

Budget cuts will leave the public at risk

Public safety and security are 'at risk' as severe budget cuts impact on police numbers, warned Julie Nesbit, chair of the Constables' Central Committee.

Ms Nesbit spoke at the Federation's annual conference in Bournemouth highlighting a bleak future as the service faces 20 percent budget cuts.

She told delegates and a panel that included police minister Nick Herbert: "Fewer constables cannot provide reassurance, cannot prevent human trafficking and other pan-European crime, cannot prevent domestic violence and child abuse, and cannot keep motorists safe. The list goes on and on. We cannot deliver all this to the same high standards as we did when we were properly evaluated and supported."

Her comments follow a high-profile media campaign by the Federation featuring images of crimes that may increase if officer numbers fall. And she called on the Home Secretary to 'be bold' and put an end to a recommendation in the Winsor Report for an incremental pay freeze for police officers on top of a two-year pay freeze. Some police officers will be up to £4,000 a year worse off.

Police minister Nick Herbert said: "We cannot have this debate in a vacuum. The reason we are having to reduce spending on public resources is quite straightforward, that there is a fiscal deficit we have to tackle."

Professor of Economics Bob Elliott, advisor to the constables, said the recommendations in the Winsor report will result in a saving of £485million. But Ms Nesbit hit out at the raft of reports, including those by Winsor and Peter Neyroud, who has suggested that in future police officers should pay to join the service without any guarantee of a job, as well as paying for a licence to practise.

She told delegates: "It is time for the government to do the right thing and support, not attack, the police service in England and Wales."

Views on the cuts:

Ian Leyland, from Merseyside Police Federation, asked if it was fair for all forces to be undergoing the same cuts across the board when some were financially better off than others. He said that in his own force police officers across most areas – such as neighbourhood policing and investigators – were being cut back, adding: "There will be an inevitable impact on rising crime and impact on the public."

Bernard Hogan-Howe, of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, acknowledged that the 20 percent cut would fall 'disproportionality' on some forces.

Professor Roger Seifert, specialising in industrial relations human resource management, said: "Each year the picture is worse and worse. At the end of the day we do not get more for less. The only thing you get for less funding is less good policing and more crime. Chief constables could squeeze you harder and make you work that bit more. We are asking you to do more for less pay, less pension and fewer resources."

Nick Herbert, police minister, said that he had recently met Bill Bratton, the celebrated police chief who took a zero-tolerance approach to crime in New York. Mr Herbert said that much could be learned from his approach. "It's about deployment and how you will use resources. He sought to challenge the idea that it's always about numbers."

John Apter, from Hampshire Police Federation, asked if police minister Nick Herbert would be prepared to resign if the cuts to policing resulted in a rise in crime, but the minister declined to take up the invitation to commit to such a move.

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Ian Leyland feared the cuts will have an inevitable impact

