

# Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

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PO Box 412  
Guildford  
Surrey  
GU3 1BR

Tel: 01483 630200  
Fax: 01483 634502

e-mail: [surreypcc@surrey.police.uk](mailto:surreypcc@surrey.police.uk)  
Website: [www.surrey-pcc.gov.uk](http://www.surrey-pcc.gov.uk)

24<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Dear Councillor,

## **Re: Reduction in Policing Capabilities / Public Safety**

Surrey Police - like every council in Surrey - has been underfunded by the National Funding Formula to the tune of millions of pounds a year, a financial challenge that has been compounded by recent austerity.

Since 2000, Surrey Police has undertaken a series of far-reaching saving programmes to manage the budget pressure it faces. The force has radically restructured - collaborating on specialist functions with neighbouring forces, substantially reducing its number of senior officers and managers, streamlining its back office processes and selling off most of its police stations.

We have faced the challenge of austerity head-on, never shying away from difficult decisions, always focussing on Public Safety. As a result crime is down by 8%, arrest rates are up by 15%, and HMIC has recognised us as both the only force in the Country to have increased the number of Police Officers and for having made real steps to cut non-essential costs.

However, despite these recent successes, there is no getting away from the fact that the cuts have eroded our operational capability in many specialist and high risk areas, and by extension the service we can deliver to the people of Surrey. We have lost many PCSOs, School Engagement Officers, Fraud Investigators, Forensic Staff, et al – a comprehensive list would run to several pages.



Over the next four years, we face a budget gap in the order of £22 million. Moreover, with the next round of cuts signposted last week by the Treasury, the position is only set to worsen.

Our current budget is £207 million. Our people make up around 85% of our total spending - £175 million. The rest of the money is spent on IT, infrastructure, vehicles and essential supplies. It is clear then that we have nowhere else to go but to cut our workforce. As an absolute minimum I foresee a loss of 150 posts, but more likely in the order of 400 over the next few years.

I believe we have reached a point where further cuts to Surrey Police would significantly undermine its ability to protect residents.

For this reason, I am now considering a significant increase in our other main source of funding - the police council tax precept - which accounts for nearly half of our total budget. I am giving thought to putting forward an increase of the order of 24%, which would be put to the public vote at a referendum. This referendum would be held in May next year, on the day of the General Election.

For a Band D household, this would represent an increase of just under £1 per week.

The Police precept - which makes up approximately 13% of the average total council tax bill - would increase from £211 to £262 per year for a Band D property.

***A 24% increase in our share of council tax would allow for a real step-change, including:***

- ***Maintaining and indeed improving our current ability to ensure public safety***
- ***Hundreds more police to respond to crime and ASB;***
- ***More investment in training and hence a better quality of service;***
- ***More expert officers to catch dangerous paedophiles preying on children;***
- ***More expert officers to catch fraudsters targeting people's hard earned money;***
- ***More operations to catch gangsters and drug dealers;***

I recognise that this is a radical proposal. However, I will not commit to a referendum without first consulting widely within the county to understand whether or not the public support is there for such a move. I am well aware of the potential costs, circa £1 million, but I must balance this against the potential gain over 10 years of £260 million.

With my Deputy, Jeff Harris, I am endeavouring to speak to as many meetings and other public gatherings as possible to canvass public opinion. In addition, I have commissioned independent research into public attitudes to the idea, and will also be making a survey available to the people of Surrey at a dedicated website: [www.safersurrey.co.uk](http://www.safersurrey.co.uk) (to be launched shortly).

I stress that no decision has yet been made about whether or not to pursue this referendum idea and I would welcome feedback from you, as Surrey's elected representatives, as well as views from your constituents on this proposal.



Crime and community safety are vitally important issues for all of us and I want residents to fully understand the implications of continuing on our current path of cuts to policing and, most importantly, give them the ability to do something about it – this is democracy!

If you would like to speak to me or my Deputy about the proposals, please get in touch with my office on 01483 630 200 or email [SurreyPCC@surrey.police.uk](mailto:SurreyPCC@surrey.police.uk) and we will get something arranged.

Thank you for reading.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Hurley". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

**Kevin Hurley**

Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

