



Durham Police Authority

PRESS RELEASE

Tax payers to benefit from policing Council Tax freeze for second year running

Durham Police Authority has agreed a financial package for policing across County Durham and Darlington for 2012/13, which sees residents paying the same for policing as they did for 2010/11.

The Authority has made the decision to freeze Council Tax for the second year running to the benefit of local people. Whilst Members deliberated over the difficulties in the long term of accepting the Government's offer of a grant which covers 2012/13 only, they determined that on balance regard had to be made to the difficult economic situation facing the council tax payers of County Durham and Darlington. Clearly the impact of this decision on the police budget for 2013/14 will be one of the first issues which will need to be addressed by the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioner in November 2012.

Local residents and non-domestic rate-payers (businesses) recently had the opportunity to feed in their views on the 2012/13 police budget and unanimously agreed to the Council Tax freeze.

Owing to significant funding reductions from Central Government for the second year running, the Authority has been faced with identifying saving of approximately £7m in the next financial year. Throughout the budget setting process, the Authority's main target has been to make these savings to balance its budget, without diminishing service delivery. It has achieved this target by working with the Constabulary to establish a new model for service delivery across the Force area in order to increase productivity and create a 'more for less' culture.

Whilst debating the Council Tax Freeze, Police Authority Members scrutinised the figures within the Medium Term Financial Plan. Independent Member Mr Norman Vaulks commented on the difficult financial decisions the Authority has had to make in recent years to ensure sound financial planning and the best possible policing for local residents. He also commented on the praise the Authority and Force have received from external auditors and agreed that good financial planning has enabled the police force to be one of the best in the country ready for the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner to take over from Durham Police Authority later this year.

All Members commented that the economic downturn and rising prices impacted on the majority of residents; Councillor Richard Bell agreed that a Council Tax freeze for the policing element seemed the right thing to do to benefit the Council Tax Payer. The Chair of the Finance Audit and Resources Committee Ms Kathryn Larkin-Bramley commented that policing is performing highly and this has a direct link to budget planning and the financial decisions which are reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Mr Peter Thompson, Chairman of Durham Police Authority said:

"Despite the financial pressures affecting all of the public sector, Durham Constabulary continues to improve efficiency and productivity while driving down crime. I am pleased that scrutiny of the budget in conjunction with listening to residents views has allowed Police Authority Members to agree to freeze the police part of the Council Tax for 2012/2013, helping to ease the financial burden for council taxpayers within County Durham and Darlington. I believe that we are the first Police Authority in the Country to set its policing budget for the coming financial year."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Durham Police Authority is an independent body responsible for ensuring Durham Constabulary delivers an efficient and effective police service. It is made up of 17 local people who include 9 councillors, 8 members of the public who are the independent members.

The Authority ensures that the Constabulary is accountable to the people of County Durham and Darlington and ensures that citizens have a say in how they are policed.

The Authority is responsible, amongst other matters, for setting the budget for the Constabulary and, following consultation with local communities, mapping out the strategic direction of policing. This includes agreeing policing priorities and setting the Constabulary challenging targets to drive performance higher.

The Authority's Vision

"To ensure that policing in County Durham and Darlington is fair, effective and visible"

The Authority's Mission

"To be the effective voice of our communities in securing the delivery of high quality policing by:

- Exercising strong & effective leadership
- Engaging positively with communities to build confidence in local policing
- Strengthening partnership working
- Promoting equality, tolerance & respect for human rights

- Scrutinising and challenging police performance to secure continuous improvement
- Scrutinising and challenging business systems and processes to ensure effective use of resources

For further information or comment, please contact Durham Police Authority:

Tel: 0191 3836471

Email: durham.pa@durham.gov.uk

Website: www.durham-pa.gov.uk

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/DPAuthority>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/durhampoliceauthority>