

I personally wanted to set out for you why we have asked for an extra 41p per week to spend on policing. I know that any rise can be difficult but regrettably it is necessary.

The area covered by the Force is growing, both in prosperity and population. This makes it attractive for organised crime gangs who deal in drug and human trafficking, kidnap and gun crime. I also want to prevent our young people being drawn into such groups or seeking status through violence. I need additional funds to prevent this escalating, gather intelligence and mount operations against these threats.

I must also protect the most vulnerable in society, especially children, from abuse. We have been asked to do more, but have not been given the money to do so. In the last year we have put significant sums into the management of sex and dangerous offenders. The work we do is good but I want to improve further this vital new responsibility.

The increased threat of terrorism is real and has changed the world we police. Policing a major regional airport adds to the demands we face. We have had to increase the level of patrolling and provide armed police officers.

We can only guess at what the future holds, but I do know if we do not act now the implications for the future will be grave. Serious crime, even if it does not affect everyone's life must be tackled, otherwise the costs and the effects become unmanageable.

The Police Authority, which is made up of your representatives, was in total agreement that the small precept increase is absolutely necessary. If our budget is rejected the Force will keep Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland safe; but at a cost. To meet the budget last year we cut police officer numbers, by 30, for the first time in 25 years and also held more than 160 police officer and police staff post vacant. Without the additional 41 pence per week we will undoubtedly have to withdraw more officers from the beat. Officers you tell us you want to see more of. That will be a sad day for me. Neighbourhood policing here is officially "excellent," and must be sustained at an effective level.

I hope that you will understand why we need this money and that you will continue to support us.

Matt Baggott  
Chief Constable