

“LANCASHIRE POLICE CUTS IN CONTEXT – THE COMMISSIONER'S VIEW”**1. FOREWORD**

1.1 The report to the Police & Crime Panel asks the Panel to consider my precept proposal to increase Council Tax in 2015/16 by 1.99%.

1.2 In order to explain my decision I have set out in this report broader context of current reality and the inevitable future when it comes to funding the police in Lancashire. This paper aims to set the scene both in terms of the reality of delivering the same services with less funds and understanding the priorities of the public when it comes to police and crime in the county

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The financial details are set out in the Panel report but the current position comprises a number of facts and realities.

- From 2011/12 to 2014/15 savings have been taken from the Police Service in Lancashire of £61m
- Between 2015/16 and 2017/18 a further £22m savings will be required to come out
- Between 2018/19 to 2020/21 it is estimated a further £20m+ savings could be required
- By April 2015 there will have been a loss of 700 police officers and circa 500 police staff (including PCSOs) as a direct consequence of the cuts to funding
- It is highly likely that if the cuts continue at the current pace the reductions in police officers and police staff numbers could double by 2020/21

2.2 The above reality is austerity in practice while policing funding continues to face more than its share of cuts while other public service budgets remain protected. In Lancashire, in spite of the severe and unprecedented cuts Lancashire Constabulary has continued to deliver a quality police service. Together with the Chief Constable, I have and always will try to ensure that the impact of all cuts is minimised particularly on the front line. However, it is somewhat inevitable that members of the public will soon feel a difference as the model of policing needs to change to adapt to the cuts. It is impossible for the Constabulary to continue to be able to mask the changes as resources just aren't available to do what we have done previously. I face difficult choices, but at all times will endeavour to ensure that the public of Lancashire is safe and be their voice on local policing issues.

2.3 Despite the cuts in funding Lancashire Constabulary has continued to deliver well. Crime over the last three years has continued to fall and public confidence in the force remains high. However, the types of crime the Constabulary is dealing with are changing and pressures are mounting. Burglary, criminal damage and anti-social behaviour still occur and need investigating. There is however, increasing new crime demand all over Lancashire and these areas of crime need additional resources if they are to be effectively managed. These

areas include Child Sexual Exploitation; Cyber Crime, Serious Organised Crime and Counter-terrorism for example.

We know that these crimes are more complex in nature and therefore more expensive and sophisticated resources are required to tackle them. A Smartphone contains over a million pieces of data and it is not uncommon for us to examine dozens of phones within one investigation. I must ensure that the investment is made to keep pace with these advances whether that be in new technologies or in specialist staff and training.

What is also clear is that these relatively recent types of crime are very much in the minds of the Lancashire public. My office recently undertook research to identify priorities for policing for the people of Lancashire and top of their list of priorities were: tackling child sexual exploitation, solving major crimes such as murder and rape, along with providing resources to tackle serious and organised crime and counter terrorism.

- 2.4 In addition the police increasingly find themselves dealing with complex incidents which can be very time-consuming. Increasingly, Constabulary officers find themselves having a heavy involvement in matters which have a strong element of social care, both adult and child related. Incidents involving people who have serious mental health problems are escalating. It is now clear that in many incidents the police are the service of first and last resort. Often officers are providing medical response as more and more officers are first on the scene to trauma and injury situations caused by crime. However I am very clear and so is the Chief Constable that the protection and safety of vulnerable people is absolutely necessary and a key priority, and irrespective of cuts this will continue in the future, but the reality of that is that there is subsequently impact on other demand areas. In areas such as missing from home enquires, the isolated elderly and self-harm. It is not uncommon for police officers to have to spend a whole tour of duty (8 hours) in A &E dealing with our most vulnerable groups.
- 2.5 Partnership working is key both now and in the future. I am very well aware that our partners have pressures and demands on their budgets and need to save money. Reductions in mental health budgets, adult and social care across the county and nationally have a huge impact on the police service as well as the service users themselves, public and a wide range of stakeholders. The reality is when incidents occur where there is a risk or harm to a vulnerable person the police still attend and go above and beyond their duties often providing vital lifesaving first aid for example.
- 2.6 The public demand for the Police Service is also important to remember. In 2013/14 we had 210,000 calls on 999 and 1.02m on 101. To date for 2014/15 the calls are 173,000 on 999 and 708,000 on 101. The trend is that public demand for the Police is increasing but in reality a high level of that demand is non crime related. Lancashire Constabulary clearly continue to respond to 24/7 999 calls and 101 calls. The force has a call centre with 295 FTE staff (at full strength). Every call requires attention, whether it be 999 response, telephone investigation referral or just advice and assistance. It all requires resourcing. We have already made huge changes to the way in which we deal for calls for service to reduce demands to a dwindling frontline, there is more we can do but again we need the investment in technology that the public rightly expects.

