

Police and Crime Panel

1st February 2018

Consultation on Council Tax Police Precept 2018-19

Report of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner

Purpose

1. To update the Panel on the process for setting the Policing Precept for 2018-19, and to seek the Panel's support in doing so.

Background

2. At the meeting of the Police and Crime Panel on 4th January 2018, I presented my proposals for an increase in the Policing element of Council Tax – the Policing Precept.
3. On 19th December the Government published the Police funding settlement. It contains an ability for PCCs to increase the precept by £12 a year on Band D properties. This equates to a 7.09% increase in County Durham and Darlington. I informed the Panel of my intention to do so, and the Panel was unanimously supportive of the proposal.
4. I recognise that households are under pressure and, whilst I deeply regret needing to ask local people to pay even more, I feel that this increase is necessary in order to maintain the excellent police force we have. Rising costs, plus the looming threat of a new funding formula which would disadvantage us further, mean it is essential we maximise our resources.
5. I presented my proposed method of engaging with the community about this proposal, and took into account the feedback which members of the Panel helpfully provided.

Current Position

6. I subsequently published my proposals on 4th January pm. The document is attached at Appendix 2. Since then I have taken a range of opportunities to engage with the community, including:
 - Area Action Partnership meetings
 - Drop-in sessions (including in Darlington and Durham City)
 - Online <http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/4083427/Tell-me-what-you-think-Policing-Funding-for-2018-19>
 - Local print media
7. Residents across Constabulary area have been given the opportunity to discuss the increase in a face to face setting. In the Darlington Borough Council Area, there have been three bespoke drop in sessions across the town. In the Durham County Council area we have visited each Area Action Partnership locality; and either presented to the

Board Meeting or, where this has not been possible, we have held a bespoke drop in session.

8. We also carried out informal consultation on increasing the precept between October and December 2017, although at the time we expected a 2% cap.
9. At the meeting on 1st 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.
10. At the time of writing, the period of community engagement is still live, and therefore I am unable to provide final results. However, there has been little to no opposition at the meetings I have attended, and my intention remains to increase the precept by the maximum amount, as set out in the proposal document.

Recommendation

11. The Panel is recommended to:
 - a. Note the current position of the consultation and the expected outcome;
 - b. Consider my proposal for a 7.09% precept increase;
 - c. Decide whether to veto my proposal;
 - d. Produce a report.

Ron Hogg
Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner

Appendix 1: Risks and Implications

Finance: The Council Tax Precept 2018-19 is proposed to rise by £12 on a Band D property (equating to 7.09% - as per main body of the report).

Staffing: Increasing the precept as indicated will enable current levels of police officer posts to be retained.

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.

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: If the precept is not increased, there will be a reduction in the number of Police Officers, which will have a negative effect on the ability of Durham Constabulary to deliver the Police and Crime Plan objectives.

Commissioning: No specific implications

Other risks: No specific implications

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