

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department

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Dear Home Secretary,

I am naturally very pleased that the government have announced a 20,000 uplift in police officers to restore their numbers to where they were before the decade-long austerity programme. Added to the increases permitted by the lifting of the precept cap this year (which has allowed Surrey Police to recruit an extra 104 police officers and operational staff to be in post by end-March 2020), this will go a long way to providing an effective level of policing to meet current and future threats to the safety of Surrey residents.

I fully appreciate that the details of allocations to forces, and where officers should be deployed within each force, is a complicated process which cannot be accomplished overnight. I am reassured by the work that is already underway and I know that Surrey Police are playing an active role in this through the NPCC. Initial indications are that the force will benefit in particular from increases in neighbourhood policing, more capacity for proactive work and an uplift in detective numbers. My own priorities on top of these would be more resource to tackle fraud including cybercrime, and traffic policing.

I had already set in hand an in-depth analysis on what the size and structure of the force should be in the medium and long-term and this will be available in November when it will provide a much more rigorous foundation on which to judge where any uplift should be directed.

I am disturbed however to hear that the basis of allocations to territorial forces might be on the basis of the current central government grant, and am surprised that this is so, given that there is universal recognition that the allocation is significantly out of date and needs urgent review. You will be aware that Surrey has the lowest percentage grant of any force in the country so this will significantly disadvantage Surrey Police in relation to its fellows. We estimate that this will mean at least 40 officers less over the life of the three-year programme. In my strong view, a more equitable distribution should be on total net revenue budget: this will put Surrey Police on a fair level with other forces of a similar nature. I would ask that the distribution principles are reviewed as a matter of urgency.

In the last decade, successive PCCs/Police Authorities and Chief Constables have, rightly, made it a priority to protect warranted police officer numbers in Surrey at all costs.

The effect has been that police staff numbers have been reduced disproportionately and unallocated reserves have been used progressively to shore up revenue budgets (so that now, the force has no general reserves beyond the safe minimum). Other forces seem not to have adopted that policy, so that many have substantial reserves which, in my view, should be taken into account when deciding the uplift resource allocations.

Finally, I am concerned that national agencies seem to be excluded from any uplift in the early stages of the programme. Is this wise? So much crime is national and international in character and I believe strongly that extra resources devoted to eg the NCA or Action Fraud would directly make Surrey a safer county. An element of top-slicing starting in Year 1 – provided it was equitably spread – would seem to be a positive move. I appreciate that this suggestion could potentially mean fewer officers being allocated to individual forces: I would be content with that – my concern is the fairness of the proposed split rather than the absolute numbers.

In summary:

1. Thank you for the uplift, which reverses a long period of decline in resources.
2. The force are currently putting together detailed plans on their desired allocation.
3. I do not like the suggestion that force allocations should be based on the current central grant funding. A fairer way is the total force net revenue budget.
4. The amount of force's general reserves should be part of the equation.
5. National agencies such as the NCA should have an allocation from the outset.

Best wishes

David Munro
Police and Crime Commissioner
