

Police and Crime Panel

3rd February 2015
(produced 22nd January 2015)

Consultation on Council Tax Police Precept 2015/16

Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner



Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise members of the Police and Crime Panel of my proposal for the policing element of the Council Tax Precept 2015/16. 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.
2. The report will provide an update in relation to the consultation on my proposal, presenting a summary of responses received so far and the expected outcome based on the feedback received. The papers for this meeting have been issued prior to the end of the consultation period but final results will be given at the meeting itself.

Background

3. The police budget continues to be affected by cuts from the Government. This means the Council Tax contribution to policing paid by residents of County Durham and Darlington (precept) is a vital contribution. As part of my role it is my responsibility to set this precept.
4. The Government has imposed a cap whereby increases of 2% or above require a referendum to take place. This would cost around £768,000.

Precept Proposal

5. Durham Constabulary works hard to provide value for money for the people it serves, and in order to maintain the excellent service they deliver I have proposed a modest precept increase of 1.98%. At the time of writing, this proposal is open for public consultation.
6. A 1.98% increase will cost the average home (a Band D property) an additional 6p per week, which is £3.16 for a year (see Appendix 2 for a full breakdown of costs). This in turn will generate circa £500,000 for Durham Constabulary, which equates to the approximate cost of keeping 10 police officers on the street.
7. An increase of less than 1.98% or remaining at the current level would result in a lower baseline for any increase in subsequent years, meaning the budget would also be

restricted over the forthcoming years. To increase by more than my proposed level would mean increasing by more than 5% to recoup the costs spent on the referendum.

Consultation

8. Details of the precept consultation have been widely circulated across partnership organisations, boards and panel members. I have attended AAPs across County Durham, held a forum for all Town and Parish Councils and held a Voluntary and Community Sector Forum. At these events the room was questioned as a whole to gauge overall opinion rather than to elicit individual survey responses. I am also conducting a walkabout in Darlington's Cornmill shopping centre to talk to members of the public and will be doing the same in Durham City Centre. The online consultation has been promoted through social media.
9. The online survey sets out my proposal and the alternative options, then asks respondents to select a statement from a multiple choice list: a) To increase the precept by more than 2%, b) To increase the precept by 1.98%, c) To increase by less than 1.98%, and d) To maintain the precept at its current level or reduce it. Respondents are also given the chance to enter any comments.
10. The public consultation opened on 8th January and will close at noon on Monday 26th January.

Responses

11. At the time of writing, there have been 157 respondents to the online survey. They have spanned across all twelve neighbourhood policing teams and all age groups from 16 – 75+ years (see Appendix 3). Through my personal attendance at events I have also reached approximately 352 people to date, with more scheduled for the coming days.
12. The responses received to date are strongly in support of my proposed increase. Through the online survey, 63.1% agree that the precept should be increased by 1.98% (see Appendix 4). The majority of free text comments written by those completing the online survey also convey a belief that the increase is justified and they are happy to pay slightly more to continue to ensure a safe place to live.
13. The general consensus from those who attended the forums I held and the AAPs I visited is that they agree with my proposed increase. There were no objections raised.
14. A number of respondents who agree with my proposed increase have stressed that they do so on the condition that the money goes towards neighbourhood policing and having police officers visibly out on the streets.

Outcome

15. Based on the consultation results so far, I intend to apply a 1.98% increase to the precept as proposed. A full breakdown of what this means for each housing band is included in Appendix 2.
16. As aforementioned, approximately £500,000 will be generated by the increase in the precept. This will contribute towards ensuring the service they provide is not adversely affected by the cuts to funding imposed by the Government.

Recommendations

17. The Panel is recommended to:
Note the current position of the consultation and the expected outcome;
Consider my proposal for a 1.98% precept increase.

[This is with the understanding that the consultation is not yet complete, however, the consultation and responses will be finalised by the time of the panel meeting and I will be able to present them to you in full then.]

18. I intend to bring a report on the police budget to the next meeting of the panel on 3rd March 2015.

Ron Hogg
Police and Crime Commissioner

Appendix 1: Risks and Implications

Finance: The Council Tax Precept 2015-16 is to rise by 1.98% (as per main body of the report).

Staffing: No specific implications.

Equality and Diversity: No specific implications.

Accommodation: No specific implications

Crime and Disorder: The money received through the increase will be put towards reducing crime and disorder and ensuring matters are dealt with as efficiently as possible.

Children's Act 2004: No specific implications

Stakeholder/Community Engagement: Feedback on the proposed increase has been sought from the community.

Environment: No specific implications

Collaboration and Partnerships: No specific implications

Value for Money and Productivity: The precept increase proposed is the largest it can be without holding a costly referendum.

