

Crime Commissioner unveils five-year plan for Bradford

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By **Dolores Cowburn**

Tackling anti-social behaviour, domestic violence, burglaries, hate crime and child sexual exploitation are all at the top of the agenda for the coming year, West Yorkshire's new Police and Crime Commissioner has said.

Unveiling his first ever five-year Police and Crime Plan, Mark Burns-Williamson, elected last November, said that tackling and getting down the rates of burglary, by an estimated 30 per cent, remained his top priority, as well as getting more cash from the Proceeds of Crime Act. He revealed that the life expectancy for both sexes in Bradford was below the national average and warned that changes to the welfare system and housing reform could have a big impact on increases in crimes related to illegal lending.

The plan also revealed that West Yorkshire Police will see 106 fewer officers this coming year, despite 44 extra being recruited, and a further 132 support staff lost. Funding will have been slashed by £102million between 2011/12 and 2014/15. That equates to more than 2,000 police jobs lost over four years.

Most of the officers are coming up to 30 years service and retirement and are being replaced by new recruits, but Mr Burns-Williamson said that he could not rule out compulsory redundancies in years to come.

Speaking yesterday (WED) at the unveiling of the plan, Mr Burns-Williamson, said: "Obviously in Bradford we are aware of jewellery thefts in recent times, and have a focus on driving these burglaries down.

"I think the personal impact of these burglaries is significant and that has been borne out by the feedback we get.

"This plan reflects my beliefs and values. It builds on the pledges made to you and the concerns you raised with me during the election campaign, but importantly is strongly influenced by and seeks to properly reflect what is happening where you live and what you care about. As people told me clearly in my Listening to You First consultation.

"I want to make a real difference to people's lives across West Yorkshire, "I passionately believe in a fair and equal society where all people across the county can have confidence in all those delivering policing and community safety. I will drive forward the change needed to make sure people are safer and feel safer."

Serious and violent crime, encouraging victims of domestic violence to report it and working with schools and voluntary organisations to steer youngsters away from a path of crime and anti-social behaviour are all part of the plan. Tackling national threats such as cyber crime, terrorism and organised crime are also on the agenda, as are defining exactly what business crime affects Bradford and beyond and what can be done about it. Helping those with mental health problems and improving understanding of how that relates to community safety and the criminal justice system will also be looked at.

So will working with the police to review the need for services around places of safety for those with mental health problems, missing persons and appropriate adults for children and vulnerable adults.

Mr Burns-Williamson said that Bradford has the same challenges as elsewhere with anti-social behaviour and burglaries and hate crime named as problems faced by people. He reassured people that he will be holding surgeries, visiting neighbourhoods and working with youngsters to find out how they can get themselves heard, by creating a youth advisory panel.

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