



policebeat

www.policfed-ni.org.uk

September 2016

The News Magazine of The Police Federation for Northern Ireland



Officers look to Stormont as budget set to be pounded



One percent pay rise is 'derisory'

also inside this issue

• The Police Dependants' Trust • Member Services • Wellbeing Programme • Planning for Retirement

EDITORIAL

Further cuts in policing budget must be resisted

An unintended consequence of the Twitter saga was the way the focus shifted to budgets and cutbacks. The rather careless comments by the Chief Constable provoked a storm of indignation, and rightly so.

In the midst of a week-long media 'feeding frenzy', it emerged that the PSNI was being asked to look at a 6% cut in its budget which equated to £40.5 million. This Staff Association did not view it kindly and expressed its opposition in straight-forward language.

There is some way to go before a reduction of this magnitude is accepted. The Chief Constable says they have been 'invited to scenario plan for up to a 6% cut'. Now that's an invitation more akin to asking turkeys to vote for Christmas.

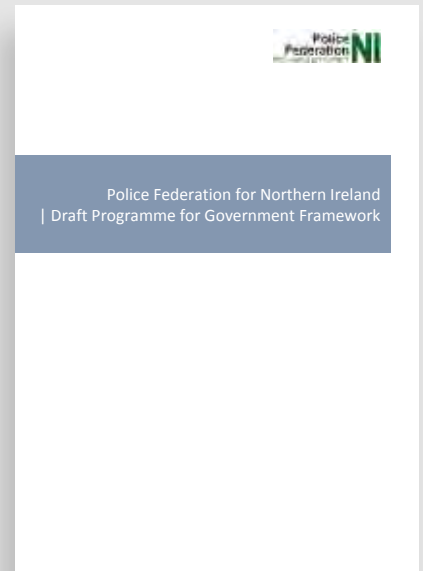
There's a simple logic that seems to have escaped some senior Civil Servants in the Department of Justice. They are determined to achieve economies but in doing so, they display a worrying lack of understanding as to the consequences for this wider community.

A staggering £250 million has been taken out of the policing budget in the past 3-4 years and for a further £40.5 million to be lopped off the PSNI budget will inevitably lead to further erosion of services, fewer Officers, increased levels of sickness and more men and women deciding on alternative, less onerous careers.

Do the Officials in the Department not care about fewer Officers doing the job or what that would mean for victims of crime and the fight against Dissident Republican terrorists? Do they suffer sleepless nights worrying about the failure to answer the call for help or the damage they are inflicting on individual Officers? Is the Minister aware of the dangerous business that her Officials are engaged in? If she is, then she, too, must be prepared for the consequences of cutting too deeply and causing untold damage to a service that is already at breaking point.

The Chief Constable says that part of that exercise will give him the opportunity to outline the risks and opportunities of any future reductions to police funding. He goes on to say that ultimately, however, the matter of budget cuts are political decisions. Yes, they are, and that is where the Police Federation will be making the case against draconian, unjustified and savage pruning. Politicians will be told that if the service fails or is failing their constituents, then they should be aware of who's to blame. Because its branded into their 'DNA', Officers will continue to do the best they can, but there are limits.

Shortcomings in delivery will be inevitable which will lead to widespread disquiet. If there's less to go around, and fewer Officers to do the job, those who will sign off on budgets will be doing a great disservice to the people who put them there. If they want to incur the wrath of this wider community, then they are certainly set on the correct course. We don't yet have a Programme for Government, which means there's still time to pull back from taking decisions that will have harmful medium to long-term effects on our community.



Since the last edition of 'Policebeat', the Police Federation for Northern Ireland delivered a detailed Submission as part of the consultation on the draft Programme for Government Framework. The Framework is the forerunner to the main event, namely the substantive draft Programme for Government, which is expected out later this year. The Federation has put down some clear markers across a range of policing issues that affect members. The full Submission can be viewed on the closed section of the PFNI website, but here's a 'snapshot' of what we said.