3. HOW HAVE WE MANAGED CHANGE?

3.1 I am not trying to create picture of doom and gloom. Here in Lancashire just like other areas we will continue to provide the best service we are able with the resources we have.

I am proud to say that Lancashire is an "outstanding" force as recorded by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC). In the PEEL report late last year the excellent financial planning and management by the Chief Constable and his team was praised. Public confidence in the force is high at 91% which is a credit to the police staff and police officers who tirelessly perform and deliver the service. The force has high public confidence, good understanding of demand and what the public want and they are good at reducing crime, keeping people from harm and protecting vulnerable people, e.g. those at risk of CSE and domestic abuse.

3.2 In Lancashire in order to deliver the cuts we have (not exhaustive) :

- Efficiencies
 - Restructured my office to provide a better value for money staffing structure aligned to my police and crime plan priorities
 - Relocated my office to County Hall to reduce accommodation costs
 - Developed a Futures Programme for the force to ensure it is able to plan ahead reducing budgets as we go and to ensure that the cuts we have made have sought to protect the frontline
 - Effectively managed an overall reduction in police numbers through natural wastage while ensuring we are still able to recruit to vacant entry level posts as needed to maintain officer numbers at a required level
 - Reduced Basic Command Unit (BCUs) areas from six down to three taking out significant management costs
 - Reduced our estate and implemented a new accommodation strategy
 - Developed effective volunteering programmes including making use of specials
 - Introduced methods of agile working to increase officer productivity and visibility

- Partnership working
 - Increased opportunities for collaborative working with other forces to help maximise reducing resources.
 - Increased partnership in areas such as the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to provide early action opportunities to manage the threat to vulnerable children across Lancashire and to manage down the demand for high cost child care placements.
 - Working with LCC to establish an Early Intervention partnership to put the right resources in the right place at the right time to deal with vulnerability
 - Working with our Unitary and District council partners to manage risk in communities – for example the Avert scheme in Blackburn Successfully bid

for additional funding to support our work and invest in crime prevention initiatives delivered by partners

- Working with our emergency service partners such as North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) and Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) to deal triage calls in our call centre and deploy the most effective resource.
- Demand – The Constabulary is continuously analysing its demand pattern, which has changed, to ensure that services are re- shaped to ensure that they deliver in the most effective way and wherever possible to reduce demand. We have done this in the following ways;
 - Demand Reduction Unit: Used in the new Contact Management Centre to reduce demand on patrols by having officers on hand in the centre who can carry out telephone investigations and deal with crime over the phone, where appropriate. They are able to use their training to judge the best response to certain incidents, allowing use of frontline police to be better managed.
 - Developed a range of ICT tools including reporting crime online and engagement channels to ensure we remain connected to the public
 - Moved to a single contact centre to reduce call handling costs (improvements continue to be made to this service after early teething problems)

4. WHAT COMES NEXT?

4.1 The future picture is one of change and not always change for the better. We know that in this next year we face a 4.8% cut in resources which equates to a funding reduction of £9.8m. We will have to prioritise services and there is no doubt that local policing as we know it will be seen to be changing by the residents of Lancashire. The same can be said for many public services since austerity began. However I am confident that through my continual challenging of the Chief Constable, Lancashire Constabulary will continue to deliver the best, most effective and efficient police service it can.

