

## Devon and Cornwall Police Authority: Budget Working Party 05/11/07

### Notes of the meeting

1. **Present:** Brian Greenslade, David Money, John Smith, William Thomas, Lynne Dunn, Bryan Preston, Mike Bull.
2. **Budget 2008/09 and beyond:** Following on from the seminar on 02/11/07, members debated what appear to be the emerging budget principles. It is still very early days yet but there does seem to be a developing consensus around
  - sustaining 3,500 police officers and 356 PCSOs
  - supporting the Chief Constable's drive to deliver budget savings of just under £6m and a fundamental change in the way the business is conducted
  - recognising that this will mean enforcing the staff number reductions announced 12 months ago
  - endorsing the effort to move more police officers to the front line
  - recognising that this will involve some back fill costs over and above the current budget plans including new civilian posts
  - a willingness to consider options for council tax to fund various numbers of officers to the front line eg +100, +200 etc
  - the desirability of defining a maximum target number of officer moves as a long term aim
  - an understanding that some temporary funding may be needed from reserves to enable a realistic timetable for savings but not as a substitute for savings
  - the need for a short clear public contract between the Force and the Authority as representatives of the community
  - perhaps above all, clear and urgent communications to make it clear to the community that we are listening to their concerns and are trying to deliver policing closer to the community

Some of these issues were discussed at length – especially council tax and communications. The Authority has been concerned for several years about communications internally and externally. This is now critical for a what could be a very positive message on the budget if it is handled correctly. There is a real need for some communications resource which is steeped in the Police Authority's business. Communications is being reviewed in force and Tony Melville agreed to feed members' concerns into the Chief Officer Group.

On council tax, there is the need for a difficult balance between local ability to pay and the needs of front line policing. We are already the lowest on tax in the south west and there is a danger of being left behind to the detriment of policing. Members agreed to share information on the numbers of police authorities considering challenging capping limits. Almost all authorities are worse placed than Devon and Cornwall and some face meltdown. We, at least will be able to show something positive in terms of front line policing enhancement. Government decisions will depend on what other authorities do and it is important that information is shared so that we have the clearest picture possible before any decision is reached.

An illustrative draft budget based on current policies was presented. All the figures carried a health warning at this stage. There is some optimism that efforts within Home Office may win us another 0.5% or so. Even so, the need to drive through savings is clear.

3. **Staff Handbook:** Members were updated on progress but there is still insufficient data to change the current budget estimates. Individual details will be assessed before the union ballot. A progress report will be made to the HR committee.
4. **Property:** The estate is inappropriate in terms of quality, cost, location and future policing and community needs. At the same time, there is considerable capital value locked in. The aim is to review the estate with a view to releasing value and developing an estate more in tune with future needs. There may also need to be investment in mobile police stations and new technology first to bring policing closer to the community before closing any traditional station. There is also a clear need for pump priming or an implementation budget for design and consultancy. A paper will be brought to Resources recommending the establishment of a Property Modernisation reserve of £0.75m from existing and future resources with spending being authorised by the Treasurer and the Lead Member.
5. **Forensics:** Progress(!) was reported. A full report will come to Resources.
6. **Alternative sources of funds:** A paper will be brought to the next meeting of the Working Party.
7. **Next Meeting:** 20/12/07 @ 10.00

**John Glasby**