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19th January 2024

Dear Roger,

Subsequent to my letter dated 11th January I am writing to you with some updates to the information contained within my budget proposal for 2024/25. These updates are presentational and do not impact on the proposed policing precept of £246.42 for Council Tax Band D properties (5.55% or £12.96 increase).

The updates made are as a result of a reinterpretation of guidance in relation to the classification of the additional Police Uplift Programme (PUP) Top Up grant contained within the Home Office provisional funding announcement (£2.160m). The update has the impact of reducing the net budget requirement stated in my previous letter from £387.698m to £385.538m and a corresponding reduction on total sources of finance. I have taken this decision to be:

- 1) consistent with how the existing PUP ringfenced grant is treated; and
- 2) consistent with other forces regionally and nationally in how the net budget requirement is calculated. This is important as the net budget requirement is used for grant and cost allocations regionally and nationally and therefore needs to be comparable between forces in line with NPCC guidance.

In addition to making this change I have taken the opportunity to update the Revenue Budget Summary to split out the previous line for Government Grants and Contributions into three lines so that you are able to see the specific grants for PUP, pensions and other grants.

The tables and appendices that have been updated in relation to these changes are:

Table B – General Funding Comparison

Table E – Budget Movement

Appendix A – 2024/25 Budget Overview

Appendix B – Revenue Budget Summary 2024/25

Appendices – C1 (MTFS Summary), C2 (MTFS Detail), C3 (2024/25 Budget Overview), C4 (2024/25 Budget Summary), C17 (2024/25 Budget – Subjective Analysis)

The updated tables are shown below and a full set of appendices are included with this letter for completeness.

Table B – Funding Comparison

Funding Source	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Increase/ (decrease)
	£m	£m	£m	£m
HO Core Police Grant	193.524	194.195	205.752	11.556
Legacy Council Tax Grants	13.125	13.125	13.125	-
Police Core Settlement Grants	206.649	207.321	218.877	11.556
Council Tax Precept	143.276	154.836	165.319	10.483
Collection Fund Surplus	2.275	1.531	1.341	(0.189)
Total General Funding	352.200	363.687	385.538	21.850
Police Uplift - Claimable Specific Grant *	3.035	6.181	9.553	3.372
Police Uplift - Additional Recruitment Top Up Grant*			2.160	2.160
Pensions Specific Grant*	2.892	2.892	10.290	7.398
Total General Funding + Home Office Specific Grants	358.127	372.760	407.541	34.780

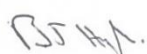
* An element of Home Office funding for the 20,000 officers national uplift and funding for increases in employer pension contribution rate increases are specific grants and not part of general funding. Therefore, the specific grants reduce the Net Budget Requirement shown in Table E.

Table E – Budget Movement

Budget Proposal Summary	£m
Opening Budget	363.687
Recurring Activity Prior - 1.4.24	1.993
2024/25 Base Budget	365.680
Inflation and Cost Pressures	36.772
New Investment & Service Demands	4.478
One-off Investment	1.544
2024/25 Base Budget plus Growth	408.474
Savings (Recurring)	(10.409)
Savings (One-Off)	(0.893)
Budget Requirement Before Increases to Specific Grants and Reserve Adjustments	397.173
Increase in Pension Contribution Grant	(6.744)
Increase in Police Uplift Claimable Specific Grant	(3.372)
Police Uplift Additional Recruitment Top Up Grant	(2.160)
Grant for Administering Pensions Remedy (One-off)	(0.654)
Net Contribution to Reserves (One-off)	1.294
2024/25 Net Budget Requirement	385.538

Please accept my apologies for any additional work that this may cause but I am keen to ensure that I am being consistent and transparent.

Yours sincerely,



BJ Harrington QPM
Chief Constable

Appendix A

2024/25 Budget Overview					
Line Ref	Budget Activity	£'000	Comments	2023/24 (£'000)	Change (£'000)
1	2023/24 Original Budget	363,687		352,200	11,487
2	Activity occurring before 1st April 2024	1,993		541	1,452
3	2024/25 Starting Budget after adjustment to 2022/23 base for activity occurring before 1st April 2023	365,680		352,741	12,939
4	Unavoidable Cost Pressures	30,028	Includes the full year impact of the 7% pay award (Awarded Sept 2023). Inflation and contractual and legal pressures	22,505	7,523
5	New Investment	4,478	Investment to enhance policing capacity and capability, maintain essential policing infrastructure and deliver environmental ambitions as well as the recurring revenue cost of the capital investment programme	5,240	(762)
6	One-off Activity - operational and support	(2)	Includes the one-off elements of new investment offset by one-off savings	594	(596)
7	Change in Police Uplift Specific Grant	(5,532)	Increase in level of PUP Grant that is ring fenced and linked to demonstrating maintenance of officer uplift targets	(3,146)	(2,385)
8	Transfer from Reserves to Fund One-Off Activity	1,294	One-off contribution to the General Reserve (required as a step change to replenish reserve back to 3% of Net Revenue Expenditure Budget) plus addition to Legal Claims reserve relating to one-off grant funding to be received for administration of pensions remedy work. These contributions to reserves are offset by contributions from specific reserves to fund one-off costs.	(3,332)	4,626
9	2024/25 Budget requirement before Savings and Efficiencies	395,947		374,602	21,345
10	Recurring Cashable Savings	(10,409)		(10,915)	506
11	Net Budget Requirement	385,538		363,687	21,851
Source of Funding					
12	Government Grants	218,877	General Funding received from the Home Office	207,321	11,556
13	Council Tax Precept	165,319	Includes a 5.5% increase in the Council Tax precept and taxbase rise of 1.15% based on information provided from billing authorities	154,836	10,483
14	Collection Fund Surplus	1,341	Information provided by billing authorities	1,531	(189)
15	2024/25 Total Funding	385,538		363,687	21,851
16	Surplus / (deficit)	0		0	(0)
Council Tax Information					
17	Council Tax Band D (2023/24 £233.46, 2022/23 £218.52, and 2021/22 £208.53)	£ 246.42		233.46	12.96
18	CT Increase (2023/24 6.84%, 2022/23 4.79% and 2021/22 4.98%)	5.55%	Equal to £12.96 rise in precept	6.84%	-1.29%
19	Increased cost to Band D property/pa (2023/24 £14.94, 2022/23 £9.99 and 2021/22 £9.90)	£ 12.96		£14.94	£-1.98
20	Additional income generated from precept increase (£m)	8.7		9.9	(1.2)
21	Additional Weekly Cost (2023/24 - 29 pence, 2022/23 - 19 pence and 2021/22 - 19 pence)	0.25		£0.29	£-0.04
22	Tax base - number of properties (2023/24 - 663,222, 2022/23 - 655,667 and 2021/22 - 644,541)	670,884		663,222	7,662

POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX			
REVENUE BUDGET SUMMARY - 2024/25			
	2023/24 Original Budget	2023/24 Forecast Outturn (Month 8)	2024/25 Draft Original Budget
	£000	£000	£000
Employees			
Police Officer pay and allowances	226,792	237,377	253,256
PCSO pay and allowances	3,687	3,687	3,567
Police staff pay and allowances	98,909	99,832	103,072
Ill-health/medical pensions	4,215	4,965	4,770
Training	2,019	2,053	1,611
Other employee expenses	399	725	392
	336,022	348,639	366,668
Other Service Expenditure			
Premises	12,317	11,898	11,650
Transport	6,934	7,143	6,433
Supplies & services	42,727	50,424	46,826
Third party payments	7,382	7,836	7,466
	69,359	77,302	72,375
Gross Expenditure	405,381	425,941	439,043
Government grants - Police Uplift Programme	(6,181)	(6,181)	(11,713)
Government grants - Pensions	(2,892)	(2,892)	(10,290)
Government grants and contributions - Other	(14,722)	(27,644)	(16,720)
Fees charges and other service income	(16,279)	(17,725)	(18,045)
Income	(40,074)	(54,442)	(56,767)
Net Cost of Services	365,307	371,498	382,275
Other Expenditure / (Income)			
Interest (receivable) / payable	(91)	(998)	(168)
Capital & other adjustments	904	2,959	1,284
	813	1,961	1,116
Net Expenditure	366,120	373,460	383,391
Transfer to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	712	(6,944)	1,297
Transfer to/(from) the General Reserve	(3,145)	(2,953)	850
Budget Requirement	363,687	363,563	385,538
Sources of Finance	(363,687)	(363,563)	(385,538)

Note: the analysis above includes the following budgets in relation to the PFCC's office and commissioned activities:

	2023/24	2024/25
PFCC's Office Running Costs	£1.867m	£1.977m
Commissioning Grant activity	£9.585m	£10.029m
PFCC Totals	£11.452m	£12.006m

Supporting Financial Documents

Setting a budget is complex and it is important to provide transparency in relation to the various elements that comprise the budget. I have therefore attached several appendices that cover specific aspects of the budget to provide further supporting detail.



Appendix C
Spreadsheets v2.pdf

The appendices are: -

- C1 - MTFS Summary
- C2 - MTFS Detail
- C3 - 2024/25 Budget Overview – Chief Constable’s Proposal
- C4 - 2024/25 Budget Summary – Chief Constable’s Proposal
- C5 - 2024/25 Pay Budget Breakdown
- C6 - 2024/25 Contractual and Legal Cost Pressures
- C7 - 2024/25 Service Demand Changes
- C8 - 2024/25 New Revenue Investment
- C9 - 2024/25 Cashable and Non-cashable Savings
- C10 - Reserves Overview
- C11 - Capital Expenditure & Financing Summary - 2023/24 to 2028/29
- C12 - Capital Financing Requirement & MRP Forecasts – 2023/24 to 2028/29
- C13 - Capital Resources Forecast – 2023/24 to 2028/29
- C14 - Capital Programme - Approved Projects
- C15 - Capital Programme–Subject to Approval Capital Bids (New and Updated)
- C16 - Capital Programme - Revenue Consequences
- C17 - 2024/25 Budget - Subjective Analysis

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11th January 2024

Dear Roger,

Policing with consent is fundamental to everything we do. Whilst national commentary has recently described trust and confidence 'hanging by a thread' I am pleased to report that due to the hard work of the Force, your support and that of the people of Essex, public trust in the Essex Police is still high with the most recent public survey showing 73%¹ of respondents stating that Essex Police do a good or excellent job. This of course being without any complacency and whilst still providing some of the best Value for Money of any force as reported by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)².

Contributory to this Essex Police, with the support of communities, your office, criminal justice, and community safety partners has been able to make some real inroads into reducing crime, bringing justice for victims, and reducing anti-social behaviour. To the end of November 2023 crime overall is down by 6.4% in the previous 12 months, meaning 1,872 fewer unique victims compared to the 12 months to November 2022. Notably this has seen key reductions in domestic abuse, violent crime, violence against women and girls and sexual violence as well as more positive outcomes for victims.

The operational plans and the net budget requirement of £387.698m, proposed for financial year 2024/25, will consolidate our improvements as a force and further reduce crime and anti-social behaviour whilst continuing to improve outcomes for those affected by crime. You will see a continued focus on building capacity and capability toward crime prevention, efforts to prevent and where possible solve the crimes causing the most harm and if appropriate divert people away from this offending whilst ensuring that we maintain and build upon the hard-won trust of the communities' we police.

In considering the coming financial year and our preparations to meet ongoing challenges within a dynamic political, economic and international environment that impacts on communities, the public, criminal justice partners and the Force it is useful to reflect on the success and progress

¹ 12 months to September 2023

² [Value for money dashboards - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectors.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk)

of the Force this year in detail. This has been multi-faceted with growth in capacity, capability but equally in expectations of the public, partners and the Government.

With your support and through the Police Uplift Programme (PUP) Essex Police is the biggest it has ever been, maintaining an establishment of 3,755 officers and 2,480 police staff. This is supported by a significant volunteer cohort of 284 Specials, 148 Police Support Volunteers and 155 Volunteer Police Cadets, 63 volunteer cadet leaders, with 11 units spread over our district commands as well as a substantial cadre of Neighbourhood and Community Speed Watch volunteers. Together they have contributed to the reductions in overall crime across Essex but notably in areas that are complex and intractable such as domestic abuse (reduction of 16.5%) and rural crime (reduction of 6.2%).

I am clear that the Essex Police Force Plan brings together my responsibilities as Chief Constable under the law with the strategic priorities in the Essex the Police and Crime Plan and the priorities set under the Strategic Policing Requirement. The balanced budget set out in this letter is how I propose to ensure that I can deliver the ambitions that we share for Essex Police in 2024/25 and beyond.

The amazing people within Essex Police remain our greatest asset and paying and supporting them is our biggest cost representing 80% of the force's gross expenditure. You have properly continued to support this investment in previous years through increases to allowances and the annual pay rise across staff and officers. Importantly this has seen a workforce that remain committed to their varied contributions to make Essex an even safer place. Applications to join Essex Police remain high and retention levels are good as compared to other industries and some other forces allowing our people and the Force to consolidate the growth and develop experience and capability. The budget I propose further facilitates this approach.

As you will have seen through financial reporting in this year and previously, the Force is delivering efficiencies in its operations and allowing those in turn to fuel improvements in delivery through business change. This targeted transformation of activities to ensure effective and efficient delivery, aligned to our priorities and demand, has achieved £51.728m savings from 2016/17 – 2023/24. The proposed budget below, recognises that this is an area we cannot afford to lose focus on and has identified a 2024/25 savings programme to deliver a further £11.302m. This is a challenging programme and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) outlines that this is likely to continue for some years, meaning that, as a force, we will need to build on the complex improvements and transformational changes required to deliver the force plan.

The proposal for 2024/25 looks to enhance and solidify the plans worked on collaboratively by our teams over the last year, incorporating agreed assumptions concerning central government funding, local precept, savings, inflation and officer and staff pay awards.

