recruited extra police officers and PCSOs to increase visibility and reassurance in our communities, as guided by the public, and we are working hard to ensure victims of crime – who are our most vulnerable service users – are understood, supported and confident in the way we handle their case.

Although this year's budgetary pressures promise to be as difficult to manage as ever, I'm very much looking forward to extending our partnership ties to progress the type of prevention work which will reduce crime in the long-term.



Volunteers' help immigrants adjust to life in Nottinghamshire

One of my duties as Commissioner is to build stronger links between our communities and the police who protect them. Traditionally, it has been more challenging to forge relationships with harder-to-reach communities such as Nottinghamshire's immigrant population however work is taking place to address this.

I was very fortunate to visit one such initiative recently which has benefitted from funding from my Community Safety Fund. The Keep Safe project, run by Voluntary Action Broxtowe, delivers informal education sessions on personal safety, child safety, and vehicle safety as part of an effort to help newly-arrived immigrants settle into community

life. The organisation also delivers sessions on how police can be contacted and how to report crime or hate incidents to ensure these residents know where to turn if they need help.

The six-week courses, which are delivered by volunteers, have so far helped more than 50 learners from all over the world, who now live in Broxtowe, to improve their English while also learning about personal safety. Members of the Beeston Neighbourhood Policing Team attend the concluding session to answer questions.

Offender rehabilitation service receives best practice recognition

Probation staff in Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland have been recognised nationally for the services they provide to reduce reoffending and make our communities safer.

The Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) was recently awarded the Committed to Excellence Award at 2* status – the highest rating at this level.

The organisation was created in June 2004 from the three local Probation Trusts, Derbyshire,

Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire & Rutland, to deliver new approaches to supervise and rehabilitate offenders to make these counties a safer place in which to live and work. Probation staff are now employed by the CRC and the National Probation Service.



KEEP ON TALKING

I'm delighted that so many people contact me, with problems, compliments and comments. This is particularly important as I need to be able to listen to your views and learn from them and also know that you can keep up to date with what my Deputy, my team and I are doing.

Whatever I do, I am answerable to you, the electorate. You can contact me at any time to ask questions or put your views across.

You can visit:

www.nottinghamshire.pcc.police.uk

You can follow me:

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