

## Big interview: New Suffolk Police chief unveils plan to invest millions to keep 'bobbies on the beat'



*Douglas Paxton, new Chief Constable of Suffolk.*

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Suffolk's new top cop has revealed plans to invest millions in new laptops so bobbies can stay out on the beat while completing their paperwork.

Chief constable Douglas Paxton returned to Suffolk to start his new role last week.

Mr Paxton, 47, admits this is likely to be his final role before retiring from the police – at the force where it all began 24 years ago.

He returns at a time of major change to the Suffolk force with new police and crime commissioner Tim Passmore replacing the role of the Suffolk Police Authority.

"So far the relationship with Tim has been extremely positive," Mr Paxton said.

The county force has also undergone £12million of cuts, with another £10.6million due by 2016.

Mr Paxton paid tribute to the work of his predecessor, Simon Ash – who announced his retirement the day after Mr Passmore was elected – in making massive savings.

"He has done an extremely good job and afforded me a time of significant stability," he said.

"For the next couple of years, we don't intend to make any further significant redundancies, and I am speaking to the commissioner about the potential to make significant investment in IT which will make use even leaner in the future."

That investment in Toughbook laptops would allow police to be "more effective while out and about as there would be less need to come back to the police station".

"We are still to have these discussions but the commissioner is aware that there are real opportunities to make us fit for purpose for the future," Mr Paxton said.

He also believes there is scope for further collaboration with Norfolk Police and other partners.

Mr Paxton welcomed the role of police and crime commissioners, saying he believed it could lead to better working with partners in the criminal justice system, had a clear 'mandate from the electorate', and could be 'more agile' than the former police authority as decision-making rests with just one person.

Mr Paxton admitted he was returning to Suffolk at a time when morale was low, but said this was down to national politics on issues such as public sector pay freezes and changes to pensions.

On a local level, one of the ways he hopes to lift that morale and improve policing is a return to what used to be termed as police discretion.

"We are talking about them using their professional judgement, trusting them to use their knowledge and experience for the benefit of the community in which they serve.

"There will be times when they fall short. I would say as long as they had the public interest of their community at the forefront of their minds, they have my support."

Mr Paxton started his career in Suffolk in 1989, and 12 years later, had risen to the rank of deputy area commander for West Suffolk.

He joined West Midlands Police in 2003 where he was in charge of a large part of Birmingham city centre. More recently he was deputy chief constable in Staffordshire.

He is originally from Scotland, and was last year awarded the Queen's Policing Medal having served 24 years in the police.

Now he has returned with a clear vision of where he wants the force to be.

He said: "My focus is on being judged as an excellent police force by being judged as that by the communities we serve. My aim is for us to concentrate on the public and what they are saying about our service.

"We will be concentrating on those crimes that are most damaging to the community."

Mr Paxton said he will be looking into why crime has fallen faster in other parts of the UK than in Suffolk, while his main aims are to improve the quality of service, cut anti-social behaviour, and identify and help vulnerable people.

Violent crime, he said, was slightly higher in Suffolk than other similar sized forces, while house burglaries, robberies and vehicle crime are all areas for police focus.

"These are the areas where we want to bring more offenders to justice or use restorative justice.

Information from other forces suggested we could be detecting more burglaries and robberies," Mr Paxton said.

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