

PRESS INFORMATION

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Home Office Requested to Reconsider PCSO Funding.

Humberside Police Authority Chairman, Cllr Graham Stroud, and the Chief Constable, Tim Hollis, have formally asked the Home Office to reconsider its recent decision to withdraw funding for a third of all Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

On November 27th 2006, Home Office Minister, Tony McNulty wrote to all Police Authorities and Forces informing them that the Home Office now only intends to help fund 16,000 PCSOs across the country, instead of the original promised figure of 24,000.

It is felt that Humberside is particularly hard hit in the change of heart by the Home Office as it advanced its recruitment to bring PCSOs in more quickly than first planned in response to the Government's manifesto commitment to increase numbers to 24,000. Humberside is extremely annoyed that a large amount of the money available has been allocated to the Metropolitan Police and the remainder has been divided up equally between the other 42 forces, regardless of policing demand or particular circumstances.

Cllr Stroud said: "The Police Authority made a commitment and has invested in the recruitment of PCSOs, allocating precious resources within its financial plan to ensure that Humberside would meet its share of the Government's targets for a full compliment of 24,000 by March 2008.

"Now we are told that things have changed, throwing our financial plans for the future into turmoil. We appreciate that money is tight and that counter-terrorism is a costly, and vital, exercise. However, we made another commitment; one to the community we serve, who have been delighted to see Neighbourhood Policing Teams on the streets in recent months. We can only do this if we have the PCSOs to provide the policing.

"We have asked the Home Secretary for special consideration. Despite the significant improvements in performance that we have seen we still need to do a lot more, and we need the funding to help us do this. We have been receiving support from the Police and Crime Standards Directorate for some time and under close scrutiny from Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary. They know the importance of maximising the number of PCSOs as part of our strategy to improve Neighbourhood Policing.

“We were reticent about recruiting PCSOs in the first instance, wondering if the funding would remain in place. Given the Government’s pledge on increased numbers, we believed that the programme would only grow, so we pro-actively supported the Home Office’s ambitious targets for recruitment. Now they have changed their mind and we are the ones who will have to account for it to local people. This is manifestly unfair.

“We have written, urging the Home Secretary to reconsider his position with regard to Humberside, and hope to hear back from him in the near future. The Humberside public should know that we are doing everything we can, within the parameters we are given by the Government, to keep all our commitments.”

The matter will be further discussed by the full Humberside Police Authority at its meeting tomorrow, Tuesday, 19th December, 2006, starting at 11.00 am.

ENDS

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