



CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY

**Statement on the Police Budget Settlement, Tuesday 7 December 2004**

Cumbria Police Authority is finding itself facing some difficult choices after Government's announcement of their funding settlement for policing in Cumbria, for the financial year 2005/06, leaves them with a yawning one-million pound gap to plug.

This is even if they are to maintain a standstill £89.6m budget for Cumbria Constabulary and deliver a sub-5% increase to local taxpayers; and quite beside the £1m-plus savings the Authority already needs to find in the Constabulary to satisfy national targets for savings (to be reinvested in the service) which are being set for them under the 2004 'Gershon Review' of public expenditure nationally.

Extra cost pressures on top, even for a 'stand-still' budget, are identified as the results of new legislation or government initiatives. They include:

- Cumbria's Local Policing Teams. Ironically, this is an initiative where the Constabulary was amongst the pathfinders, and represents an approach now broadcast approvingly in November's Government White Paper for take-up all over the country, but one where early investment in the idea with local taxpayers money by this Authority directly led the Secretary of State to 'nominate' it under 'capping' powers for a budget figure reduced for 05/06 by the £138,000 by which he says its budget was excessive in 04/05.
- The new national police radio system, 'Airwave', is vital and much needed. Unfortunately, the way central grant was calculated in Whitehall still leaves Cumbria Authority with an extra £1.6m pa to be found locally, due to exceptional terrain difficulties unique to Cumbria omitted from those calculations.
- The recommendations of the Bichard enquiry into the Soham murders mean that Cumbria Constabulary, like all police forces, will need to invest heavily in new Records Management technology and the extra people to input this sensitive data, as well as extra sergeant supervisors for child protection teams.
- Higher national standards in the capacity and methods of DNA, ANPR and Firearms teams, and the enhanced policing activity needed on potential Terrorism in Cumbria, all bring extra financial costs.
- The Crime Fighting Fund is another Central grant (to boost officer numbers) where annual payments have stood still without benefit of inflation-indexing. This omission alone costs the Authority £100,000 (the price of 4 police officers) but, under a classic 'Catch 22', reducing officer numbers to match reducing funding only incurs extra financial penalty under the Fund, for failing to maintain the original headcount. This must leave those officers supported by local funding too. Likewise, for the past three years, the Rural Grant element of Cumbria's police funding for sparsity has declined in real value without any inflationary increment to maintain it.

- Other government initiatives like the Police Reform Agenda; its reform of the Criminal Justice system, and the effects of the new Freedom of Information Act regime all represent new areas of major change needing to be met and funded in Cumbria out of existing budgets.

Chairman of Cumbria Police Authority Reg Watson has already stated how the Authority recognises this type of funding gap can no longer be filled by the increased contributions of local taxpayers, and neither will government allow it.

In what he described as a 'cleft stick', Chief Constable Michael Baxter has repeated his determination that prioritisation of essential services will ensure Cumbria Constabulary continues to deliver the best possible policing service to the people of Cumbria. However he acknowledges that there will definitely be other plans or projects which will not be able to go forward this year, however desirable.

He said today: "This budget settlement presents significant challenges to maintaining and improving the service to the public which we provide - particularly the local policing team approach. The impact of significant Public Inquiries; Police and Criminal Justice Reform; and public safety issues, must all be borne from what is in effect a reduced budget for 2005/2006. The Police Authority and the Constabulary have difficult choices to make in how they take forward key issues, such as protecting vulnerable people; dealing with crime, disorder, and anti-social behaviour; and not least in how we take forward the partnership environment increasingly so important for the way public services to the communities of Cumbria will be provided in the future."

\*Technical Footnotes:

**Government grant for policing in Cumbria increases from £59.637m in 2004-05 to £61,883m in 2005 – 06, an increase of £2.246m (3.8%).**

**For 2004 – 04, the Authority set a budget of £85.6m which required a Band 'D' Council tax of £150.28p.**

**Subsequently the First Secretary of State judged the Authority's budget to be excessive by £138,000 and set a "nominated" budget of £85.462m as the level from which the increase in 2005-06 would be measured. Had this nominated budget been set in the first instance, the level of Band 'D' Council tax would have been 80p lower, at £149.48.**

Editors' note:

*Cumbria Police Authority is made up of local people - a mixture of councillors, magistrates and independent members - and acts as the bridge between Cumbria Constabulary and all communities across the county in policing matters. Legally, it is responsible for:*

- *setting the budget for Cumbria Constabulary, including raising local council taxes for policing;*
- *consulting and engaging with local communities in Cumbria to find out what they want the local police to tackle;*
- *setting the strategic direction for policing in Cumbria; deciding local priorities for policing and setting the Constabulary challenging targets to drive performance higher*
- *appointing (and, if necessary, dismissing) the Chief Constable; Deputy Chief Constable, and Assistant Chief Constables;*
- *monitoring and managing local police performance.*

Further information: *Clive Alcock, Clerk & Chief Executive; or Doug Thomas, Treasurer to the Authority, at the Cumbria Police Authority office, Carleton Hall, Penrith CA10 2AU.*

Not Protectively Marked

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*7<sup>th</sup> December 2004*