4.2 The future is based on delivering affordable policing for everyone that lives, works and visits Lancashire and keeping our residents safe from risk, threat and harm.

4.3 To understand the picture as the public of Lancashire see it, my office recently undertook a research project. The findings show that public expectations of policing remain high – everything is a priority – but that some areas are higher on the priority list than others. This research will help shape the future review of my Police and Crime Plan, but is also behind my decision when it comes to setting the council tax precept for 2015/16.

4.3.1 **PRECEPT AND PRIORITIES RESEARCH**

- (I) I wanted to understand our residents' changing priorities when it comes to policing and crime and to seek their thoughts in relation to setting the council tax precept.

- (II) This insight, gathered by an independent market research company via a telephone poll and via a wide-ranging consultation exercise, is vital in refreshing my Police and Crime Plan priorities of defending frontline policing; protecting vulnerable people; tackling crime and re-offending and championing victims' rights. It has also contributed significantly to my decision relating to the Police budget, including deciding to increase the police precept.
- (III) The market research is robust in that it features 100 responses from each district area and is representative of our demographic age profile from 18 upwards in Lancashire. Of the key findings there are a number that are significant in terms of what they tell us about the changing priorities of local residents when it comes to police and crime.

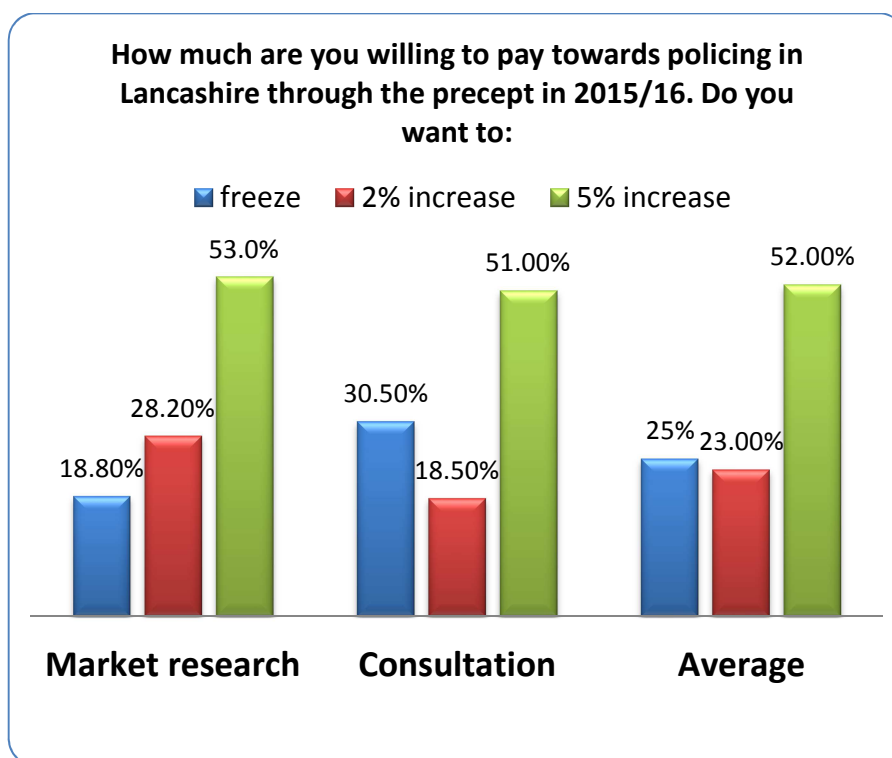
In addition to the independent market research and in order to gather opinions of those who felt they wanted to make representation on issues relating to policing in Lancashire, I have also carried out extensive consultation with our residents testing the same issues. We targeted council tax payers all over Lancashire along with those with a direct interest in local policing through Lancashire Constabulary's In the Know online alerts system which had 16,000 registered users at the time.