Potential Impact on Police and Crime Plan Priorities: No specific implications

Commissioning: No specific implications

Other risks: No specific implications

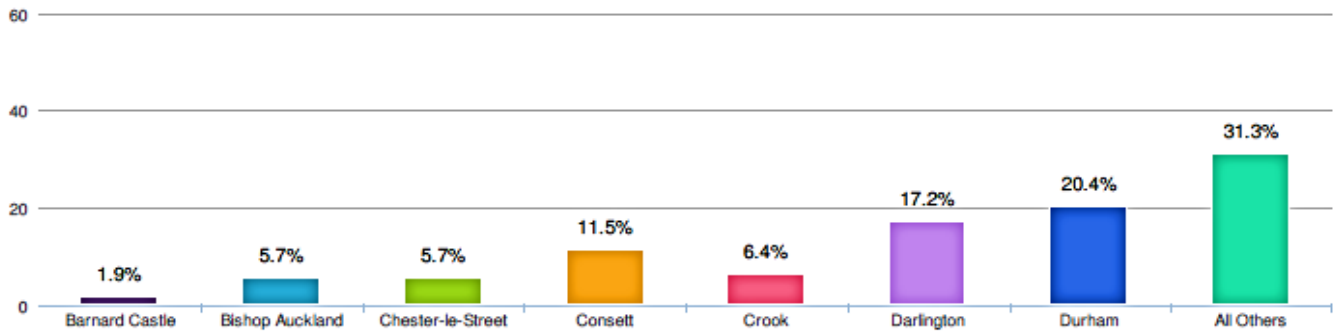
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Appendix 2: Table Showing the Impact of the 1.98% Precept Increase per Council Tax Band

	Council Tax 2014/15	Council Tax 2015/16	Increase per Week	Increase per Year
Band A	£106.38	£108.49	£0.04	£2.11
Band B	£124.11	£126.57	£0.05	£2.46
Band C	£141.84	£144.65	£0.05	£2.81
Band D	£159.57	£162.73	£0.06	£3.16
Band E	£195.03	£198.89	£0.07	£3.86
Band F	£230.49	£235.05	£0.09	£4.56
Band G	£265.95	£271.22	£0.10	£5.27
Band H	£319.14	£325.46	£0.12	£6.32

Appendix 3: Summary of Online Consultation Respondent's Demographics

3. Which area do you live in, or live or closest to?

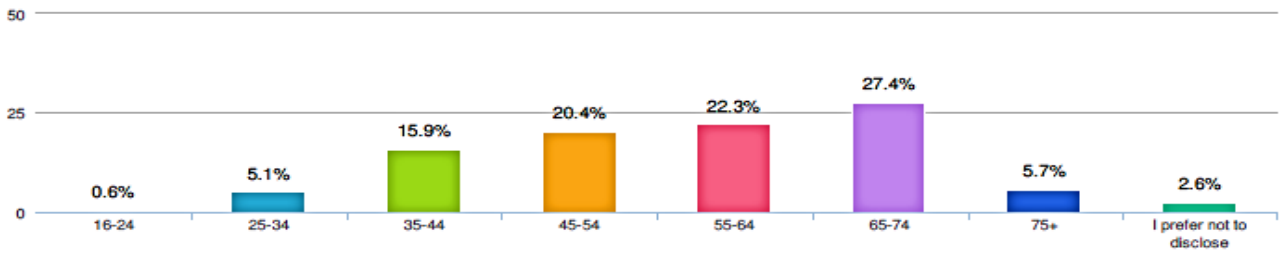


Statistics

Total Responses 157

Barnard Castle	1.9%	3
Bishop Auckland	5.7%	9
Chester-le-Street	5.7%	9
Consett	11.5%	18
Crook	6.4%	10
Darlington	17.2%	27
Durham	20.4%	32
Newton Aycliffe	2.6%	4
Peterlee	2.6%	4
Seaham	1.9%	3
Spennymoor	10.8%	17
Stanley	13.4%	21
Total		157

