

Police and Crime Panel

4th February 2021

Precept Consultation

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 2021/22, and to seek the Panel's support for an increase of £15 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 during the following financial year. That enables the PCVC to formulate plans for the level of precept that he will need to ask Council Taxpayers 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.

Funding in 2021/22

3. Government funding for policing in Durham and Darlington in 2021/22 includes the following:
 - The Police Grant will increase by 3.5% to £97.8m. This comprises the 'Operation Uplift' funding for 68 extra Police Officers in Durham and Darlington, with no additional funding beyond that.
 - Capital funding will remain at £0.13m which is no change.
 - The PCVC is enabled to increase funding from the precept for the council taxpayer by 6.97% or £15 for a Band D property.
 - The total potential revenue funding, assuming maximum precept, increases from £133.2m to £140.4m, an increase of £7.2m or 5.4%.
4. To achieve the £140.4m, it will be necessary to increase precept by the maximum permitted, i.e. £15 per household per year, for properties in Council Tax Band D. If this happens, the implications for each Council Tax Band would be as follows:

Council Tax Band	Police Precept 2020/21	Proposed Annual increase for 2021/22	Proposed Police Precept for 2021/22
	£	£	£
Band A	143.49	10.00	153.49
Band B	167.41	11.67	179.08
Band C	191.32	13.33	204.65
Band D	215.24	15.00	230.24
Band E	263.07	18.33	281.40
Band F	310.90	21.67	332.57
Band G	358.73	25.00	383.73
Band H	430.48	30.00	460.48

Consultation

5. 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 31st December (printed in Northern Echo, 4th January edition) to gain the attention of the press and broadcast media, and material has also been placed on the ODPCVC website.
6. 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.
7. The on-line survey has generated over 1,100 responses as at 25th January:
 - 500 responses from the Elucd survey with analysis to be provided after 31st January in preparation for an update to the Panel.
 - 632 responses from Survey Monkey. There were two specific questions related to the precept:
 - Would you be prepared to invest more in policing to help improve the services? Of the 632 responses 234 (37.0%) said Yes, 302 (47.8%) said No and 96 (15.2%) were not sure.
 - How much more would you be prepared to contribute to support more investment in policing? Of the 632 responses, 314 (49.7%) were prepared to contribute £5 or more and 318 (50.3%) were not prepared to pay more.
8. In addition, respondents were asked to provide additional comments. A summary of typical comments is listed below:

- The extra money should be coming from the central government not the local people. People do not object to paying for a service, but a non-existent service is shocking.
- Do not centralise custody suite, don't need crime commissioner, reinstate traffic division and use revenue from speeding fines ...
- I think they are doing a tremendous good job in these difficult days. Well done!
- Do not centralise the holding cells in Spennymoor. It's a totally stupid idea and will be a total waste of money and resources especially officers being otherwise engaged instead of being out policing the area making us feel safe.
- We need more community police who actually know people and what's happening on the ground in communities.
- I'm not opposed to increased funding for police and services. You can't though keep hitting us with massive increases every year...with police, social care precepts and increased council tax...the bills are rising massively every year. If you don't pay....go to prison We can't afford these massive hikes in council tax any more.
- I wish there was more action from the police over COVID breeches.
- I would like to see the police to be tougher and nice to keep the community safer. Durham city is becoming a kids city so police officers need to be more tougher then been political.
- My partner is joining your force in September, so it was good to see how money is apportioned out.

9. At the time of writing the survey has been operating for 25 days, and more responses are expected before the Panel meets on 4th February. An update on consultation findings will be provided to the Panel, verbally, at the Panel meeting.

Summary

10. 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 £15 per household per year for Band D properties.
11. At the meeting on 4th 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

The Panel is recommended to:

- a) Note the current position of the consultation and the expected outcome;

- b) Consider my proposal for a £15.00 precept increase at Band D with the same percentage increase applied to all Council Tax bands as shown at paragraph 4 of the report;
- c) Decide whether to veto my proposal; and,
- d) Produce a report.

Steve White

Acting Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner

Appendix 1: Risks and Implications

Finance

The outcome of consultation will influence the size of the PCVC's, and the Constabulary's, budget in 2021/22

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

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