



CHAPTER SEVEN

# **KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES SAFE**



# KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES SAFE

Over the last ten years, the Conservative government has overseen a 20,000-officer reduction in police forces across England and Wales. In Wiltshire, a 16 per cent reduction to police numbers has left us with the country's second lowest number of officers per population. Today, many crimes in Wiltshire are left without meaningful investigation – including 72% of all vehicle crimes.

Our plan is to restore policing capacity in Wiltshire. In turn, this will enable the reinstatement of neighbourhood policing, with dedicated neighbourhood teams working within local communities. This is essential for gathering local intelligence and rebuilding public confidence.

We also believe that addressing the causes of crime is as critical as effective policing. This will require investment in the social fabric of our communities, restoring youth services, early interventions, and taking meaningful action to improve drug and alcohol services and to tackle unseen crime such as domestic abuse.

## LABOUR WILL

- Recruit additional police officers and PCSOs to restore policing capacity in Wiltshire.
- Reinstate neighbourhood policing with dedicated teams working within local communities.
- Put a hold on the sale of police stations and undertake an operationally-led review of accommodation needs to support neighbourhood policing.
- Increase dedicated resourcing to tackle rural crime such as farm thefts.
- Improve support for victims of crime.
- Take effective action to tackle “County Lines” criminal drug networks.
- Make tackling Domestic Abuse a real priority.
- Rebuild youth services in Wiltshire.
- Increase support for much-needed drug and alcohol services.

# KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES SAFE

## POLICING OUR COMMUNITIES

The Conservative Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has overseen the introduction of a cuts-driven “Community Policing” model. The programme has pulled together neighbourhood policing, response teams and local crime investigators into seven large Community Policing Teams.

What’s more, with the closure, or planned closure, of police stations in Wiltshire, many of our towns are being left covered by officers based far from the communities that they are serving.

Of course, we are pleased that the PCC has recognised these mistakes and accepted the need to reintroduce dedicated neighbourhood policing teams. We are also pleased that after 10 years of cuts, the Government is now committed to increasing funding to enable police numbers to grow back to the record levels achieved by the last Labour Government.

However, these welcome changes would be just the start of our action plan to rebuild policing across Wiltshire. As Police and Crime Commissioner, our candidate Cllr Junab Ali will:

- Recruit additional police officers and PCSOs to start the process of restoring capacity back to the Wiltshire Police Force. In rebuilding this capacity, we will ensure that this recruitment builds a police force reflecting the diversity of the communities that it serves in Swindon and Wiltshire.
- Use this increased capacity to reinstate neighbourhood policing, with dedicated neighbourhood teams working within the community, being visible, accessible, skilled and familiar. This policing model provides knowledge of community concerns, helps the gathering of local intelligence and enables prompt, effective and targeted action. It is a model that has been proved to work.
- Put a hold on the closure and sale of police stations and undertake an operationally-led review of accommodation needs to support the reinstatement of neighbourhood policing.

Rural crime, including agricultural, wildlife, environmental and heritage crime, requires specialist expertise. We will increase dedicated resourcing for this and work with partners through the Swindon & Wiltshire Rural Crime Partnership to determine priorities, develop strategies and build effective intelligence networks.

We will work with organisations that support victims of crime, including increasing support for women suffering from domestic abuse, and increasing access for vulnerable women to protected accommodation. We will improve the quality of information and support provided to victims to ensure that this is tailored to their needs.

We will be transparent about the performance of the police force against a range of leading and lagging indicators. Unlike the incumbent PCC, we will regularly publish a Scorecard with actual scoring against it. We will ensure that Wiltshire Polices works in partnership with town and parish councils, listening to the concerns and priorities of local communities and providing them with data on crime statistics in their neighbourhoods.

In 2018, there were almost 1200 people injured or killed on Wiltshire’s roads. We believe that the lack of enforcement of speed limits is a contributing factor to this: in the same year Wiltshire Police issued only 657 Fixed Penalty Notices for speeding (the second lowest in England) compared to 163,000 in Avon & Somerset next door. We will ensure the police address this and support the efforts of local community speed watch schemes with enforcement action.

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## TACKLING COUNTY LINES

We will increase focus on tackling “County Lines” criminal drugs networks, which ruthlessly target and exploit children and vulnerable adults. We acknowledge the progress made in tackling County Lines gangs operating in Wiltshire and in the establishment of National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC). However, we think more could be done, including:

- Improving intelligence gathering and sharing processes with the NCLCC and other forces.
- Adopting a stronger emphasis on neighbourhood policing, improving contact and trust with the local community and gaining insights and intelligence through local presence.
- Building collaboration with other agencies involved in child protection, such as social services and schools. We also recognise that greater investment in front-line child protection through social services plays a critical role.
- Making greater use of existing sanctions to disrupt county lines networks, such as telecommunications restriction orders and serious crime prevention orders.

## MEANINGFUL ACTION TO REDUCE DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic Abuse, primarily but not exclusively against women, has significantly increased during the Coronavirus pandemic. We'll ensure that meaningful action to tackle Domestic Abuse is made a priority. We'll continue to fund the Wiltshire Phoenix project, offering a single pathway for domestic abuse victims into the range of support services available in the county. We'll also ensure that Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire Police take leading roles in ensuring an effective multi-agency approach is taken to reducing domestic violence, including:

- Ensuring sufficient protected accommodation and women's shelters are available.
- Improving training for police officers and PCSOs to recognise signs of domestic abuse and coercive control.
- Working with schools to raise awareness and challenge attitudes among young people, and equipping teachers with the skills to identify signs of domestic violence.
- Running campaigns to raise awareness of domestic abuse, enabling victims to identify the signs and know how to seek help.
- Providing a range of options for victims to disclose abuse and seek help.
- Making support available to victims to report abuse to the police and helping them engage with the criminal justice system.
- Getting support in place for victims to help them deal with both the emotional and practical issues of moving on.
- Ensuring a framework of training, awareness and effective liaison is in place across the various agencies involved, including police, courts, social services, health services, and schools.

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## PREVENTATIVE ACTION

We also recognise that preventing crime is about investing in the social fabric of our communities. Wiltshire Council used to employ 150 youth workers running 24 different clubs and services for young people. Since 2014, these services have been decimated, and reduced to meeting statutory obligations only, such as the Youth Offending Team. We agree with the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee that “prevention is a far more cost-effective alternative to spending so much money on reactive and acute responses later on, which cost the taxpayer far more in the long term.”

We believe that Wiltshire Council can do far more on preventative action:

- We'll establish a Wiltshire Young People's Foundation to coordinate and grow services for young people. This will work strategically to bring different groups together from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors in order to develop partnership projects and share resources and good practice including:
  - Facilitating centralised fundraising based on a consortia approach aimed at accessing funding from multiple sources.
  - Providing a “Venue Bank” for groups to share and access available sites to run their projects.
  - Distributing seed grant funding to member organisations.
  - Organising capacity building within the youth services sector.

We will increase support for drug and alcohol treatment in Wiltshire. Funding for this has halved over the past six years while at the same time, the number of deaths as a direct result of drug misuse has risen by 109%.