

Force's budget given the go-ahead by PCC panel

Written by

KATHRYN CAIN



POLICE and Crime Commissioner Olly Martins' first budget has won the support of the Police and Crime Panel.

The endorsement, together with their approval of his Police and Crime Plan, means that the Commissioner can now start to put his plans into action. These include saving Bedfordshire's PCSOs, 40 per cent of whom having been at risk of being cut due to challenging financial times for the force.

He said: "Our PCSOs play an important role, both helping to reduce crime and the fear of it. I know how much the public values the work they do and I have seen first-hand how well they do their job. It was one of my key pledges to do all I could to protect visible policing so I am very pleased to have been able to protect all 108 PCSO posts."

Although Mr Martins is delighted to have his budget approved he is disappointed that funding cuts have forced him into some difficult decisions, which include increasing the share the public pays towards policing by 2 per cent via the council tax precept.

He said: "I do not relish increasing the policing element of the council tax -even by less than a penny a day for most householders - but it has enabled me to put some resilience in the budget to retain the PCSOs.

"The 2 per cent increase will generate an extra income of £560k for the force in 2013-14, which will be used to help maintain frontline policing.

"I am pleased that my budget was endorsed by the Panel," the Commissioner said. "Now we need to get the ball rolling to see the reductions in crime continue and ensure a safer county."

Bedfordshire Police is faced with a funding gap of approximately £7 million over the next three years due to the on-going cuts of the main policing grant provided by central government.

This year's budget for 2013/14) has been set at £102.878m.