In previous years there has been extensive and welcome growth in both our headcount and capabilities, but this year the focus is very much on consolidation and development of our assets. We have a highly motivated and dedicated workforce, but with 40% of officers and staff having been within policing less than five years we need to develop, shape and mould them so that they can progress to maximise their skills over the longer term. In this way building upon their commitment and adding to the long-term capability of the force with a sustainable long-term return on our investment.

This does not limit our operational ambitions, but mean that set against the many financial pressures for policing our investment areas this year are relatively modest and focussed on:

- Mitigating unavoidable cost pressures
- Enhancing policing capability and capacity
- Maintaining essential policing infrastructure
- Delivering our force environmental ambitions, and
- Investing to save to support operational delivery.

We will as in previous years utilise the efficiencies and savings we have made and maximise central government funding for the force to deliver our plans. Alongside this I am asking you to use your full flexibility to raise the policing element of the council tax precept for 2024/25. I hope that with our proven record of achievement we can demonstrate in the further detail outlined below how we will use this funding to consolidate our achievements and where possible, improve service delivery and outcomes for the people of Essex.

As you will be aware the detailed budget building processes have been conducted in dialogue with your Officials and scrutinised by you throughout. I hope the proposals within this letter are familiar to you and your team. They come at the culmination of a mature, consultative, and data-informed budget building process. I believe that with the associated detailed financial information, this presents a cogent and fiscally sound budget proposal to reduce crime, achieve justice for victims and best-serve communities in Essex.

Whilst recruitment into Policing is challenging nationally in the current climate, Essex Police continue to succeed in this space. Through the PUP and previous PFCC investment we have seen the Force grow Full Time Equivalent (FTE) officer numbers to 3,755 since 2018. A rise of 905 that has directly led to reductions in violent crime, domestic abuse, deaths and injuries on our roads and crime in our towns and city centres. Table A demonstrates the growth achieved.

Table A – Growth in Police Officer Establishment since 2018

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total Growth since 2018
Establishment Baseline	2,850	3,000	3,263	3,369	3,555	3,755	3,755	2,850
PUP	-	45	90	126	170	-	-	431
PUP (ROCU)	-	-	-	6	10	-	-	16
PUP (CT)	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Precept	150	218	16	52	20	-	-	456
Revised Establishment	3,000	3,263	3,369	3,555	3,755	3,755	3,755	3,755

Although the police officer pay budget requirement is calculated on an FTE basis, the Home Office monitoring of PUP is based on a comparison of police officer headcount to an allocated headcount target. The initial target for Essex Police was 3,765. The Home Office subsequently offered additional funding to forces who were able to exceed this initial target, up to an agreed level. For 2023/24 we are on target to reach a headcount of 3,825 i.e., an over achievement of 55 officers, but staying within our establishment of 3,755 FTE as a result of some officers being part time. For 2024/25 the Home Office have re-based the initial target to include an additional 45 officers to bring us up to a revised target of 3,810, which we are able to achieve without changing our FTE establishment or planned recruitment profile. The Home Office have added £2.160m to the core grant in respect the additional 45 officers.

In addition, the Home Office have offered the opportunity to recruit over again as we did this year with a further 10 officers in terms of headcount and, subject to agreement of this budget, we would intend to do this again in 2024/25. The cost of these additional 10 officers and associated grant income has not been factored into the budget proposed to you as full details of the additional recruitment scheme are yet to be received from the Home Office. Once the scheme has been confirmed, and with your agreement, recruitment plans would be updated on the basis that this would provide additional capacity for policing in Essex with no impact on the policing precept.

Achieving the officer uplift and maintaining it is a significant achievement and one that remains for the coming year, supporting the officers that we have attracted and retained in the force. We will continue to develop their skills and experience in policing to provide sound foundations for coming years, and investing in strong supervision for those we continue to attract to join us. We also maintain a focus on the attraction of those wishing to volunteer with us whether that be as a Special, Active Citizen or in our Cadet schemes. This will continue to improve police visibility and accessibility, supporting achievement of the strategic ambitions in your published Police and Crime Plan to maintain high quality local policing, responding to the growth in high harm and emerging crimes whilst investing in long term infrastructure, technology and enhancing the skills and capabilities of our people.

In 2023/24 I set a priority to continue to develop the capabilities of our people, consolidating on progress and building sustainability moving forward. This continues in the coming year and will enable the ongoing success we are seeing as a force compared to others. This is linked to our strong internal culture of public service, inclusion and valuing difference, driven through our leaders and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of Essex Police that underpins ethical performance and community trust and confidence, and this will continue with support of this budget proposal. Essex continues to become more diverse with many different communities as well as the wide geographical, societal and political make up. This year has seen Essex communities touched by world events such as the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and Russia and most recently Israel and Gaza, as well as the ongoing concerns of women and black communities linked to national and international events. Therefore, a key enabler to maintaining the trust of all communities is within our approach to valuing difference.

Our plans see the consolidation of our Community Policing and Town Centre Teams that have been at the forefront of dealing with Hate Crime and enabling engagement to build community cohesion as well as wider crime and anti-social behaviour reduction. It allows our Rural Engagement Team to continue to work to reduce crime in rural areas and our Business Crime Team to keep working with our businesses through the Business Crime Forum to ensure that these essential parts of the Essex economy and community are safer. The proposals set out allow us to enhance and develop the skills and capabilities of the staff and officers across these teams and the Force through key operational training such as crime investigation, driving courses, tutoring and the Force Wide leadership and supervisor development in the 'Be the Change Programme' development course for all first and second-line leaders.

Retaining and developing experience is a key challenge within policing and this is no different in Essex. The 2023 pay settlement of 7% for both officers and staff this year has benefited our workforce in a period of increased inflation and cost of living pressures. Although inflation is slowing financial pressures remain for the police workforce in Essex and we must work to ensure we retain our talent through both remuneration and provision of support and wellbeing services. That is why we are committed to maintaining our welfare, wellbeing services that were graded as 'Good' by HMICFRS³ and bolster our development opportunities alongside maximising financial

³ HMICFRS Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) – 2021/22

renumeration within regulations and affordability. In support of this we continue to support payment of Southeast allowance at £3,000 p.a. for officers and Targeted Variable Payments for Detective Constables at £1,200 p.a. whilst we continue to grow our detective capacity. These are all key to retention of our people in support of our aim to consolidate and develop our capability in the longer term.

Alongside tackling the wide range of issues impacting the safety and way of life of the people of Essex we have made specific and notable impact in areas that have been of particular concern locally and nationally. This budget allows us to continue to do this.

Reducing violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains a priority for Essex Police, and with the resources allocated and focus directed to addressing this we are seeing positive results. Accepting the change in Home Office Counting rules with regards to Stalking and Harassment offences, Essex experienced a 14.3% decrease (5,509 fewer) in the amount of violence against the person offences committed against females in the 12 months to November 2023 compared to the 12 months to November 2022. There has also been an increase in the number of cases solved (35) in the 12 months to November 2023 compared to 12 months to November 2022.