4. Age Group (years):

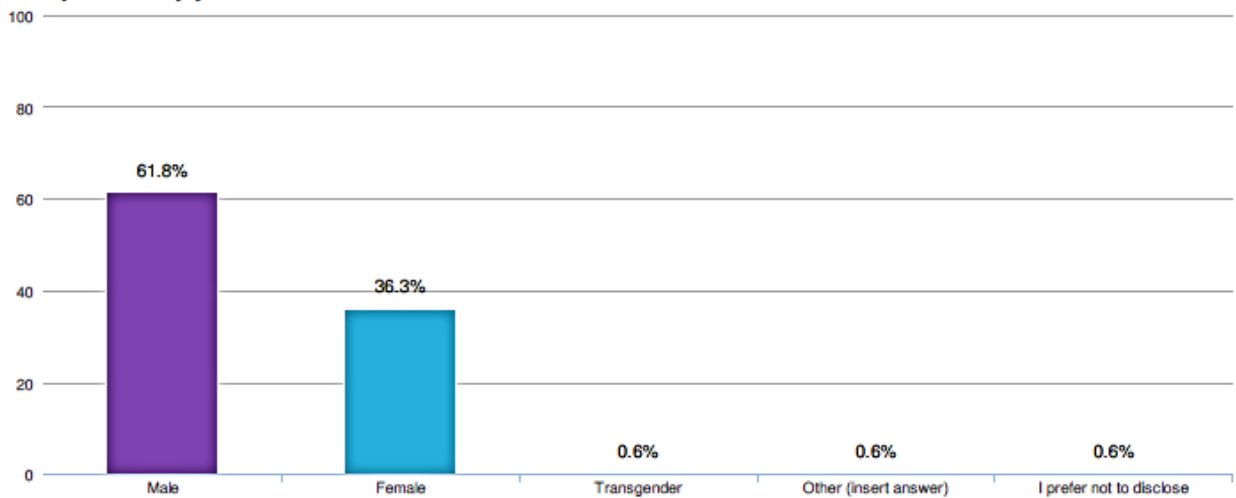


Statistics

Total Responses 157

Under 16	0.0%		0
16-24	0.6%		1
25-34	5.1%		8
35-44	15.9%		25
45-54	20.4%		32
55-64	22.3%		35
65-74	27.4%		43
75+	5.7%		9
I prefer not to disclose	2.6%		4
Total			157

5. Do you identify yourself as:



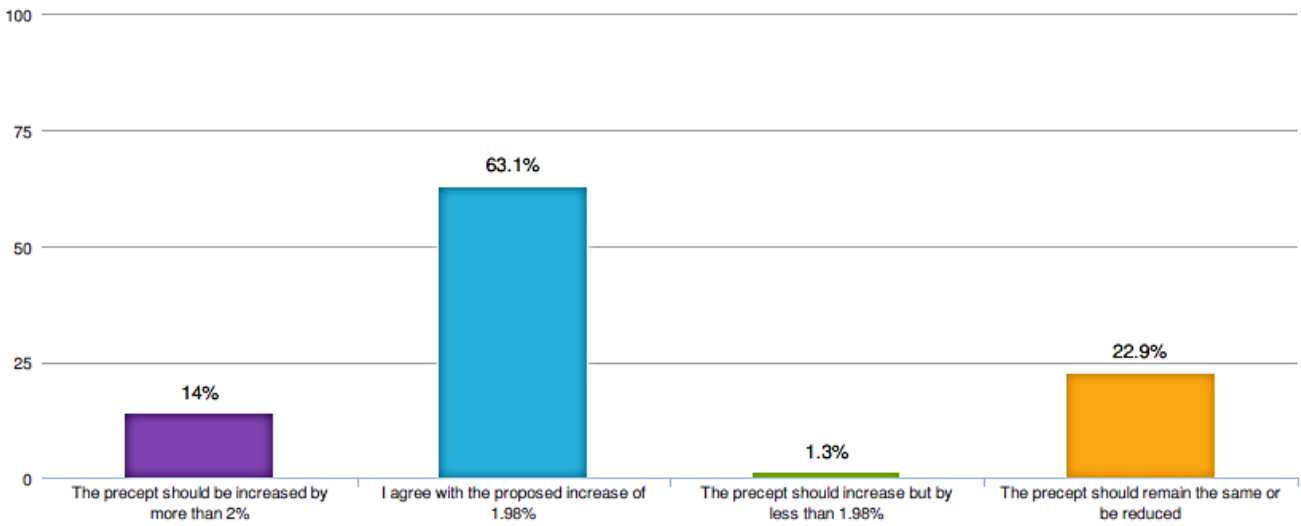
Statistics

Total Responses 157

Male	61.8%		97
Female	36.3%		57
Transgender	0.6%		1
Other (insert answer)	0.6%		1
I prefer not to disclose	0.6%		1
Total			157

A

1. Which of the statements below best describes your opinion?



The precept should be increased by more than 2%	14.0%		22
I agree with the proposed increase of 1.98%	63.1%		99
The precept should increase but by less than 1.98%	1.3%		2
The precept should remain the same or be reduced	22.9%		36
Total			157

Statistics

Total Responses 157