

Proposed changes to neighbourhood policing in Cambridgeshire

The Chief Constable has today announced proposed plans to redevelop Cambridgeshire Constabulary's neighbourhood policing model to ensure budget gaps can be met next year and beyond.

Last year the Government announced plans to boost police numbers by 20,000 across England and Wales in the coming years, with Cambridgeshire Constabulary receiving a proportion of this, however, the force also needs to make considerable cost savings to avoid using financial reserves.

The plans, announced today (Wednesday 21 October), include the reduction and alignment of PCSOs to all neighbourhoods across the force, the removal of the community safety role and a change to the opening hours of enquiry offices across the force, which will all assist in saving £1.7 million in 2021/22.

The planned changes will see:

- The reduction of PCSOs from 80 to 40, but with a single role profile and improved alignment to their team and they will cover all 28 neighbourhoods in the county to deal with the issues that matter most to the local community
- The removal of the community safety team, resulting in the reduction of six community safety officer posts across the force
- The delivery public enquiry offices providing a seven day a week provision at Thorpe Wood and Parkside Police Stations
- The closure of nine enquiry offices (NOT the police stations), with the implementation of a team of police officers to provide people in each local authority area with an appointment-based service to allow members of the public to make an appointment to speak to an officer. This will result in a reduction of enquiry officers from 17 to 11
- The remodelling of the citizens in policing team, including the removal of the Head of Citizens in Policing and Special Constabulary post (which is currently vacant)
- In the north and south, the development of Area Command Cells and Neighbourhood Support Teams to deliver consistent and efficient neighbourhood policing across the whole force, and Continuous Professional Development Units (CPDU), to support officers with ongoing operational competence and training, now and into the future with the introduction of PEQF (Policing Education Qualifications Framework) as an entry route into policing

Chief Constable Nick Dean said: "We have had to make some incredibly difficult decisions over the past 12 months when considering how we balance the needs of the community and the policing service we provide, with being able to manage within the budget we have – we simply could not continue with the existing neighbourhood policing model with the budget constraints we currently face, and are likely to have in the coming years.

"These proposals were due to be announced in April 2020, however, due to Covid-19, it was put on hold. We are very aware the timing of this announcement in the current climate is not good, however, in order to meet budget deficit demands, there is no alternative.

"The proposals have been made following extensive analysis across the force, the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire collaboration and the Eastern Region seven force collaboration to find savings, and will make the necessary improvements in efficiency while saving the Constabulary £1.7m. We simply could not continue with the existing financial modelling."

Since 2018, the number of police officers across neighbourhood policing teams has, and continues to increase from 57 (April 2018) to an anticipated 132 in April 2021 from a combination of savings achieved from the Local Policing Review and the precept increases.

Chief Constable Dean added: “Effective neighbourhood policing is absolutely crucial. I’m delighted we were able to provide an additional 50 officers to the frontline last year and that with these plans every single neighbourhood in the county will retain a PCSO allocation.

“No police stations will close as a result of these plans. Enquiry offices which have been affected by these plans will remain open for appointments and we are committed to holding regular surgeries to engage with the public.

“Footfall in some of the stations is incredibly low and we believe deploying officers out into the community is a far more effective use of resource.

“We are absolutely committed to neighbourhood policing, tackling crime in our communities and keeping the people of Cambridgeshire safe.”

The initial period of staff consultation has started today (Wednesday 21 October) and will last until 20 November.