Our work with the StreetSafe initiative has enabled the public and particularly women and girls, to pin-point locations where they feel unsafe or have felt unsafe and identify why that location made them feel unsafe. Developed by the Digital Public Contact (DPC) Programme in cooperation with the Home Office and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) it was introduced into Essex as part of the government's strategy to tackle Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG). Despite the reduction in offences against women and girls 42.5% of females feel safe walking alone in their area after dark (from the independent survey jointly commissioned and funded by Essex Police and PFCC) for the 12 months to September 2023 compared to 70.9% of males. The total of 435 reports that have been submitted for the county since inception allows us to work with local partners to improve perceptions of safety as well.

Protecting vulnerable people and breaking the cycle of domestic abuse (DA) has been an area of focus for the force over many years and we continue to make an impact on this ambition. In the 12 months to November 2023, compared to the 12 months to November 2022, Essex experienced a 15.5% decrease in the number of recorded DA offences, this equates to 4,602 fewer offences. Over the same period there has also been a 10.2% decrease in repeat victims of DA equating to 2,036 fewer repeat victims. Alongside this, as a result of Operation Puffin⁴ the force has implemented several changes to how it approaches the issue of DA including implementing improvements to the risk assessment and safeguarding processes that have seen more dangerous people being proactively targeted and victims being better protected.

Our focus on serious violence has seen a reduction in homicides over the past 5 years. We continue to focus our activity, through the Serious Violence Unit and Operation Grip to target high harm hot spots for violent crime. In these 'hot spot' areas we have seen a 7% decrease in crime. This has also supported a reduction of 9.6% (1,500 fewer offences) of violence with injury for the 12 months to November 2023 compared to the same period to November 2022. This is alongside a reduction of 10.9% (185 fewer) of knife-enabled offences and 33.6% increase in Organised Crime Group (OCG) disruptions in the county.

In a relatively safe county, we know that ASB is an important area of concern to residents of Essex, and focussed activity in this area has seen a reduction of 9,367 (38.4%) in ASB incidents for the 12 months to November 2023 compared to the same time to November 2022. This is

⁴ Operation Puffin was an investigation into the horrific murder of Ashley Wadsworth by a young man with a history of domestic violence in Chelmsford in 2022

further reduced, by almost 65% compared to the pre-pandemic levels reported in the 12 months prior to December 2019.

Endorsement and assessment by HMICFRS is an important assurance for me and you in the performance of the force. I will continue to build upon the positive assessment from our last PEEL inspection that graded the force with 5 'good', 4 'adequate', 1 'requires improvement', as well as the 'outstanding' received in 2019 from the HMICFRS review for Crime Data Accuracy (CDA).

We continue to work on improving all the areas assessed and 2023 has seen significant progress in reviewing our process and structure to improve how we respond to calls from the public. The complex Major Change Programme has seen change across multiple commands leading to the resourcing support in our approach to Domestic Abuse and the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA) and the development and resourcing of the Contact Management Strategy 2023-2027 with the implementation of the new Contact Management Target Operating Model. Of the four areas for improvement (AFI's) identified by HMICFRS, one has since been signed off by the inspectorate who are confident that the force call takers are providing appropriate advice to callers regarding crime prevention.

Whilst we still have much to do here, our trajectory is positive, and the budget allows us to build a firm and sustainable operating model that will see our responses to the public improve with maintenance of our emergency to 999 calls as well as a reduction in handling and wait times for non-emergency contact online and through the 101 number that will further improve the service to the people of Essex.

As well as building capacity through growth we have sought to improve our efficiency by ensuring we work professionally and collaboratively with partners. Ahead of the national Right Care Right Person Framework Essex Police has worked to deliver the requirements for Right Care, Right Person (RCRP). Supported by the Home Office National Partnership Agreement, focusing on Mental Health with the Department of Health and Social Care Essex Police has already reduced the volume of calls for service for 'concerns for welfare' by 61.4%. A decrease that sees 32 less deployments every day allowing the officers to focus further on preventing crime and responding to the public. Allied to this we are already working to ensure that we harness all the learning and opportunity highlighted in the Police Productivity Review.

I am keenly aware that any request for an increase in local taxation at a time when people's finances are under pressure may be unpopular and given that my proposals for a budget increase do not include further growth, this could be open to question. However, with the extensive unavoidable cost pressures and despite our ongoing ambitious and successful savings and efficiency programme this is my assessment the best way to consolidate, sustain and increase the significant gains we have made in growing the force, reducing crime and improving the service to the people of Essex. Therefore, this budget proposal is based on Essex Police receiving £407.541m of general funding, PUP and Pension specific grants along with a 5.55% precept increase (equating to £12.96 on a band D property) as set out in Table B below.

The following Table B sets out the overall general funding position over the past two years and demonstrates the growth proposed for 2024/25.

Table B – Funding Comparison

Funding Source	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Increase/ (decrease)
	£m	£m	£m	£m
HO Core Police Grant	193.524	194.195	207.912	13.716
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Council Tax Precept	143.276	154.836	165.319	10.483
Collection Fund Surplus	2.275	1.531	1.341	(0.189)
Total General Funding	352.200	363.687	387.698	24.010
Police Uplift - Claimable Specific Grant *	3.035	6.181	9.553	3.372
Pensions Specific Grant*	2.892	2.892	10.290	7.398
Total General Funding + Home Office Specific Grants	358.127	372.760	407.541	34.780

* An element of Home Office funding for the 20,000 officers national uplift and funding for increases in employer pension contribution rate increases are specific grants and not part of general funding. Therefore, the specific grants reduce the Net Budget Requirement shown in Table E.

Savings and Efficiency plan

Essex Police has a proven track record for delivering savings and efficiencies across the Force to invest in front line delivery and has achieved total cashable savings of £51.728m from 2016/17 – 2023/24. In addition, a further £16.15m in non-cashable savings have been achieved, giving an overall total of £67.88m of savings and efficiencies during the period referenced below.

Table C – Essex Police Savings 2016/17 – 2023/24

	Cashable Actual Savings Full Year £m	Non Cashable Actual Savings Full Year £m	Total Actual Savings £m
2016/17	(17.574)	**	(17.574)
2017/18	(3.564)	**	(3.564)
2018/19	(3.586)	**	(3.586)
2019/20	(4.656)	(4.649)	(9.305)
2020/21	(4.954)	(2.484)	(7.438)
2021/22	(2.887)	(0.416)	(3.303)
2022/23	(3.774)	(3.906)	(7.680)
2023/24 *	(10.732)	(4.696)	(15.428)
Total 8 Years	(51.728)	(16.150)	(67.878)

* Full year savings forecast as at December 2023

**Non Cashable savings were not formally reported from 2016/17 to 2018/19

In 2023/24 the force is on track to deliver the savings challenge set out in last year's budget proposal - an in year cashable savings of £12.213m for 2023/24 and full year recurring saving of £10.915m. Compared to previous year challenges, it was acknowledged that this represented a significant step change in volume, however, through the strong leadership of my Chief Officer Group and good strategic overview by Corporate Finance and Strategic Change I am confident

we will continue to deliver these cashable savings and bring sustainable efficiencies for the Force.

