

20 March 2023

Dear Colleague,

Policing our communities

Police Scotland will present our budget for 2023-24 to the Scottish Police Authority later this week and I wish to share some key points with you.

Policing's funding allocation for the year ahead is better than the flat cash settlement which had been suggested, which I believe is recognition of the improvements, reforms and related savings already made. Despite this, it does not allow us to maintain our workforce at the levels of previous years and at the same time make a pay award in 2023-24.

Hard choices are being taken across the public sector to respond to high inflation and the cost of living crisis. Police Scotland is not immune to those challenges and we are taking action to prioritise and maintain operational policing.

Because of recruitment delays and increased retirements, officer numbers are lower than in previous years, at around 16,600. Our funding allocation means our officer establishment will remain around 16,600, including over 200 officers currently funded from outwith our core Scottish Government settlement. We are building a service model which reflects that level.

Officers and staff demonstrate professionalism, dedication and goodwill every day, all across Scotland. Their safety and wellbeing is a key consideration. It would not be reasonable for me to ask fewer people to deliver the same level of service without implementing changes which support them to meet these challenges.

Despite our shared resource pressures, Police Scotland and our key partners must ensure we address the highest levels of risk and support the vulnerable. Of necessity, this will mean policing will be engaging with partners about how often we are meeting the demand of other agencies. This is right for policing and right for citizens who deserve the best help from the appropriate agency when need arises.

We are actively considering areas of demand and what services are best delivered at national, regional and local levels. At the same time, we will continue to achieve necessary savings such as through increased co-location with partners.

During the last 10 years, Police Scotland has increasingly demonstrated a sustained commitment to partnership working, and we will continue to use our strong relationships with you to ensure our communities are supported.

Reform of policing in Scotland has demonstrated that efficiencies delivered through improvements to service design, working practices and technology can be, and are, reinvested to enhance service.

Driving this progress will be essential as we are required to respond to growing and increasingly complex community and personal needs, underlined by our commitment to prioritise our response to violence against women and girls and to tackling cyber crime. I have great confidence in the quality of our officers and staff to maintain effective policing for our communities now and in the future.

In the coming months, we will share more information and undertake further engagement about how these changes apply across all our divisions and departments.

Thank you for your continued support for policing in Scotland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iain Livingstone', written in a cursive style.

Sir Iain Livingstone QPM
Chief Constable