



(Sent via email)

Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2019

Dear Clerk to the Parish,

I am writing to you as Bedfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner to explain the current state of policing in the county and to ask for your assistance.

Every community in Bedfordshire, whatever its location, tells me that they wish to see more officers involved in local policing. Bedfordshire has just over 1100 officers to service a population of some 670,000 currently which is forecast to exceed 700,000 within three years and which here, as nationally, is experiencing unprecedented levels of demand with calls to service on some weekend evenings last summer at three times the level of a New Year's Eve.

Bedfordshire faces the third highest terror threat in the country, substantial Serious Organised Crime issues including Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery as a result of the airport and road and rail links together with the close proximity of the capital as well as drug and gun trade along so-called 'county lines' both to and from London and issues at the highest level ever in terms of gang and knife crime countywide.

In December, I won a unique emergency payment from Government of £4.571m from the Policing Special Grant to simply make good the cost of meeting the latter without which the Force was heading for an overspend. I am not permitted to overspend and must bring in policing within budget. Without the grant, recruitment would have had to stop dead.

Also in December, the Policing Minister, Nick Hurd, announced the Policing Settlement for 2019-20 for all forces. Bedfordshire Police received two grants of just £1.318m and £1.117m (the latter being designed to help with the national shortfall in police pensions and which still falls short of the amount needed by £115,000). Bedfordshire Police faces inflationary pressures including an anticipated police and staff pay award of 2% which will cost in excess of £900,000 and soaring insurance costs, including a tripling of vehicle insurance to £300,000 for this year. Your council will appreciate that, collectively, these inflationary pressures cancel out the prospect of growth in officer numbers as well as the benefit of this income.

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**Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire**

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I have, however, been awarded the leeway to raise the police precept of council tax by a maximum of £2 per month for Band D homes, without holding a referendum. Such a referendum is not an option for me as the last one, held by my predecessor, not only cost in the region of £1m which Bedfordshire Police could ill afford, once legal costs and the time of the staff of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner were taken into account, but an appeal to raise council tax was rejected by in excess of 70% of those who voted.

I am insisting however, since all the elements of income above amount to an extra £12.5m – albeit as a one year arrangement only – that the Force must recruit 160 Police Constables this year to bolster local policing primarily.

I will be frank: this is not enough, especially to provide an uplift in the villages. I provided evidence to Government in October 2017 that Bedfordshire Police requires some 300 officers and 80 detectives to meet its crime demand in a way that is comparable with other forces facing similar challenges.

The Government had intended to address the funding of all 43 forces more fundamentally in December 2020, with a promise to put that of Bedfordshire Police on a more sustainable footing permanently. I am now learning that this is likely to be delayed by a further year, in all probability because of Brexit and the economic uncertainty that surrounds it.

The answer, in your local area, may lie in your hands. I am told by councillors from the three unitary authorities in Bedfordshire (who are also facing substantial reductions in funding) that the parishes hold some substantial reserves. A PCSO costs £31,200 to fund each year. If your council wishes to consider the funding of such an officer to be dedicated to policing in the local area, subject to agreement, I would be very grateful if you would contact me directly at [Kathryn.Holloway@Bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Kathryn.Holloway@Bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk)

I would be very appreciative if your parish would discuss this matter at the earliest possible opportunity and let me know the outcome as officers cannot be produced out of thin air and I am providing every last one that this Force can conceivably afford; having already made £34.7m of savings since austerity started and with £11m more to find over the next four years to enable me to balance the books as I must.

All very best regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathryn Holloway".

Kathryn Holloway

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