The Major Change Programme is coming to a conclusion and has successfully allowed for the realignment of resources within the organisation to facilitate an improvement in how we tackle domestic abuse (accounting for 18.5% of all crime) by adopting the DARA risk assessment to better prevent and tackle offending, the streamlining of areas of the Crime and Public Protection Command to ensure focused targeting of dangerous offenders and a staged implementation of a new target operating model (TOM) for the Contact Management Command that is already seeing improvements in service to the public. An investment of £1.029m into the new TOM is underpinning improvements and delivering change and transformation that will pay for itself over a three-year period.

Off the back of this significant increase in savings delivery, the force this year has prepared a savings and efficiency programme for 2024/25 with an output of 'one-off' in year savings of £0.893m and in year recurring in-year savings of £10.409m that will have an ongoing full year effect of £10.589m – a total of £11.302m efficiency savings in financial year 2024/25. A sum greater than the funding from the increase in the police precept proposed.

This is a significant programme for Essex Police and outlines our commitment to delivering value for money to Essex residents and our continual desire to deliver efficient and effective policing to the county. There are several significant areas of focus which have dominated this programme. This includes the extensive work in collaboration with Kent Police that has seen a wholesale review of our Information Technology (IT) delivery function contributing £0.404m of pay savings and a further £0.889m non-pay savings.

The proposed 2024/25 savings include a recurring cashable saving for a police staff vacancy factor, of between 7% and 13%. This yields a saving contribution of over £4.2m, which is a significant part of the overall savings programme proposal. Whilst, using an average cost, this equates to 92.7 FTEs there is currently no negative operational impact and through 2024/25 all posts will be reviewed to establish whether these can be removed permanently. To date all departments across the Force have also conducted an efficiency review of officers and staff which is set to deliver over £1m to the programme.

Essex Police have been maximising income available to us and this is reflected by a £1.317m contribution to the efficiency programme in 2024/25. This covers areas such as Stansted Airport and insurance recoveries. In considering any income generation opportunity the overriding maxim is that it does not detract from our delivery of core business.

Our savings proposals also feature £3.285m of non-cashable savings that equate to greater opportunity to deliver operationally. A large amount is attributable to the efficiencies driven through the implementation of Digital Asset Management reducing time and cost in securing digital evidence and the contribution of our Special Constabulary to operational delivery.

Together this takes the proposed savings programme for 2024/25 to one of the most ambitious Essex Police has put forward since 2016/17. However, this comes on the back of consistent savings being driven from an already lean force and the achievement of £10.732m in 2023/24 and shows the ongoing commitment of Essex Police to deliver even more efficiently for the people of Essex. Although it should be noted that this will become increasingly hard to achieve in future years.

2024/25 budget

Following the Home Office provisional grant announcement and with an assumption of securing the full flexibility to raise the local policing precept I am now able to present a proposal for a balanced budget for the Force for the fiscal year 2024/25. The details of which are contained within this letter and its appendices.

Table B above shows a £13.716m increase in Home Office Core Grant. The additionality includes a share of the £150m confirmed by the Chancellor at the Spending Review 2021, and an increase towards the cost of the September 2023 police officer pay award. These increases are partially offset by a reduction in core funding to offset the Home Office increase to the level of ringfenced grant that can be claimed directly linked to demonstrating maintenance of the national police uplift programme.

2022/23 was the final year of the national Police Uplift Programme and previously the ring-fenced grant (£6.181m) would be added to the Home Office grant in the subsequent year. However, to incentivise forces to maintain the current levels of officer numbers the level of ring-fenced grant has increased by a further £3.372m to £9.553m for 2024/25.

Legacy Council Tax Grants remain unchanged. The proposed precept increase reflects a 5.55% increase which is an additional £10.483m; £1.789m of this is derived from the change in tax base whilst the other £8.695m is from the council tax rise. The collection fund, although at a healthy surplus of £1.341m is a reduction on the previous year position of £1.531m but still positive considering the fiscal impact of COVID19 on councils across the country, the impact of cost-of-living pressures and their ability to collect council tax.

The budget is based on the following: -

- i) The Home Office Core Grant has increased by £13.716m;
- ii) The Home Office has ringfenced a specific grant of £9.553m for PUP. This will be based on retention of the additional officers recruited through the national Police Uplift Programme;
- iii) Increase the council tax precept by 5.55% (**£12.96** per Band D property);
- iv) Increase in the tax base of 1.16% from 663,222 to 670,884; and
- v) For 2024/25 the employer contribution rate for police officer pensions increases to 35.3% with the Home Office increasing the specific pension grant by a further £7.398m from £2.892m to £10.290m covering this cost and the administration costs for administering the pension remedy following pensions changes resulting from the Macleod Sergeant judgment.

Since 2022 the force has maintained its highest ever FTE establishment for police officers at 3,755. With the support of PUP funding and from yourself through council precept rise I intend to consolidate the gains we have made and maintain this overall establishment in 2024/25.

However, given the gradual impact of projected leavers and the need to recruit the main body of replacement officers in fixed intakes at periods throughout the year it is not possible to maintain the actual FTE at 3,755 officers. At some points throughout the year the FTE strength may reduce slightly as to recruit in excess to maintain the 3,755 is financially prohibitive. Therefore, I

have set a floor of 3,700 FTE that sees actual numbers fluctuate between 3,700 and 3,743 during the year as set out in Table D below.

It should be noted that any change in actual leavers will have an in-year impact.

Table D – Police Officer Recruitment Profile 2024/25

	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25
Previous Month End Strength	3,755	3,734	3,712	3,743	3,721	3,700	3,743	3,722	3,700	3,743	3,721	3,700
Projected Leavers (FTE)	(23)	(23)	(23)	(23)	(23)	(23)	(23)	(23)	(23)	(23)	(23)	(23)
Total Projected Joiners			52			65			64			62
Total Joiners (FTE)	0	0	52	0	0	65	0	0	64	0	0	62
Transfers In / Returners	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1
Projected Month End Strength	3,734	3,712	3,743	3,721	3,700	3,743	3,722	3,700	3,743	3,721	3,700	3,740
Target Establishment	3,755	3,755	3,755	3,755	3,755	3,755	3,755	3,755	3,755	3,755	3,755	3,755
Variance (FTE)	(21)	(43)	(12)	(34)	(55)	(12)	(33)	(55)	(12)	(34)	(55)	(15)
Projected Headcount	3,804	3,782	3,781	3,759	3,738	3,810	3,789	3,767	3,746	3,755	3,734	3,810
Variance against Uplift Recruitment target of 3,810 (Headcount)	(6)	(28)	(29)	(51)	(72)	0	(21)	(43)	(64)	(55)	(76)	0

Based on current assumptions, there is a balanced budget for 2024/25. As per the outline of the MTFS, future years have a forecast deficit, £13.4m in 2025/26, £26.6m in 2026/27 and rising to £40m in 2027/28 and £50m in 2028/29. The MTFS assumes that the force will achieve £3m recurring savings annually and one-off savings equal to one-off cost pressures in each respective year. This is a picture that we will continue to monitor and one that can change. We will continue to work with your office to bring assurance in our forward financial planning.

As discussed through our budget building engagement meetings the MTFS reflects estimates based on current information available including an assumption for council tax policing precept of 2.5% in 2025/26 and future years and a general reserve maintained at 3% of net revenue budget.

