

Police and Crime Panel

6 February 2020



Precept 2020/2021

Report of the Office of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner

Purpose

1. To update the Panel on the process for setting the Policing precept for 2020-21, and to seek the Panel's support for an increase of £10 per household per year for properties in Band D, and commensurate increases for other properties.

Background

2. Normally in December every year, the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner (PCVC) is informed by the Home Secretary of the amount of Government grant that will be provided for policing for the following financial year. That enables the PCVC to formulate plans for the level of precept that he will need to ask Council Tax payers to contribute, in order to deliver policing in County Durham and Darlington in line with the Police, Crime and Victims' Plan. The Government normally puts a cap on the level of precept increase.
3. This year, the timing of the General election made it impossible for the Government to announce police funding allocations in December, and they were instead announced on 22 January. The Government cap on an increase was made known at the same time. Nonetheless, there was still a statutory requirement for the PCVC to inform the Panel of the proposed level of precept in 2020-21 by 1 February, and to carry out consultation before that date.

Funding in 2020/21

4. Government funding for policing in Durham and Darlington is the subject of the Medium-Term Financial Plan paper, covered elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting. The headlines are as follows:
 - Police grant to increase from £80.7m to £88.2m, an increase of £7.5m or 9.3%. This comprises the 'Operation Uplift' funding for extra Police Officers in Durham Darlington, with no additional funding beyond that.
 - Capital funding to reduce from £0.5m to £0.1m, a reduction of £400,000.
 - PCVC enabled to increase funding from the precept from £42.3m to a maximum of £44.9m, an increase of £2.6m, or 6%. The increase for the council tax payer is 4.87% or £10 for a Band D property.
 - Total funding to increase from £123m to £133.1m, an increase of £10.1m or 8.2%.

5. Panel members are aware that the Government is expected to undertake a review of the Police Funding Formula over the next few years. That may mean a reduction in funding, which makes the case for protecting the Constabulary's baseline budget.

6. To achieve the £133.1m, it will be necessary to increase precept by the maximum permitted, i.e. £10 per household per year, for properties in Council Tax Band D. If this were to take place, the implications for each Council tax Band would be as follows:

Council Tax Band	Police Precept 2019/20	Proposed annual increase for 2020-21	Proposed police precept for 2020-21
	£	£	£
Band A	136.83	6.66	143.49
Band B	159.63	7.78	167.41
Band C	182.44	8.88	191.32
Band D	205.24	10.00	215.24
Band E	250.85	12.22	263.07
Band F	296.46	14.44	310.9
Band G	342.07	16.26	358.33
Band H	410.48	20.00	430.48

Consultation

7. Consultation has been taking place in January, and will continue until the Panel meeting.

8. The consultation arrangements include a number of consultation events, with Area Action Partnerships in County Durham and in the Cornmill Centre in Darlington, on the following dates:

County Durham

Date	AAP
08.01.20	4 Together (Ferryhill)
08.01.20	Mid Durham (Brandon/Ushaw Moor)
16.01.20	Bishop & Shildon (BASH)
16.01.20	Spennymoor
22.01.20	Durham
22.01.20	Teesdale

27.01.20	East Durham Rural Corridor
27.01.20	Chester le Street
28.01.20	Greater Aycliffe and Midridge
29.01.20	Derwent Valley (Consett)
30.01.20	3 Towns (Crook)

Darlington

30.01.20	Cornmill Centre
04.02.20	Cornmill Centre

9. The Government funding announcement was not made until 22 January, and so it was not possible to be specific about a precept rise at many of the meetings listed above, but in all cases it was made clear that an increase would be likely.
10. In addition, the PCVC has been running an on-line survey, and an awareness-raising campaign on social media. A press release was circulated to local media on 23 January to gain the attention of the press and broadcast media, and material has also been placed on the ODPCVC website.
11. At all the consultation meetings, the following arguments were put forward:
 - Operation Uplift will be welcome, with 68 additional Officers to be in post by March 2021.
 - Their recruitment and training will occur during 2020-21, and therefore the benefits of the Uplift will take time to be realised.
 - The Constabulary has lost 380 Police Officers as a consequence of funding reductions since 2010, and the Uplift (ultimately providing 220 additional Officers by March 2023) will only partly mitigate this.
 - Demands on policing are increasing complex and resource-intensive – for example, cybercrime has increased, as have reported cases of high-harm crimes such as trafficking, modern slavery, domestic abuse and sexual violence.
 - The Constabulary continues to have to invest in equipment and estates, in order to enable the high standard of policing which local people quite rightly expect.
 - Neighbourhood Policing remains a priority.
12. Noting that Operation Uplift, i.e. the increase in Government grant, will only cover the additional Police Officers and some associated costs, it will be necessary to increase the precept to cover rising costs in other areas and to avoid an impact on effectiveness and efficiency.
13. With those arguments in mind, consultation meetings were told that an increase in the precept would be necessary.
14. The on-line survey has generated the following results:

Question:

Despite Durham Constabulary being one of the most efficient force in the country, crime continues to rise and more investment is needed. Would you spend an extra 20p per week in order to further invest in local policing?

Yes	128 responses (53.8%)
No	67 responses (28.1%)
I'd pay more	43 responses (18.1%)
Total	238 responses

15. In addition, respondents were asked to provide additional comments. A summary of typical comments is listed below:

- Happy to pay more, force is overstretched need more funding etc.
- Happy to pay more if more of a policing presence is seen.
- Willing to accept if used for a certain area of policing.
- Not happy to pay more, no benefits seen each year.
- Commissioner post is costly and of dubious value.

16. In addition to the support shown by survey respondents, panel members should note that, at the public meetings, there were few objections to an increase and many expressions of support.
17. At the time of writing the survey has been operating for five days, and more responses are expected before the Panel meets on 6 February. An update on consultation findings will be provided to the Panel, verbally, at the Panel meeting.

Summary

18. Given the overall support for an increase, and the clear need to support Policing beyond the constraints of Uplift funding, the Panel is recommended to support an increase in precept of £10 per household per year for Band D properties.
19. At the meeting on 6th February I will present feedback to the Police and Crime Panel. Under Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Police and Crime Panel is required to review the proposed precept, and to make a report on it (the Panel are to determine the manner of this report). The report can include recommendations on the level of the precept. The panel has the power to veto the proposed precept, which requires a two-thirds majority in favour of a veto.

Recommendation

20. The Panel is recommended to:

- a. Note the current position of the consultation and the expected outcome;
- b. Consider my proposal for a 4.87% precept increase;
- c. Decide whether to veto my proposal;
- d. Produce a report.

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Appendix 1: Risks and Implications

Finance

The outcome of consultation will influence the size of the PCVC's, and the Constabulary's, budget in 2019-20

Staffing

None

Equality and Diversity

None

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Children's Act 2004

None

Stakeholder/Community Engagement

A consultation exercise has taken place as set out in the report

Environment

None

Collaboration and Partnerships

None

Value for Money and Productivity

None

Potential Impact on Police and Crime Plan Priorities

Size of budget will influence delivery of priorities

Commissioning

None

Other risks

None