- (iv) Lancashire residents were targeted through promoted Tweets and boosted Facebook posts on social media; and leaflets were available in a number of libraries, all police enquiry desks, and by me and my officers at various meetings and events attended during late November and December. I finished the exercise by trying to capture the views of those who would not usually engage with my office at shopping centres covering four different geographic locations of the county. The shopping centres were chosen to ensure we increased the quota from areas where fewer surveys had been undertaken.
- (v) In excess of 1,000 responses across all districts have been gathered, representing all age groups.

4.3.2 COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT

- (I) The independent telephone survey asked three sets of questions. The first related to the Police precept and asked if residents wanted to freeze the amount they pay in 2015/16 at last year's levels, increase it by 2% (an average of 6p a week for band D properties) or by 5% (15p per week). Support for an increase was overwhelming with 82.2% supportive, and 53.1% actually favouring the larger 15p a week increase.

The findings of the consultation exercise have similarities with the findings of the independent survey, although slightly more people said they wanted to see the council tax precept frozen. In all 78.8% favoured an increase in the precept, with 51.9% willing to pay an additional 5%. The number wanting a freeze was slightly higher at 31.2%. The graphs below show the full set of results and the average response between the two surveys.



The respondents were also asked why they had given their response and a summary of their reasons is included in the table below:

Please can you explain what factors have contributed to your answer?		
Reason	Number	Percentage
Policing needs to be maintained / improved by funding	617	43.9
This is the amount I can afford	321	22.8
This is the fairest option in terms of inflation and support for the police	142	10.1
Should look into other ways of gaining funding / saving money	104	7.4
This is not a lot to pay for the services received	103	7.3
I pay enough council tax already	99	7.0
I would choose this opinion providing the extra funds are spent on policing	82	5.8

