

Report from Councillor Clucas on the Police and Crime Panel meeting of 6 February 2024

At the meeting on 6th February, the Panel considered the budget for 2024-25. Unfortunately I had a clash of meetings and could only stay for the first hour.

Several matters were of concern. The first was the lack of tabling of the Reserves paper. The concern is that should an emergency situation arise that has not been factored into the budget, there will be insufficient funds to cover need.

I was advised that the paper will be available before the start of the new financial year. There was an assurance from the Chief Constable that the Reserves would be sufficient. However, this coming year, some £4.4m of reserves will be required to fund day to day business.

As colleagues had asked about police numbers, I raised the issue. Questions were asked about Full Time Equivalent Officer numbers and lack of officers on the street or to respond to crime committed. One example of a burglary case and the lack of officers to do fingerprint collection in the property and issues in Charlton Kings were raised.

What was apparent from answers given was that there are not enough officers on the streets. The number quoted is 1255, down from 1264 in 2021. £700,000 of reserves has been used to fund police officer overtime.

There is, according to the Financial Report, therefore 'considerable pressure on the Constabulary to deliver substantial savings to meet increasing costs and service delivery pressure'.

Questions will continue to be put to the PCc and Chief Constable over the coming months.