

# **Consultation on proposed increase to the Police Precept 2017-18**

**6 January 2017 – 29 January 2017**



Putting victims first in County Durham and Darlington

## Introduction



The Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner, Ron Hogg

As Police, Crime and Victims' 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 a part of Council Tax which is known as the Policing Precept. Like the rest of Council Tax, how much you pay depends upon the value of your home. I am responsible for setting the level of the precept each year, after consulting you.

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 2016 Durham Constabulary retained their 'Outstanding' grading by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) for all three questions of the PEEL Efficiency Inspection. The HMIC said that "Durham Constabulary understands the costs of the provision of police services. It consistently reviews how it can improve efficiency without reducing its service to the public." They added that "Durham Constabulary's plans for the future are well developed and ambitious. They make realistic assumptions based on comprehensive information about the future demand for policing and the resources to meet these."



The Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner, Ron Hogg and Chief Constable Mike Barton



The Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner, Ron Hogg engaging with service users of Age UK

# The Comprehensive Spending Review



In the 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), the Government stated that they will protect the overall policing budget.

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 2017-18 will be £84.668 million which is £1.115 million less than in 2016-17.

In 2010 Durham Constabulary had 1507 police officers, and now this has fallen to 1132. In 2010 we had 174 PCSOs and we now have 158. In 2010 we had 131 Special Police Constables and we now have 97. In

The types of innovative initiatives used by the constabulary include:

2010 we had 930 police staff and we now have 848.

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 2016 we have undertaken successful recruitment campaigns for Police Constables, PCSOs and the Special Constabulary.



A Police Officer and PCSO on the beat  
An intake of officers came into post in both September and November 2016, with more starting in January 2017.

Durham Constabulary are leaders in innovation and this was one of the factors behind the 'outstanding' rating in HMIC's PEEL Efficiency inspection in 2016.

## The Durham Difference



A problem-solving approach to policing, working with residents and others to try and ensure that incidents can be prevented, and do not recur



The first force to issue body worn cameras to all response/neighbourhood officers and PCSOs and the introduction of hand-held tablets to reduce paperwork



Use of voluntary severance for police officers



Introduction of Checkpoint – which reduces crime and the number of victims by addressing the causes of someone’s offending



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



Using restorative justice to help victims recover and reduce reoffending



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

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.

## The Precept

The Government also only allows me to increase the precept by a certain level each year, unless I hold a referendum. I do not believe that holding a referendum this year, at a cost of almost £800,000, would be a good use of your money, so I have not offered this as an option

However, if our area's precept does not increase this year, the baseline (and therefore the budget) will be lower for every subsequent year.

If I do not increase the precept I will 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. For that reason, I have not offered reducing the precept as an option

## Budget

The total Government grant I will receive for 2017-18 will (provisionally) be £84.7m, which is £1.1m less than 2016-17. After assuming a 1.98% precept increase, the estimated budget for 2017-18 is approximately £113.3 million, which is £0.7m less than the 2016-17 budget.

This is a real terms cut and means that the Council Tax contribution to policing is vital.



Ron with PCSO and children at Sugar Hill Primary, encouraging parents to park safely

## The Proposal

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 2016-17	£110.63	£129.07	£147.51	£165.95	£202.83	£239.71	£276.58	£331.90
<b>1.98 % Increase</b>								
Proposed Precept 2017-18	£112.83	£131.63	£150.44	£169.24	£206.85	£244.46	£282.07	£338.48
Increase Per year	£2.20	£2.56	£2.93	£3.29	£4.02	£4.75	£5.49	£6.58
Increase per week	£0.04	£0.05	£0.06	£0.06	£0.08	£0.09	£0.10	£0.12

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'.

The precept increase in 2016-17 raised approximately £550,000, helping to keep around 11 officers in the force. The proposed increase in 2017-18 would raise approximately £560,000.

The Government restricts the amount by which I can increase the precept, and requires 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 £260,000.

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.

### Available Options

My preferred option is to implement an increase of 1.98 %, which will raise approximately £560,000 and help to keep 11 Police Officers on the street compared to freezing Council Tax. I am consulting on the following options:

- **Option A** - To increase the precept by 1.98%, increase of £3.29 per year or £0.06 per week for a Band D property
- **Option B** – To maintain the precept at its current level.



## Future Funding of Policing

We know that the Government is reviewing the formula used to decide how much money is made available to each force. This formula is likely to take into account a range of issues including population, deprivation and environmental factors. I will be working hard with our local MPs and others to try to secure a positive result for Durham Constabulary.

## Responses

An online survey is available at: [XXXXXXX \[UPDATE BEFORE PUBLICATION\]](#) to enable you to respond. The consultation will run from 6<sup>th</sup> January 2017 until 1159pm on **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2017**.

**Thank you**