

# Police officers welcome Police and crime commissioner Tony Hogg's plan



Tuesday, February 05, 2013

Western Morning News  
Follow

Rank-and-file officers have welcomed a proposed 2% rise in council tax which would keep policing numbers at more than 3,000 in Devon and Cornwall.

In his first budget, Police and crime commissioner Tony Hogg said accepting the Government's freeze deal could harm frontline policing in the region.



Tony Hogg

He has set out a 2% increase in the force's share of council tax bills, saying the extra cash from the taxpayer would keep police officer numbers above 3,000 while also retaining 380 community support officers and recruiting an extra 50 "specials" a year.

If approved by the Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel, which meets on Friday, bills for Band D properties would rise by £3.19 to £162.92 a year.

The plan has been welcomed by the Police Federation in Devon and Cornwall, which represents constables, sergeants and inspectors.

Branch chairman Sergeant Nigel Rabbitts said 400 officers had already been lost because of cuts imposed by the Government, alongside some 500 civilian staff.

But he said there has been a "realisation" that dropping officer strength to 2,800, as had been planned, was "not obtainable without seriously damaging the frontline".

"I think the police and crime commissioner has been told that we can't afford to go to that number," Sgt Rabbitts said, "and that we need to maintain numbers at over 3,000 to be operationally viable."

Mr Hogg's budget report, published last week, described how taking the Government's offer of freezing council tax in exchange for a 1% increase in grant, would leave the force facing a "fiscal cliff" in two years' time and an annual shortfall of £1.8 million.

And he painted a worrying picture of the potential impact, saying: "There would be a critical reduction in pro-active crime reduction, there would be a critical reduction in partnership, community and early intervention activity (and) there would be a critical reduction in police visibility and hence reassurance to the public."

Additional savings made in the last two years have given Mr Hogg more financial flexibility in his first budget than had been expected. He is also proposing to use £4.3 million from reserves to top the total budget up to £288.6 million.

Read more: <http://www.thisiscornwall.co.uk/Police-officers-welcome-Police-crime-commissioner/story-18057946-detail/story.html#ixzz2KJoLydPQ>

Follow us: [@thisisdevon on Twitter](#) | [ThisisSDevon on Facebook](#)