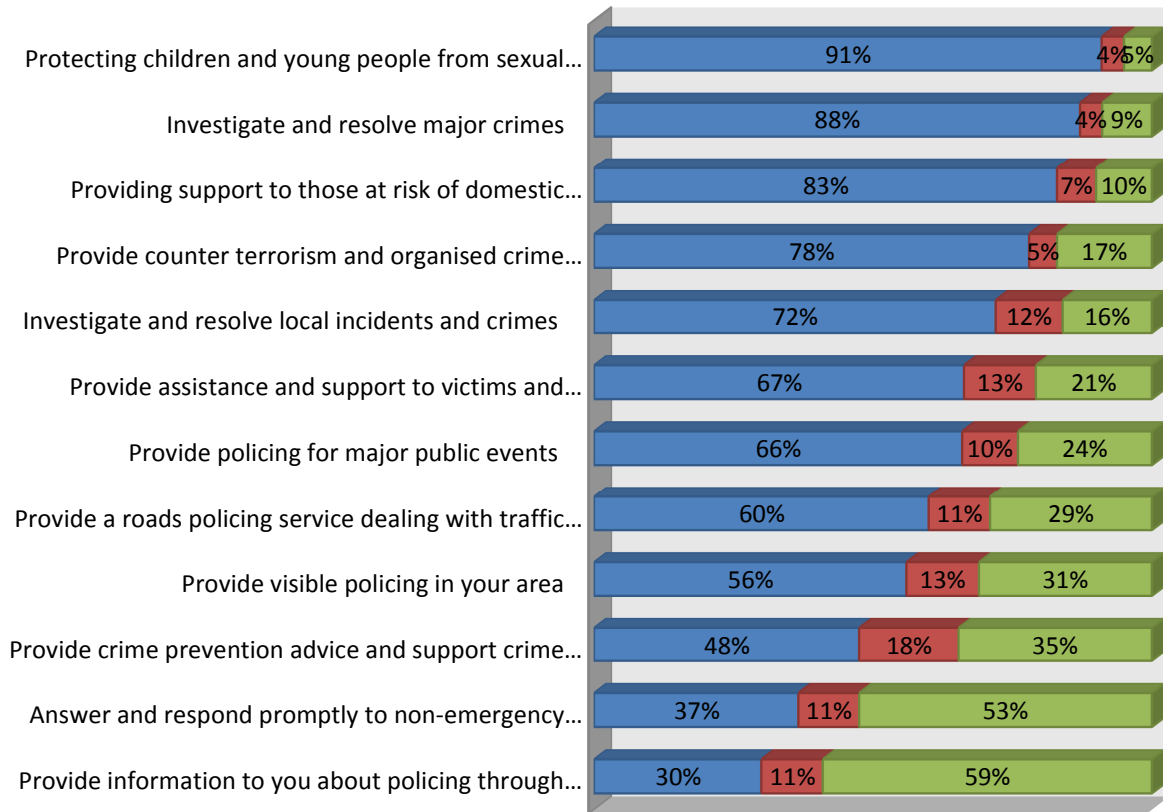
4.3.3 POLICING PRIORITIES

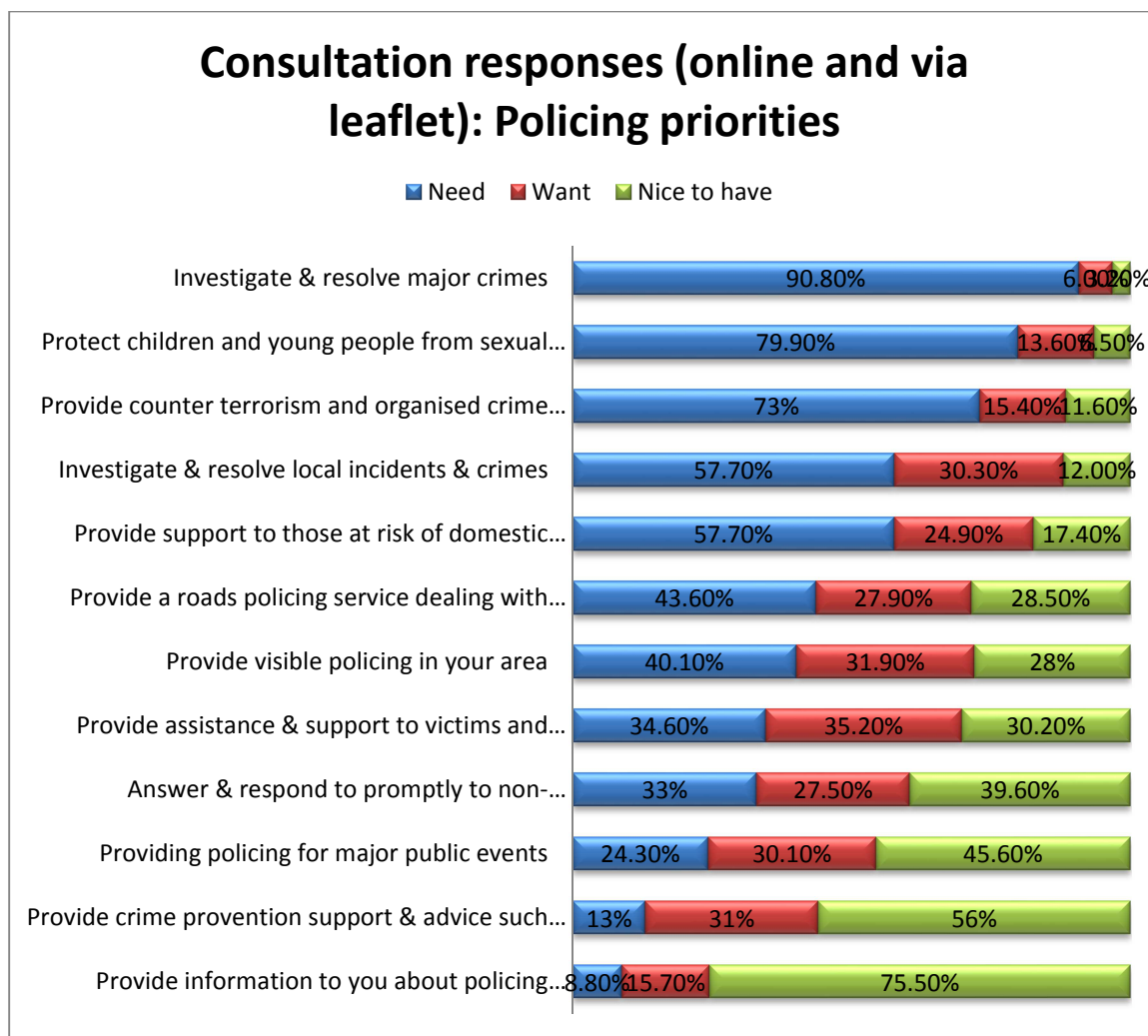
- (i) The second question in the survey was totally unprompted and asked the public of Lancashire what their priority policing issues are in their local area. Of the 1,400 respondents, 365 (26%) said they had NO policing priorities in their local area. This reassures me as it is very clear that the public in these areas feel safe and are clear they only need the police in situations where they experience risk, threat or harm.

