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Date: 20 January 2023

Dear BJ

Thank you for your letter of 9 January 2023, setting out your proposal for the Essex Police budget for the financial year April 2023 to March 2024. Your proposal documents a detailed budget request which has been built in dialogue with my officials and myself and robustly scrutinised in its development, supported by the detailed and collaborative hard work of both our teams.

I commend your proposals to ensure we deliver against our shared ambitions detailed in the Essex Police and Crime Plan, the Force Plan, and our wider responsibilities set out in the Beating Crime Plan and our national obligations to the Strategic Policing Requirement.

This is a carefully measured budget, which enables us to sustain the growth in the force and consolidate our achievements so far. The investment by the public into Essex Police means that by the end of March 2023, the force will have an officer establishment of 3,755 police officers. This is over 900 more police officers (an increase of almost 32 percent) since May 2016 and will make the force the largest and strongest it has ever been, enabling the force to make significant progress in preventing crime, tackling drug driven violence, protecting the vulnerable and supporting victims of crime. I am very content that your budget proposal ensures the sustainability of these police officer numbers.

Essex Police is an efficient force and I recognise your continued success in finding new, more efficient ways of working to provide good value for the people and businesses of Essex. The savings and efficiency programme is delivered over a broad range of costs, through continued collaboration activity, across a variety of partners, embracing technology and digital solutions, greater efficiency in the use of the police estate and the important delivery of our disposals programme. I thank you for the rigorous efficiency and savings process you have put in place over recent years and that through the budget setting for 2023/24, you have identified in year savings of £12.213m and full year savings of £10.915m. This is a considerable savings and efficiency programme, which will help to maximise efficiency and effectiveness of the force and deliver value for money for Essex communities. In addition, it will be a substantial contribution towards the Government's publicly stated expectation to see over £100m of cashable efficiency savings nationally per annum delivered from police force budgets by 2024/25.

I am assured by your plan to realign posts across the force allowing investment in; the Resolution Centre and the Force Control Room for more effective answering of first contact; the new risk assessment process for Domestic Abuse; the Police Standards Department to investigate conduct matters and your proposed investment in supervision levels across Local Policing Teams. I am also pleased to see Safer Essex Road Partnership funding posts to roads policing for a more proactive approach to enforcement. I recognise the need to invest in new roles to meet our governance requirements and to support the increasing capital programme, as well as the delivery of the five-year Estates Strategy for long-term efficiency and sustainability and to modernise

policing capability. I appreciate the requirement to invest in a dedicated team to support response to matters requiring investigation and / or safeguarding as well as working with key partners to drive long term prevention of mental health harm, demand and criminality.

I have previously acknowledged the pay disparity between forces in South and Eastern England as compared to London, and believe it was right to increase the Southeast allowance for officers to the maximum £3,000 per annum in 2022/23, which is now consolidated in the 2023/24 budget. I agree that this will help with the recruitment and retention of our essential police officers.

We have worked hard together with Government over the last six years to ensure policing receives the investment it needs to make a real difference to our communities. Government have shown a clear commitment to invest more in policing, this is underpinned by the ongoing support from our local communities. Over 2,000 members of the public completed the precept survey this year and 78 percent (who gave a view) said they would like to see Essex Police receive more funding to invest in getting crime down with 55 percent (who gave a view) saying they were prepared to pay up to £15 per year. I recognise that this budget proposal will help to ensure we deliver on our promise to the public, to make a tangible difference in their communities.

I do appreciate that the assumptions within the MTFs for police pay are set at 2 percent for September 2023 and then 2.5 percent annually thereafter. I recognise that given the current inflationary pressures, there is a possibility that the 2023/24 pay settlement may be more. At this stage we do not know what next year's pay award will be and as such I believe your proposal is appropriate, with the pay award built upon the assessment from the last Comprehensive Spending Review. In addition, I am in favour of your proposal to hold the General Reserve at 3 percent, this balances the need to have flexibility to manage unexpected requirements, while at the same ensuring we are able to spend today's money on today's community.

I thoroughly support your budget proposal and will be recommending to the Essex Police Fire and Crime Panel that the council tax be increased by 6.84 percent, thereby having a Council Tax Band D of £233.46, an increase of £14.94. In doing this I am also pleased to support your net budget requirement of £363.7m.

I will be putting this budget to the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel and making the proposal of an increase of 6.84 percent in the Council Tax Precept for Policing for their consideration and endorsement.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roger Hirst', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Roger Hirst**  
**Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**