

By email

Kit Malthouse MP
Minister of State for Policing
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

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Dear Minister

Cuts to Policing in Cambridgeshire

I must start by thanking you for your reply to our request for support concerning a favourable settlement to protect the entire policing team in next week's comprehensive spending review.

I apologise for having to get in touch again so soon, but the cuts we've previously warned about have now become a reality in Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

Last month the Constabulary announced 53 police staff redundancies – 40 police community support officers (PCSOs), the entire team of 7 community safety officers and 6 enquiry desk officers.

The force currently has 80 full-time equivalent PCSO posts, including a number of specialist roles in the rural community action, safer schools and volume crime teams.

This will lead to the loss of the safer schools initiative and a reduction in the number of volume crime investigations within local communities, affecting everyone living and working in the county.

The closure of all but two station enquiry offices will have the biggest impact on vulnerable people and the elderly. With no office nearby, their ability to directly access police services to report crime and seek police help will be difficult, if not impossible. Many of these groups have no access to the internet or phones and may have to rely on either travelling to Peterborough or Cambridge or asking family to make contact on their behalf. I'm sure this isn't what you and the Home Secretary want for vulnerable members of the community.

Withdrawing community safety officers will reduce crime prevention services to local constituents, small businesses, and a range of voluntary and civil-society

organisations. It's vital all these services – PCSOs, enquiry offices and community safety officers – are maintained as they're integral to neighbourhood policing, a service the government has promised to protect since 2010.

PCSOs were introduced to the police service in England and Wales partly to provide the much-needed visible presence it was otherwise impossible to provide in communities. At their height they made up 75% of neighbourhood policing teams in those nations.

Even with the planned recruitment of 20,000 officers, there's no reason to believe that these new recruits will have a greater ability to provide that visible presence – they were unable to do so a decade ago when officer levels were at a similar level.

Policing is a team effort, as you understand well, and those 20,000 extra officers won't be effective if the team working with them continues to be cut.

Cambridgeshire Police is halving the current PCSO workforce, the backbone of neighbourhood policing. But the overall reduction from 2010 levels is 84% (from 210 positions to 40). If nothing is done as part of the CSR to retain these essential staff, the reduction in police presence on the streets will be glaringly obvious.

Last month, the government gave £30 million to local authorities to recruit Covid marshals. This money would have been much better spent saving PCSOs, who are uniquely well placed to help enforce the current restrictions. There seems no sense in making PCSOs redundant, then trying to plug the gap by creating a new local council role which will be inferior.

With jobs and services already being cut, the outlook for the policing in Cambridgeshire looks bleak if policing doesn't get an adequate CSR settlement. It's vital you and the Home Secretary intervene to provide the necessary funding for Cambridgeshire Police to retain the police staff posts threatened by redundancy.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Ben Priestley
National Officer
UNISON
b.priestley@unison.co.uk

Cc: Martin Hewitt, Chair, National Police Chiefs' Council
Paddy Tipping, Chair, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
Chief Constable Pam Kelly, NPCC Workforce Lead