

South Yorkshire Police Commissioner reveals his crime fighting plan

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Strategy: South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner Shaun Wright

Published on **Friday 8 March 2013 06:25**

CUTTING crime and anti-social behaviour, protecting vulnerable people and heightening police visibility are all on the agenda as South Yorkshire's Police and Crime Commissioner today reveals his plan of action for the next five years.

Commissioner Shaun Wright, elected last November, said he will try to deliver what South Yorkshire residents want while battling a hugely reduced budget - and has promised to set the county's police force strict targets to meet.

In his new Police and Crime Plan, Mr Wright said he will maintain staffing levels by replacing 170 officers due to leave in the next two years, as well as bolstering the number of PCSOs.

The commissioner said £500,000 will also be spent on recruiting specialist officers to protect vulnerable groups including children, the elderly and people struggling with addictions.

To increase police visibility, Mr Wright has also pledged to recruit more special constables - part-time volunteers with the same powers as full-time constables. He wants to boost numbers from 290 to 650 by April 2015.

Extra visibility will be added by 'badging up' unmarked vehicles currently used on non-covert police business, as well as putting up signs and 'positive messages' on force buildings which currently have no police identification.

"I want to make South Yorkshire the safest place for people to live, learn, work and run their businesses," said Mr Wright.

"Our police officers work very hard, and implementing my priorities will help them to further reduce crime and make people feel safer.

"Despite the cuts to funding, I will make sure that people in South Yorkshire receive the policing they have told me they want."

He added: "I have set challenging performance indicators that will be continually assessed throughout the period marked out in the plan and will report on the progress to the Police and Crime Panel at regular

intervals.”

The panel, chaired by Sheffield councillor Harry Harpham, has been set up to hold the commissioner to account and examine his decisions.

“In delivering these objectives, I am being forced, as a result of Government cuts, to allocate an extremely challenging value-for-money budget, some £6.1 million lower than that of the Police Authority which used to oversee the force last year,” Mr Wright said.

“I’ve been going out and talking to people, and we’ve also held focus groups in which people have told us their priorities. The plan builds on the work of the old police authority, we’ve not started with a clean slate.

“It’s the public’s police and crime plan, they have elected me to make sure their priorities are dealt with. It’s a five-year plan which will be updated every year.

“I will be up-front about this - I’m not in any way under the illusion that every single thing will be delivered, but we will strive to.”

Mr Wright said there has been a ‘huge reduction’ in anti-social behaviour in South Yorkshire over the last year, but incidents still need to be reduced further.

“We’re still getting more anti-social behaviour than many other areas of the country, given that’s the case it must remain a priority. I want to reduce crime in line with the national average.

“While you can’t compare South Yorkshire with the likes of Surrey and Sussex, I do think it’s a fair ambition that people here should aspire to having less crime than anywhere else in the country.”

The commissioner added: “We’re living in a world of austerity and our budget is going to continue to reduce year on year. We’re making the best of the resources we’re going to get.”

He said an increase in the police’s council tax precept would ‘offset’ reduced Government cash. South Yorkshire Police has lost £30m since 2010, and faces another £13m cut in the next two years.

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