

# **Police warn less 'low level' crime will be investigated without more funding**

**Police will be forced to attend fewer calls on 'low level' crimes such as vandalism, road traffic offences and damage to cars if funding is not increased, City Councillors have been told**

Chief Superintendent Sean Scott said a "flat cash settlement" for the force would mean "less officers and a reduced service". He said officers would not de-prioritise investigating "high harm, high risk, high vulnerability" crimes, adding it would be the "lower hanging fruit that will go".

Police Scotland say 3,000 jobs across the country are at risk without a £128m investment from the Scottish Government, which unveils its 2024-25 budget later this month.

Ahead of the announcement Finance Secretary Shona Robinson warned of a "worst case scenario" and a smaller public sector workforce.

Addressing members of Edinburgh Council's Culture and Communities Committee on Thursday (December 7) Ch Supt Scott said: "Like many the spending review decisions the Scottish Government makes on the 19th of December will, more than ever before, determine how many police officers and staff we will

have going forward and what services we can – and just as importantly cannot – provide in the future.

“Our new Chief Constable was clear in her recent budget statement to the Scottish Police Authority that we must stop reacting to budget cuts and salami slicing.”

He said the division would adopt a “spend to save approach, which if properly funded will actually save the public purse, going forward”.

He added: “The bottom line is the consequence of a flat cash settlement will be less officers and a reduced service.”

Labour councillor Lezley Marion Cameron asked if incidents of rape, sexual assault and efforts to reduce drug harm would still be prioritised “regardless of your spending commitments”.

Ch Supt Scott confirmed these issues would still be at the top of the list for the police in Edinburgh. He said: “If we have less officers, we will still be concentrating on those high harm, high risk, high vulnerability areas.

“It’s the lower hanging fruit that will go, and actually in guiding us in deciding which lower hanging fruit will go we would welcome any opinions you have.

“What is palatable to the public for us then, not to be able to attend?

“We’re talking about lower level vandalisms, we’re talking about damage to cars, lower level road traffic offences where there’s no injuries – we’re talking about those areas that really don’t affect people the way that what you’ve just articulated does.”

*by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter*