We have set the ongoing pay assumptions at 2.5% for September 2024 and the same annually following the last Comprehensive Spending Review. If any new government in 2024/25 changes the current policy of fully funding police pay rises above that budgeted by forces this will be a significant pressure if not fully funded by government.

A summary of the budget proposal is shown in Appendix A and Table E below with a more detailed analysis within supporting document C4.

Table E – Budget Movement

Budget Proposal Summary	£m
Opening Budget	363.687
Recurring Activity Prior - 1.4.24	1.993
2024/25 Base Budget	365.680
Inflation and Cost Pressures	36.771
New Investment & Service Demands	4.479
One-off Investment	1.544
2024/25 Base Budget plus Growth	408.474
Savings (Recurring)	(10.409)
Savings (One-Off)	(0.893)
Budget Requirement Before Increases to Specific Grants and Reserve Adjustments	397.173
Increase in Pension Contribution Grant	(6.744)
Increase in Police Uplift - Specific Grant	(3.372)
Grant for Administering Pensions Remedy (One-off)	(0.654)
Net Contribution to Reserves (One-off)	1.294
2024/25 Net Budget Requirement	387.698

A full subjective analysis is provided at Appendix B and a detailed analysis of movements for the 2024/25 proposed budget is provided in Appendix C17 to this letter.

Precept increase

In order to deliver the ongoing crime reduction and achievements we have delivered in the past years I formally request that you raise the council tax by 5.55%, thereby having a Council Tax Band D of £246.42 which is an increase of £12.96.

This budget proposal is cognisant of the funding challenge nationally faced by public sector bodies and seeks to continue to consolidate the many benefits the PUP funding and your support have bought to the force in recent years. We are committed to investing in our people, to considering the wellbeing and financial payments we are able to provide and through our DE&I work, also making sure that this is an organisation that people want to be part of and can be proud of.

As described above since in the last year we have undertaken complex change to ensure the movement of resources to deliver improvements in our support for Domestic Abuse victims and in improving how we answers calls for service and identify vulnerability at point of contact. The focus on both resource and delivery in our Contact Management Command is seeing improvements in these areas already, with HMICFRS positive about the progress we have made in providing crime prevention advice to victims. We expect this to improve further with the implementation of a new TOM in this area in May 2024. This prepares us well for the continuous assessment from HMICFRS and the publication of our next Police Efficiency Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection report in 2025.

This budget proposal focuses on key areas that will allow us to make essential gains and improvements, but also importantly allows for the continued consolidation of previous investment to maintain visible, accessible, and consistent policing. The workforce is comparatively young in experience (as of October 2023 more than 37% of our officers had less than 5 years' experience) and in many cases young. Therefore learning, development and leadership are key in developing their skills and capability. That is why the investment of time and effort in our 'Be the Change'

First Line Leaders course for all sergeants, inspectors and police staff equivalent (PSE) supervisors is an essential intervention providing direction, theory and practical skills to lead and develop themselves and their staff. Currently over 250 Sergeants and 65 Inspectors and PSE equivalents have progressed through this training to date.

Investing in our workforce is an essential enabler of policing with consent in Essex having a better trained, well-motivated, well led and valued workforce ensure that I can focus on delivering the highest quality of service for the people of Essex. In support of this I will be continuing to place emphasis on the delivery programme underpinning the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy launched in 2020. The development of this programme placed us in a good position to undertake a self-audit following the findings of the Baroness Casey Review on the Metropolitan Police Service. Arguably the Casey Review was the catalyst that saw many forces undertake this activity, however, the investment we had already made gave us a framework to progress this, building upon plans rather than initiating new ones. As you have read and seen through the scrutiny report that went to the Ethics Committee of the Police Fire and Crime Panel, whilst not complacent, Essex is in a strong position in this area. This of course being supported by the 'Good' rating when inspected by HMICRS in relation to vetting and counter corruption in June 2023⁵.

Ensuring that the people of Essex are informed about policing and that we are engaging with them to prevent crime and reassure them means a professionally delivered communications and engagement plan is essential and resourced and this budget allows us to maximise this. The Essex Police Media and Communications Team run ongoing, extensive Crime Prevention campaigns throughout the year, alerting all our audiences (the public, our partners, colleagues and those in other forces with whom we collaborate) on how to avoid becoming a victim of crime and how to work with us to make our county even safer, whether online or on the street.

In the last year our communications focus has continued to focus on: building upon and maintaining community trust and confidence in Essex Police; the visibility and credibility of our officers (from operational work to criminal justice outcomes); and, uniting with our communities with a common goal of preventing crime, keeping people safe and catching criminals.

Effective, positive, proactive communications from police forces have never been more important and in Essex Police we have continued to cut-through the often-negative media headlines about policing more broadly, to ensure the people of Essex (and beyond) see our good work and can see our point of difference.

Examples that have made a difference include:

- Our successful perpetrator focused Reflect campaign to encourage those committing domestic abuse to reflect on their behaviour and seek help. This to date has resulted in 500 engagements between Perpetrators and the Change project that will make Essex Safer.
- Continuation of the #WeValueDifference campaign to ensure our force remains representative of the communities it serves that has seen record numbers of women and ethnic minority officer join the force.
- Relating positive stories of successes builds community confidence and enhances feelings of safety so focusing on external storytelling has seen our press office issue between 200 and 300 positive stories focusing on credibility, visibility, operational activity and criminal justice outcomes each month.

⁵ A report into the effectiveness of vetting and counter corruption arrangements in Essex Police [A report into the effectiveness of vetting and counter-corruption arrangements in Essex Police - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmics/reports-and-publications/a-report-into-the-effectiveness-of-vetting-and-counter-corruption-arrangements-in-essex-police/)

- Notable pieces of external communications activity in 2023 include promoting the work to tackle ASB (Operation Dial), Live Facial Recognition (Operation Stronghold), tackling robbery (Operation Calibre) and preventing knife crime (Operation Sceptre) as well as publication of daily court results where perpetrators of all types of offences are convicted and sentenced.
- Ongoing engagement through social media channels with Essex Police reaching almost 600,000 followers to our combined social media channels.
- The relaunch of our district digital newsletters 'Dispatch' in October 2023, saw subscribers receive a direct-to-inbox weekly email summarising all of the good work in their area. At the time of writing subscribers have grown organically (without promotion) to 16,000 across Dispatch and 2024 will see a promotional campaign to promote this further.

Investment

When reviewing this budget proposal, our initial focus has been to consider where we are able to identify unavoidable cost pressures, accepting that these will need to be factored into our ability to deliver operational policing, before any further investment decisions can be considered. As you might expect, within this we include significant areas of cost pressures such as that for pay (£33.248m for the cost of nationally agreed pay awards, pension contribution rate increases and the impact of pay progression on an expanding police force) as well as Inflation and Deflation (£0.852m). We have further identified Contractual and Legal cost pressures of £2.671m, meaning that our unavoidable cost pressures total £36.771m as indicated in Table E.

