Policing your local area: a funding dilemma

HAVE YOUR SAY: vote online www.cambs-pa.gov.uk/hottopic.cfm or email police.authority@cambs.pnn.police.uk

- In autumn 2010 the government announced massive reductions in public spending for the four year period 2011/12 to 2014/15.

- In December 2010 the government announced how much grant it would give to the Police Authority in 2011/12 and 2012/13. Over the two years Cambridgeshire will get about £11m less than previously (5% to 6% less per annum). In the following two years (2013/14 and 2014/15) reductions will be slightly less severe.

- Cambridgeshire Constabulary has already identified £11m of the £17m currently estimated to be required over four years. The force has been undertaking a restructuring programme which has moved 'back office' police officer roles to the front line while management ranks have reduced so that local constable numbers are maintained

- The Government is encouraging all local authorities not to increase their council tax in 2012-13. A one-off additional government grant of £1.5m is being offered to the Police Authority instead of raising the policing part of council tax to fund services in 2012-13.

- The grant is for one year only, whereas a council tax rise permanently increases the funding available for future years. What this means: instead of a % salary increase, you are offered a bonus instead. A salary increase would have increased your income not just in the current year but future years too. If your mortgage/ rent and utilities bills all increase due to inflation and you've spent your bonus, how will you cover the increases next year?

- Unless this lost, ongoing funding can be recovered by a council tax increase in 2013/14 – over and above the increase required to pay our unavoidable increasing costs – then the police service in Cambridgeshire would need to find a further £1.5m per year in savings. To clarify, this is in addition to the £17m we already know we have to find. £1.5m is the equivalent of 37 police constables

- The dilemma: raise council tax from April 2012 or take the grant and leave the new Police and Crime Commissioner with the decision either to raise council tax significantly from April 2013 or accept a further £1.5m per year in cuts.

- Additional considerations: local referendums must be triggered under new laws set out in the Localism Act 2011 if an authority wishes to set the increase above the government threshold. This level has been set at 4% for 2012/13. Any increase in Cambridgeshire would be below this level, and cost the average household ten pence per week.

- We are keen to hear the public's views. You can vote in our online 'hot topic' poll (www.cambs-pa.gov.uk) or email police.authority@cambs.pnn.police.uk or write to us at: Cambridgeshire Police Authority, Police HQ, Hinchingbrooke Park, Huntingdon, PE29 6NP

FACTS AND FIGURES

- The Authority's net spending this year (2011-12) is £130m. Of this, £47m (36 per cent) is financed by local council tax payers and the balance of £83m (64 per cent) by government grant.

- The policing element of the current Band D council tax is £169.56 per annum (£3.26 per week). Most households in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are below Band D. A 3 per cent increase in the council tax is around ten pence per week.

- The Police Authority will make the decision at its meeting on February 9,2012