



My priorities for a new term of office

A little over a week ago I was honoured to be returned as Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The proceeding weeks had been spent working hard on the priorities which I set, with the input from our communities, three years ago when I developed my second police and crime plan – a strategic document which gives the force and partners a sense of direction.

In my spare time I travelled the length and breadth of our police force area, speaking to hundreds of residents of rural, coastal and urban areas which make up our wonderful corner of England.

When out campaigning for this post for the first time in 2016 people told me there were simply not enough police officers in the force, that contact with officers was rare or fleeting and they did not understand why front desks had been closed in their communities.

Reoffending was rife, with prisoners leaving jail with little prospect of housing or work.

I have, with the help of central Government funding and investment through the police precept on our council tax bills increased police numbers to a record 3,610. I revamped and reopened 13 front desks (with another five to come this year). And I worked with partners to create the innovative Prisoners Building Homes programme, which trains ex-offenders in construction skills and provides much-needed housing stock for local authorities.

Much of this work would not have been possible without additional financial support from our residents, through the police precept, which I set.

Although I have made progress in the eight years in total I have been in post, it is evident that so much more remains to be done.

The budget might have been created for 686 new police officers in Devon and Cornwall but our communities have yet to feel this investment. This is partly because not all have completed their training yet, but it is also because officers' time is sucked up by training and extractions.

Our residents are increasingly fed up with seeing drugs on our streets. From Camborne to Torquay, they complain about unacceptable levels of lawlessness, intimidation and harassment.

I need to ensure that those officers we have spent so much public money on recruiting are visible, accessible and reassuring. Policing is, and should be, a tough job, when they robustly deal with the issues which matter most to people they will have my full backing.

I will also spend this term working with partners to ensure that ex-offenders who want to put their lives of crime behind them have all the support they need to get their lives back on track. This could be help to get off drugs or kick alcoholism. They might need housing or training and investing a little time and money in this area will be helpful.

The other significant job in my in tray is to ensure the force has a substantive Chief Constable to lead the force to success.

In summary, much has been achieved but I remain steadfastly committed to securing the lowest crime rate in the country and delivering a high performing police force for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.