Against the context of rising prices, inflation and a forecast of challenging financial climate, new demand led growth for the force has been kept to a minimum. To provide an overview of the modest investment requested in this budget proposal, I have split these out into the following priorities:

- Enhancing policing capability and capacity
- Maintaining essential policing infrastructure
- Delivering our force environmental ambitions, and
- Investing to save to support operational delivery.

Enhancing Policing Capacity / Capability

This area sees investment into the key operational policing space to address both prevention and response capability and capacity. A key area for investment that has already been referenced in this proposal, is into our Contact Management Command. However, whilst this may see £1m invested now, this is against a commitment that the command will deliver this investment back in savings from improved operations and efficiencies in 2025/26.

Investment into the Operational Policing Command (OPC) to maintain operational capacity following reductions in central funding from the National County Lines Coordination Centre. The flexibility through additional overtime availability of £80,000 in support of the Serious Violence Unit and Op Raptor teams focus on tackling drug driven violence and reduction of harm in the county.

In our Criminal Justice work we propose to consolidate in year investment of £0.156m that has seen the outsourcing of the taking of medical statements. Since inception in May 2022 the benefits have been closely monitored and we have seen significant improvements in timeliness

and quality of medical statements that allows for speedier justice for victims.

This budget proposal also supports a £0.233m suite of investment in our ability to deal with Digital Forensics. This will enhance our capability and capacity to bring serious offenders to justice, by increasing capacity in areas with proven impact including options for unlocking encrypted devices. This proposed investment will also increase our capacity to tackle increased case work in this area of between up to 20% per annum in terms of both the number of cases and the amount of data per case. This being alongside the need to comply with new regulations and the recommendations following the HMICFRS thematic inspection of Digital Forensics in 2022.

Essex Police are also committed to being a data driven force and progressive in the area of evidence based policing. This budget proposal supports our continued £74,000 investment into the Essex Centre for Data Analytics (ECDA) partnership with Essex County Council and the University of Essex, driving a future operating model that will increase our ability to use data in operational policing activities and in whole system approaches that deliver for Essex residents to be and feel safe. This has seen the wider use of data across Community Safety and successful utilisation in projects such as the Knife Crime Violence Model (KCVI) that has seen evidenced reduction in harm and offending that is being extended to further areas of the county.

Maintaining Essential Policing Infrastructure

As might be expected in an organisation that is committed to both digitally enabling and equipping its workforce to deliver effective and appropriate policing in an increasingly technologically advancing world, the maintenance of our digital and IT infrastructure is essential. There are several areas of proposed investment in this section that are linked to taking this forward and align heavily with the move to cloud based infrastructure. These support our ability to store, manage and understand data, taking the force forward into an area of data maturity that will be a cornerstone of policing, locally and nationally, in coming years.

Our people, as referenced previously, are the largest part of our essential policing infrastructure and this proposal sets out a strong rationale for the need to bolster our support in areas such as force mileage and subsistence budgets. We are more agile across all areas of policing than we have ever been and as such where there is this small increase in resource requirement, we have seen significant efficiencies, driven through our ambitious estates programme, in the use of our physical estate as a result.

Delivering Force Environmental Ambitions

There is much work currently focussed on the future electrification of the Essex Police Fleet and the infrastructure required to support this. The proposed capital programme includes £0.436m in 2024/25, an additional £1.45m in 2025/26 and a further £1m in each of the subsequent years of the MTFS period, to provide the required infrastructure. In 2035 the production of combustion vehicles will cease, and we need to be prepared to ensure we can maintain our fleet. A Capital Business Case is being prepared which will put forward proposals that will support a significant change for the operational policing tactical approaches in this area, in line with legislation for the requirements to move to electric vehicles before the 2035 deadline.

Invest to Save

The force is committed to delivering on the core requirements of policing, however, modest investment into specific areas, as identified in this proposal will allow us to accrue or recoup monies into the force.

Within the Insurance Team it has been identified that the investment of one extra member of staff will allow us to clear a number of backlog claims on behalf of the force, as well as progressing current claims more quickly. This will create a more efficient way of recouping owed monies back into the force.

Within the Information Management command there is a proposal to grow by one Civil Disclosure Officer, meeting the growing demand for this information for civil court cases that individuals are willing to pay for to progress their case. Early, and conservative, estimates on income as a result more than cover the cost of the role and add additional income to the force. Should income in this area exceed our expectations, we will be reviewing this as a future opportunity in the coming months and years.

Table F below shows how the force will maximise the benefits derived from a precept rise.

Table F – Analysis of Investment

Proposed Areas of Growth	£m
Unavoidable Pay Pressures (Includes Pay Awards, Increments and Employers Pension Contribution)	33.248
Contractual & Legal Pressures	2.671
Contractual Inflation	0.852
Gross Inflation & Cost Pressures	36.771
Enhancing Policing Capacity and Capability	2.261
Revenue Consequences of Capital Investment Programme	1.469
Maintain Essential Policing Infrastructure	0.592
Other New Investment & Service Demands	0.156
Total New Investment and Service Demands	4.479
Enhancing Policing Capacity and Capability (One-off)	0.931
Revenue Consequences of Capital Programme (One-off)	0.699
Other Including Contractual and Legal pressures (One-off)	0.175
Cost of Policing Bank Holidays (below that funded in base)	(0.261)
Total One-Off Pressures	1.544
Total Growth	42.794

NB: Appendix C sets out the supporting documents to be sent to your Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) to support this budget.

Reserves

In line with your strategy, we have held a prudent level of reserves have to deal with known commitments (earmarked reserves) as well as unforeseeable events (general reserve). The reserves position has stabilised at about 3% whilst allowing the maximum number of monies to be directed to reducing crime, tackling offenders and providing a service to the people of Essex.

The below table summarises the reserves position. As you are aware, last year we faced an unprecedented pressure responding to the Just Stop Oil protests and funded £1.584m towards our total costs of £5.584m, with the balance of £4.003m funded by a Home Office Special Grant. I am grateful for your submission to the Home Office to seek full cost recovery, but the lack of full reimbursement has taken the General Reserve balance which has dipped below 3%.

The reserve forecast and our Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) assumes that the General Reserve will increase to 3% of net revenue budget by 2025/26.

Table G – Forecast Reserves (Year End Balances)

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)
Earmarked Revenue Reserves	8.3	7.7	6.9	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.5
General Reserve	13.8	10.4	11.3	12.4	13.0	13.5	13.8
GR as % of net revenue expenditure	3.9%	2.9%	2.9%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Total - Revenue Reserves	22.2	18.1	18.2	18.8	19.4	19.8	20.4

The Future

The Force is on track to deliver a recruitment plan which will see officer growth reaching 3,755 by the 31 March 2024. Table D sets out a recruitment plan for police officers that ensures that our strength at no point falls under 3,700 and indeed, stabilises at 3,740 at 31 March 2025.

Whilst Essex Police is able to maintain the growth afforded to it over recent years, we, like all forces, face challenges in terms of retention and recruitment. I have outlined how we are 'bucking the trend' compared to many forces, positively maintaining a high level of satisfaction, however, nationally many forces have found themselves scrutinised publicly, quite rightly, for all the wrong reasons, and this has a negative impact on the more general appetite for people to see policing as an attractive career path.