- (ii) The next two issues they felt were priorities for their local area were anti-social behaviour (21.6%) and more police on the streets (19.7%).
- (iii) However when given a list of policing issues the Constabulary deals with, residents responded differently indicating their top three services most needed from the police were: Protecting children from sexual exploitation and abuse (91%) closely followed by the need to investigate and solve major crimes (88%)and providing support to those at the risk of domestic violence (83%). This was particularly important to me as gave a very strong picture of people's priorities when it comes to understanding the issues the officers deal with on a daily basis.
- (iv) From the responses received (see table over leaf) it is clear that my Police and Crime Plan priorities remain very relevant to residents living in Lancashire, with the need to provide support to counter terrorism and organised crime services seen as of growing importance.
- (v) Answering and responding promptly to non-emergency calls and providing newsletters were seen more as "nice to have" rather than needed, while surprisingly visible policing in the local area came ninth out of the 12 priorities tested.
- (ii) The two tables of results below show the difference in the independent telephone survey findings and the findings of the consultation exercise taken by my office.

Independent research (telephone poll): Policing priorities

■ Needed
 ■ Wanted
 ■ Nice to do





(vii) This research has been undertaken to inform my budget decisions and to help with the refresh of my Police and Crime Plan which is currently under way and will be presented to Panel for discussion at a future meeting.

(viii) As it stands I feel unable to act fully on the wishes of the residents in terms of increases to the Council Tax. This remains due to the referendum threshold imposed on me by Government.

(ix) Any increase in precept beyond 2% would require me to hold a referendum at the cost of around £1.5m, all of which must be funded from existing budgets. As a 5% increase would realise £3.2m almost half would immediately be swallowed up by the cost of the referendum.

(x) Therefore my proposal remains to increase the precept by 1.99% generating resources of £1.25m to support my Medium Term Financial Strategy to help meet the £22m savings target required to 2017/18.

4.4 The depth of public support for the police precept increase as I have set out above is apparent and their priorities for policing in the future are also clear. I have written to MPs to

seek their support to review to the current referendum limit rules and I await their replies at the time of writing this report. However, at a cost of £1.5m for a referendum under the current proposed rules, I don't consider it cost effective to incur that cost for a 5% increase. A 5% increase in Council Tax would bring in £3.1m across the life of the MTFs (i.e. to the end of 2017/18) but less the cost is £1.6m. The Government stance on the referendum rules as proposed is therefore disappointing and inevitably would impact on resources available for service delivery.

