

The Right Honourable David Cameron MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to you on behalf of the Lancashire Constabulary, West Division, Blackpool and Fylde Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) Executive Committee. This group represents the 332 Neighbourhood Watch Schemes across Blackpool and Fylde and I write to you as the Prime Minister to express our concerns over the changes to the proposed funding formula for the Police.

The committee would like to bring your attention to the statement made by the Chief Constable, Mr Steve Finnigan, which I am sure you may have been made aware of, if not read.

The Lancashire Constabulary has already saved and identified cuts totalling £74 million, when combining this with the proposed revised funding formula, this would see a reduction in budget of £87 million.

The NHW Executive fully understand that a review of the Policing function needed to be conducted, especially during this period where everyone has had to have a critical look at how they do business and identify potential savings to assist with the reduction of the National Debt.

However, whilst fully accepting that the Police Service has to take its share of the cuts, they cannot see how this amount of money can be taken from the budget without severely restriction levels of service and putting lives at risk. The impact of this is a frightening thought.

The Chief Constable outlined in his statement that:

- All public enquiry desks across the County CLOSED
- The loss of specialist resources including support units, mounted officers, dog units and neighbourhood policing teams (including PCSOs)
- Dramatic cuts to those departments that deal with serious and complex crime
- 1,912 fewer Police Officers (3,611 in 2010 to 1,699 in 2020)

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This is astonishing considering the complex nature of crime and how that has changed over the last few decades.

As a community, we have seen the recent release of the crime statistics, violent crime on the increase, sexual offences increased, fraud increased. These offences are complex and the recording and investigation of such can be time-consuming.

The very nature of Policing has changed; the demand has changed with a great deal of their work not resulting in a criminal investigation, such as missing from homes, sudden deaths, mental health issues, cybercrime, pro-active policing, licensing, the list is endless, so to compare crime numbers solely with Police numbers does not reflect the role and demands placed on the modern-day Police Officer.

As NHW Co-ordinators, we have experienced difficulties in contacting the Police combined with increased time waiting for the deployment of a Police Officer. Co-ordinators also report increasing levels of under-reporting of crime, linked to falling levels of confidence in the service as a result of cuts, and increased levels of fear of crime.

They are very proud of our Police Force and the service it delivers in partnership with us, the community. Neighbourhood Policing is at the forefront of the way Lancashire Constabulary police the county and the committee has grave concerns about the future of Neighbourhood Policing.

The Executive and all our members are concerned that with fewer Officers to respond and work pro-actively to reduce and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, the criminals will see this and take advantage and, in certain areas, the streets will not be safe for people to walk around, especially at night.

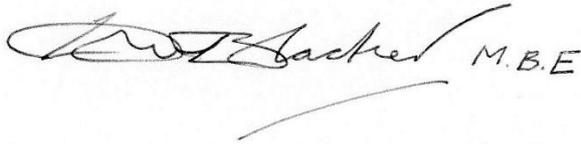
Blackpool is already one of the most deprived areas in the country.

Add to this the fact that other public services are experiencing crippling cuts, there are less and less public servants to pick up the tasks that one service is no longer doing!

We at the Blackpool and Fylde Neighbourhood Watch Executive are asking if you would please recognise the particular unfairness of singling out of Lancashire for the worst funding cuts without any sound justification or argument and arrange for the proposal to be reconsidered. Your support in righting this anomaly would be greatly appreciated.

It does not matter what anyone's politics are, we all expect and demand, as a basic right, to have our communities property policed in sufficient numbers.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Blacker" followed by "M.B.E." in a smaller, more formal script. There is a long horizontal flourish underneath the signature.

DAVE BLACKER

Committee Member

Blackpool and Fylde Neighbourhood Watch Executive Committee

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