



### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 As Police and Crime Commissioner for County Durham and Darlington, it is my responsibility to secure an efficient and effective police force for the area. This includes setting the budget for the police force. The Government only provides around 75% of the funding necessary to run the force, and the rest is raised through part of Council Tax, known as the Policing Precept. I am responsible for setting the level of the precept each year, after consulting you. Like the rest of Council Tax, how much you pay depends upon the value of your home.
- 1.2 This is your money, and we must be careful how we spend it. Durham Constabulary has carried out excellent work to increase value for money and improve its service within constricting budgets. It has improved efficiency and continuously looks at innovative ways to generate income. In 2015 Durham Constabulary were the only force in the country to be graded as 'Outstanding' by HMIC for all three questions of the PEEL Efficiency Inspection. The HMIC said that Durham has a track record of strong financial management and has a clear plan to manage future reductions in its budget.
- 1.3 In the recent Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), the Government stated that they will protect the overall policing budget in line with inflation. However the amount of funding coming to local policing from Government is still reducing year on year. This is because the Government is choosing to allocate additional money to national priorities like counter terrorism, increased firearms capability, and funds to which forces have to bid for a share. The total provisional grant received by Durham in 2016-17 will be £85,782,390 which is £457,127 less than in 2015-16.
- 1.4 In 2010 Durham Constabulary had 1507 police officers, and now this has fallen to 1130. In 2010 we had 174 PCSOs and we now have 148. In 2010 we had 131 Special Police Constables and we now have 99. In 2010 we had 930 police staff and in 2015 we have 808.
- 1.5 Despite these reductions I remain committed to neighbourhood policing and my responsibility to secure an effective and efficient service to the people of County Durham and Darlington. In 2015 we have undertaken successful recruitment campaigns for Police Constables, PCSOs and the Special Constabulary. An intake of officers came into post in September 2015 and with more starting in January 2016.
- 1.6 Durham Constabulary are leaders in innovation and despite the reductions in staff numbers was the only force in the county to be graded as outstanding at investigating crime by HMIC in 2014. Durham Constabulary was also rated by HMIC as outstanding in how it tackles anti-social behaviour and good at reducing crime. The types of innovative initiatives used by the constabulary include:
- The first force to issue body worn cameras to all response/neighbourhood officers and PCSOs;
  - Introduction of Checkpoint – which reduces crime and the number of victims by addressing the causes of someone's offending;
  - Use of voluntary severance for police officers;

- The development of bespoke IT systems for crime management, foreign nationals, firearms licensing, case and custody, all of which are designed to save officer and staff time and money;
- An improved understanding of future demand upon the Constabulary;
- Solving problems and using restorative justice;
- A reduction in size of building estate by 23% which has saved approximately £0.8m per annum;
- Increased collaboration with neighbouring Police Forces and the Fire and Rescue Service;
- Increased income generation in respect of training and ICT.

1.7 These initiatives, together, mean that we are spending your money wisely and are in an excellent position to cope with future pressures on the force.

1.8 The Government also only allows me to increase the precept by a certain level each year, without seeking an expensive referendum. This means if our area's precept did not increase one year, the baseline (and therefore the budget) would be lower for every subsequent year. If I did not increase the precept I would be permanently reducing the income that the precept can generate. This would make the force less resilient to future budget reductions, which ultimately impacts on the number of officers the police force can provide.

1.9 After assuming a 1.98% precept increase, the estimated budget for 2016-17 is approximately £113.5 million, which is £0.9m more than the 2015-16 budget. This is the first increase in total resources for over 5 years, which still means a real terms cut after taking into account the costs of extra employers' national insurance, the nationally agreed pay award, and other inflationary pressures such as those relating to national ICT contracts. This means the Council Tax contribution to policing is a vital contribution.

## 2 My Proposal

2.1 The table below sets out the current level of policing precept for each band of property, along with what the proposed increases equate to on a weekly or yearly basis.

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Precept 2015/16	£108.49	£126.57	£144.65	<b>£162.73</b>	£198.89	£235.05	£271.22	£325.46
<b>1.98 % Increase</b>								
Proposed Precept 2016/17	£110.64	£129.08	£147.51	£165.95	£202.83	£239.70	£276.59	£331.90
Increase Per year	£2.15	£2.51	£2.86	£3.22	£3.94	£4.65	£5.37	£6.44
Increase per week	£0.04	£0.05	£0.06	£0.06	£0.08	£0.09	£0.10	£0.12

- 2.2 Properties fall within eight category 'bands' for Council Tax ranging from A to H. Nationally, a typical Property in is classed as 'Band D'. However across County Durham and Darlington approximately 55% of households are categorised as 'Band A'.
- 2.3 The precept increase in 2015-16 raised approximately £500,000, helping to keep around 10 officers in the force. The proposed increase in 2016-17 would raise approximately £520,000, helping to keep around 11 officers in the force.
- 2.4 The Government restrict the amount by which I can increase the precept, and require me to hold a referendum if I wish to increase it by 2% or over. Such a referendum would cost around £768,000, and the result would not be guaranteed. Each additional increase of 1% raises approximately £250,000. Therefore, in order to recoup the costs of a referendum, I would need to raise the precept by at least 5% (2% plus 3% to cover the referendum costs) before the force would actually see any additional money in the first year. In addition, if the people decided at the referendum that they did not want to pay more, the money spent on the referendum would be lost forever.

### **3 Available Options**

- 3.1 My preferred option is to implement an increase of 1.98 %, which will raise approximately £520,000 and help to keep 11 Police Officers on the street compared to freezing Council Tax.
- 3.2 I am consulting on the following options:
- a) To increase the precept by 1.98%, increase of £3.22 per year or £0.06 per week for a Band D property
  - b) To maintain the precept at its current level.

### **4 Responses**

- 4.1 An online survey is available at: [XXXXXXX](#) [UPDATE BEFORE PUBLICATION] to enable you to respond. The consultation will run from 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016 until 1159pm on **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016**.