



Richard Fuller, MP
House of Commons
London, SW1

07 February 2025

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your letter. I am pleased to hear that the meeting on rural crime was appreciated by those who attended and that issues raised by your constituents were adequately addressed by Chief Inspector Goldsmith and myself. Please let me know if there are any issues which you would like us to follow up on.

You may be interested to know that I am holding one of my regular joint meetings with the National Farmers Union on 26 February at Mead Open Farm in Leighton Buzzard. If you are able to help with promoting this, I would be very grateful.

I would be happy to share my plans with you for the police budget for the coming year, 2025/26. In terms of police funding, you are absolutely right that Bedfordshire has traditionally been underfunded by successive governments. This was evidenced in the recent report by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services on Bedfordshire Police, published last month, which highlighted the fact that our police service is the lowest funded in England and Wales per head of population.

In part, as you say, this is due to the national funding formula which effectively allocated funding to Bedfordshire on the basis that it is a rural county similar to Lincolnshire. This is clearly not the case, not least because Luton has all the characteristics of a metropolitan borough, and indeed the whole county has significant challenges, and our crime profile is very different from that of a traditional rural county.

I am grateful for the support that you and your fellow MPs from all parts of the county in lobbying Home Office ministers for a change in the formula. The previous government, and I very much hope the current government, have recognised the challenges in Bedfordshire by allocating special grants of £6.8m a year, or 5% of our total budget, to resource programmes to address issues such as gang and gun crime. I hope to get confirmation that these grants will continue into the current year very soon and am pressing for them to be incorporated into our core funding.

It is worth noting that over the last 15 years, underfunding has resulted in £53m in cuts. In setting the police budget for the coming year, I have worked with the Chief Constable

Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire

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to maximise impact and achieve equitable allocation of resources.

The overall expenditure in 2025/26 will be £158m. This will be funded by central government grants, council tax and a prudent use of reserves. Government funding has increased by 6.6%, but some of this has been absorbed by increases in NI contributions and the pay awards.

We have been allocated £1.8m by government for the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee fund, as our first instalment of the 13,000 police officers and PCSOs promised nationally by the government to be funded over the next four years. This is most welcome.

The budget is aligned with the Police and Crime Plan which I launched last October. It also enables the Chief Constable to deliver the police service's strategic objectives and the national policing objectives set by government. I have also made it very clear to the Chief Constable that I expect the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee funding to lead to additional police officers and PCSOs and to act as catalyst for a wider reinvigoration and reform of local policing, including rural policing, which also features in my police and crime plan.

In 2025/26, Bedfordshire Police will spend £35m on local policing including both emergency response (patrol teams) and community policing; £15.5m on public protection services including the specialist domestic abuse, child protection and rape and serious sexual offences teams. In total, Bedfordshire Police spend £42m on tackling serious and organised crime and other crime including Bedfordshire's contribution to the Eastern Regional Serious Organised Crime Unit.

In developing the budget, I have required the Chief Constable to review and justify every budget line to ensure value for money, efficiency and effectiveness. I am committed as is he to improving productivity, seeking value for money through collaboration with other police services and investing in AI and other technology.

Unfortunately, in spite of the additional funding, including raising the council tax precept to the government's cap limit, it has been necessary to make savings of approximately £2.5m. I am confident that these cuts will have no impact on direct services to the public but had the precept not been increased by 5.3%, more damaging cuts would have been required. I will be robustly monitoring financial performance including the impact of the decisions taken.

You mentioned policing at Luton Airport. Counter terrorism policing at the airport, and regionally and nationally, is entirely funded by the Home Office with no local contribution. Luton Airport pay for policing at the airport.

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I hope that I have provided you with sufficient information and explanations to enable you to understand the police budget, its funding and its application. Naturally I would be very happy to have a further conversation if that would be helpful.

Finally, as I mentioned at our meeting at Old Warden, I am setting up an advisory panel on rural crime and would be open to any potential members you would wish to recommend. The NFU is fully engaged.

I look forward to our next conversation.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J Tizard".

John Tizard
Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner

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