- 4.5 Moving forward therefore, Lancashire Constabulary will face more service redesign and my office will continue to ensure it is focused on my Police and Crime Plan priorities, seeking to maximise grant support to deliver crime prevention and victim services. The Constabulary will continue to reduce its estate and use what buildings it has more effectively, looking at sharing arrangements where possible. The force will continue to look for more opportunities to collaborate with other forces and public services and to procure both locally, regionally and nationally in order to drive out further efficiencies.
- 4.6 The force will continue to take every opportunity through its Futures Programme to ensure services are thoroughly reviewed, fit for purpose and efficient. Constabulary will continue to enhance partnership arrangements and proactively tackle crime head on. This will be even more important moving forward. In arrangements it is essential that I enable, facilitate and indeed participate in as many partnerships as possible to ensure continued effective delivery. We all have a role to play here in Lancashire and now is not the time to be parochial but to look for the greater good of Lancashire. The public of Lancashire matter.
- 4.7 Sadly it will be necessary to reduce staffing numbers and police numbers in order to achieve efficiencies and savings. This is inevitable. However, it will be done sensitively and proportionately. We are also planning well ahead to ensure we can achieve such savings in a timely fashion, and minimise impact. Redundancies are an obvious consequence, but are the last resort and with the Chief Constable we will explore other methods of exit, such as voluntary exit for Police Officers.
- 4.8 Contact by the public with Constabulary will clearly still continue. The force will continue to provide 24/7 call handling in a timely way. The Chief Constable and his team will continue to review what response is required, and that the response provided is proportionate. Crimes which have the greatest impact on the victim will need to be prioritised and the public's expectations will need to be managed going forward.
- 4.9 When it comes to the principle of the Constabulary providing a proportionate response, the public themselves have a role to play in terms of demand. My office will continue to work with Constabulary to promote new and emerging channels such as online reporting of minor crimes and incidents; signing up for online alerts and emails to ensure people are informed about crime in their area and ensuring non-crime demand on police resources is reduced.
- 4.10 Investment in high demand crime areas is clearly a priority for the public as outlined in my research, and resources will be prioritised accordingly. I will continue where possible to invest in these priority areas such as serious and organised crime, tackling domestic abuse, tackling child sexual exploitation and early action programmes that help prevent crime.

- 4.11 Officers will be provided with technology through capital investment that will enable them to police more efficiently – keeping them out in their local area more often and helping them to utilise social media and online services in their investigations.

5. COMMITMENT

- 5.1 My commitments are set out in the Police and Crime Plan but, moving forward, I can be confident of the following:-

- The public of Lancashire will be kept safe round the clock. If they need to call the police, their call will be answered and officers will respond proportionately and appropriately to the situation.
- Crimes will continue to be investigated proportionately, prioritising crimes that have the biggest impact on victims and are seen as important in terms of priorities for the public of Lancashire.
- Local policing teams will continue to cover every inch of Lancashire. The public will know how to get in touch with their local teams and local teams will know their local area.
- Partnership working will continue to be enhanced where possible to reduce harm and to protect the most vulnerable.
- Citizens in Policing and the Specials will involve more people in community safety and improving their local areas.
- Resources will be allocated to serious crimes such as child protection, counter-terrorism, CSE and organised crime, which sometimes can be perceived as the unseen aspects of policing.

6. CONCLUSION

The way Lancashire is policed is changing and this is inevitable. The Constabulary will continue to have my support and constructive challenge to the changes it is implementing, but we can all be reassured it is managing change well.

Our cherished model of policing as we know it today will not survive the continued financial cuts and will need to adapt to the resources available.

There are things we can do to mitigate and slow down some of the cuts – this includes collaborative working and increasing the council tax precept.

I would be failing in my role as Police and Crime Commissioner to be the voice of the people of Lancashire if I did not act on their wishes. Therefore increasing the council tax precept by 1.99% is just one of the things I can do to help mitigate some of our funding cuts.

My pledge is that any increase will go towards reducing the impact of the cuts on frontline policing, which is clearly in line with my Police and Crime Plan priorities.