



**AVON &
SOMERSET
POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**

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23rd October 2017

Mr Nick Hurd MP
Minister for Policing & Fire

Dear Minister

Thank you for your letter dated 19 October in response to our letter and accompanying evidence submission (entitled Tipping Point) dated 13 September 2017. As you know our submission was sent to you following your request at the July 2017 APCC/NPCC conference for evidence to support your discussions with the Treasury as part of the upcoming 2018/19 budgeting process. We welcome your request for us to set out the evidence base of what is really happening in our area and what the demand, threat and risk, partnership working and resourcing challenges are. It is very important that the Government is in possession of the full facts when making important financial decisions having significant implications for public services and local people.

We believe that the Tipping Point document sets out a detailed and compelling case that given the increases in the complexity of demand on the police and the increased threat levels the consequences of even a "broadly flat cash direct resource settlement" (as you describe it in your letter) are that the current level of policing service is unsustainable.

You refer to a number of issues in your letter which we addressed in detail in our submission to you. However, we thought it would be helpful to summarise the position here:

- You refer to a broadly **flat cash settlement** since 2015 and an increase in direct resource funding of around £4.5m since 2015. The reality is that we continue to have reductions in our Central Government Main Grant of 1.5% year on year and have had to find £65m savings since 2010, a further £8m this financial year and have to find at least a further £15m by 2021/22. The impact of the flat cash settlement is clearly set out in the Tipping Point document at pages 13 and 14 – importantly the document looks forward at the ongoing impact of the historic cuts and ongoing flat cash settlement and seeks to predict the impact on public services and local people. Our figures assumed that the public sector wage cap of 1% remained in place. Whilst we fully support hard working police officers and staff having appropriate pay rises, if no additional funding is provided this of course means that police budgets have to find further savings – we anticipate a 2% wage settlement for example would increase the total savings required from the end of this financial year to 2021/22 to £23m.

PCCs under the current arrangements are entitled to raise council tax by up to 2% this year without triggering a referendum requirement - indeed Government forecasts assume that PCCs will raise the precept by this much. This increase and the growth in the number of people paying council tax in the area (which of course in turn increases the demand for public services) means that Avon and Somerset's net budget has increased over the last two years by a total of £4.5m – however as is set out in detail in the Tipping Point document this increase is significantly outweighed by wage and other inflation and the increase in demand so we are still required to find significant savings each year.

- You refer to Avon and Somerset's **reserves** position in March 2016 in your letter. Our current and projected reserves position is set out in detail on page 16 of the Tipping Point Document. By next year our useable (non-ring-fenced) reserves are predicted to have fallen to just 5% of net annual spend and reserves are predicted to continue to fall. In reality, this is near the minimum acceptable level in our view for an organisation which has to manage unexpected significant incidents on a frequent basis.
- You refer in your letter to the **armed policing uplift**. The Counter Terrorism Specialist Firearms Officer investment is indeed welcomed. In reality, however this specialist resource will not be part of the initial response to any unplanned CT operation. This will rely on local Armed Response Vehicles which are funded by local forces – in our area in collaboration with other forces. The CTSFO recruitment has in fact put additional strain on the resourcing and recruitment to ARVs for forces in the short term. In addition, as argued in the paper, investment in Neighbourhood Policing is also crucially important to develop intelligence and contacts in communities to address the CT threat and despite our efforts to preserve this resource the ongoing financial situation is making this approach unsustainable.
- You also refer to the Police Transformation Fund (PTF). Whilst Avon & Somerset have benefitted from this fund by way of short term project funding, it is important to note that the PTF has effectively been top sliced from PCC's ongoing revenue budgets which would otherwise have been available for additional longer term investment in resources such as recruitment of additional police officers.

Finally we are very pleased that you want to take up our invitation to meet to discuss these important issues at the earliest opportunity – we think it is vital that we continue the dialogue on the future of policing in this country.

Best regards



Sue Mountstevens
Police & Crime Commissioner



Andy Marsh
Chief Constable