

## Modernisation isn't working

The chief constable of Essex police has criticised the government's workforce modernisation programme for 'horribly missing the point'.

Speaking at the Police Federation's annual conference, Roger Baker said: "People say don't worry it'll be fine, but it's complete and utter nonsense to think workforce modernisation will sort the service out."

He added that the service had got the workforce mix wrong: "We have removed too many from the frontline who have day-to-day contact with the public. We are at risk of creating an army without soldiers."

Essex police is bucking the trend in terms of increasing the number of sworn officers in its ranks. In the next few years the force hopes to recruit more police officers and put an additional 600 rank and file officers back on the street by finding savings of up to £27 million elsewhere in the force. "It is not about the cost of police officers. It is about the cost of the police service. There are too many business processes that don't help the public or reduce the fear of crime. We think we have a powerful and positive example of policing in the 21st century."

Talking about the force's approach to finding the money for the new recruits, Rick Tazzini, director of finance and administration for Essex police, said: "We took a flyer. This isn't cash that was down the side of the sofa, but when you look high and low you start to find it."

He said that the force had restructured its business and defined what it considered to be essential spend. "We are prepared to challenge and dig deeper than most forces in the country."

According to force figures, Essex police has saved between £40,000 and £50,000, by buying fuel from supermarkets rather than branded petrol stations. Up to £300,000 was saved in staff advertising. Since September 2008, in total £10.6m has been saved, equating to 212 officers.

Roger Baker: we are 'at risk' of creating an army without soldiers

## Flexible friends should remain

The service should fight 'tooth and nail' to retain the Office of Constable, delegates at the Police Federation conference were told.

In an impassioned address, Roger Baker, chief constable of Essex Police, said the public wanted police officers. "We need sworn cops on the frontline dealing with making the public feel safer. That is what the public want. We should fight tooth and nail to hold on to this. We must not give up the Office of Constable. We are flexible, adaptable and we are match fit."

Mr Baker who is due to retire in a matter of weeks hit out at what he called the nonsense that prevailed in some areas of policing.

"We are not teachers, or social workers or probationers, we are the police," he said.

Processes such as performance development reviews also came under fire in a speech that drew frequent applause from the floor.

"You do not need a lever arch file to tell you that you managed to dress yourself this morning. Most of it is nonsense."

Mr Baker also said that serious crimes had been decriminalised and bemoaned the closure of police stations. "To give a fixed penalty to someone for assaulting a police officer has got to be outrageous. Closing police stations chips away at the soul which is why Essex police has 14 police stations that are open 24 hours a day."

Mr Baker said as a result of his approach, crime was down in the county and detections were up

Essex is currently recruiting and putting 600 police officers back on the streets by making savings across the force of up to £27m, as part of Operation Apex.

Bobbies: back where they belong on the street