I have outlined my commitment to addressing this locally by continuing to support officers and staff in their wellbeing and training. Equally our continued focus on the structures I have put in place to increase inclusivity in the force to facilitate better understanding of the diversity communities and ensure retention of the widest pool of talent are an essential part of the plan.

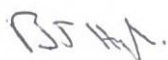
Our ambitions to redevelop our estate and in particular Boreham are significantly further on in our planning and our continued investment in technology has seen the successful implementation of the ICCS solution and the identification of the technology solution requirements for a forward-looking Force Control Room. This, alongside the significant work that is taking place in the Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) arena, including the force driven Data Transformation Programme, will allow for a foundation to make significant changes into how we use our data and technology in policing in future years.

As I have outlined in this proposal, Essex Police continue to deliver successfully in several areas whilst being one of the most poorly funded when comparing the amount per head of population. We are reducing crime and in particular violent crime as well as bringing more people to justice giving greater satisfaction for victims. ASB and Burglary across the force are significantly down as compared with 2019 and in contrast to other areas of the country trust and confidence in Essex Police remains relatively high. Working with public sector and the community and voluntary sector we continue to protect vulnerable people and make Essex safer.

This is a balanced budget and is realistic and ambitious. I have every confidence it will deliver better policing for the people of Essex. It is though built with several reasonable and agreed assumptions and it would be wrong for me not to highlight the need for these to be realised, Equally the challenge in future years remains substantial and whilst we are already planning our approach for 2025/26 and beyond the scale of any challenge will be subject to an as yet unknown police funding settlement in 2024.

This does not detract from the proposals within the budget for 2024/25 that builds on the achievements of the past 5 years consolidating our capacity and capability at a time when other services will be reducing. It allows us to maintain and develop our workforce, to continue to work with your office and the wider system across Essex to ensure that Essex Police is increasingly efficient and effective in getting crime down whilst best serving the people of Essex. I commend it to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'BJ Harrington'.

BJ Harrington QPM
Chief Constable

Appendix A

2024/25 Budget Overview

Line Ref	Budget Activity	£'000	Comments	2023/24 (£'000)	Change (£'000)
1	2023/24 Original Budget	363,687		352,200	11,487
2	Activity occurring before 1st April 2024	1,993		541	1,452
3	2024/25 Starting Budget after adjustment to 2022/23 base for activity occurring before 1st April 2023	365,680		352,741	12,939
4	Unavoidable Cost Pressures	30,027	Includes the full year impact of the 7% pay award (Awarded Sept 2023). Inflation and contractual and legal pressures	22,505	7,523
5	New Investment	4,479	Investment to enhance policing capacity and capability, maintain essential policing infrastructure and deliver environmental ambitions as well as the recurring revenue cost of the capital investment programme	5,240	(761)
6	One-off Activity - operational and support	(2)	Includes the one-off elements of new investment offset by one-off savings	594	(596)
7	Change in Police Uplift Specific Grant	(3,372)	Increase in level of PUP Grant that is ring fenced and linked to demonstrating maintenance of officer uplift targets	(3,146)	(225)
8	Transfer from Reserves to Fund One-Off Activity	1,294	One-off contribution to the General Reserve (required as a step change to replenish reserve back to 3% of Net Revenue Expenditure Budget) plus addition to Legal Claims reserve relating to one-off grant funding to be received for administration of Pensions remedy work. These contributions to reserves are offset by contributions from specific reserves to fund one-off costs.	(3,332)	4,626
9	2024/25 Budget requirement before Savings and Efficiencies	398,107		374,602	23,505
10	Savings and Efficiencies	(10,409)	Value of recurring savings.	(10,915)	506
11	Net Budget Requirement	387,698		363,687	24,011
Source of Funding					
12	Government Grants	221,037	General Funding received from the Home Office including £2.160m additional grant for stretched PUP growth target (additional 45 officers)	207,321	13,716
13	Council Tax Precept	165,319	Includes a 5.5% increase in the Council Tax precept and taxbase rise of 1.15% based on information provided from billing authorities	154,836	10,483
14	Collection Fund Surplus	1,341	Information provided by billing authorities	1,531	(189)
15	2024/25 Total Funding	387,698		363,687	24,011
16	Surplus / (deficit)	0.000		0	(0)
Council Tax Information					
17	Council Tax Band D (2023/24 £233.46, 2022/23 £218.52, and 2021/22 £208.53)	£ 246.42		233.46	12.96
18	CT Increase (2023/24 6.84%, 2022/23 4.79% and 2021/22 4.98%)	5.55%	Equal to £12.96 rise in precept	6.84%	-1.29%
19	Increased cost to Band D property/pa (2023/24 £14.94, 2022/23 £9.99 and 2021/22 £9.90)	£ 12.96		£14.94	-£1.98
20	Additional income generated from precept increase (£m)	8.7		9.9	(1.2)
21	Additional Weekly Cost (2023/24 - 29 pence, 2022/23 - 19 pence and 2021/22 - 19 pence)	0.25		£0.29	-£0.04
22	Tax base - number of properties (2023/24 - 663,222, 2022/23 - 655,667 and 2021/22 - 644,541)	670,884		663,222	7,662

POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX			
REVENUE BUDGET SUMMARY - 2024/25			
	2023/24 Original Budget	2023/24 Forecast Outturn (Month 8)	2024/25 Draft Original Budget
	£000	£000	£000
Employees			
Police Officer pay and allowances	226,792	237,377	253,256
PCSO pay and allowances	3,687	3,687	3,567
Police staff pay and allowances	98,909	99,832	103,072
Ill-health/medical pensions	4,215	4,965	4,770
Training	2,019	2,053	1,611
Other employee expenses	399	725	392
	336,022	348,639	366,668
Other Service Expenditure			
Premises	12,317	11,898	11,650
Transport	6,934	7,143	6,433
Supplies & services	42,727	50,424	46,826
Third party payments	7,382	7,836	7,466
	69,359	77,302	72,375
Gross Expenditure	405,381	425,941	439,043
Government grants and contributions	(23,795)	(36,718)	(36,563)
Fees charges and other service income	(16,279)	(17,725)	(18,045)
Income	(40,074)	(54,442)	(54,607)
Net Cost of Services	365,307	371,498	384,435
Other Expenditure / (Income)			
Interest (receivable) / payable	(91)	(998)	(168)
Capital & other adjustments	904	2,959	1,284
	813	1,961	1,116
Net Expenditure	366,120	373,460	385,551
Transfer to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	712	(6,944)	1,297
Transfer to/(from) the General Reserve	(3,145)	(2,953)	850
Budget Requirement	363,687	363,563	387,698
Sources of Finance	(363,687)	(363,563)	(387,698)

Note: the analysis above includes the following budgets in relation to the PFCC's office and commissioned activities:

	2023/24	2024/25
<i>PFCC's Office Running Costs</i>	£1.867m	£1.977m
<i>Commissioning Grant activity</i>	£9.585m	£10.029m
PFCC Totals	£11.452m	£12.006m