

## **POLICE & CRIME PANEL**

**Date: 4 February 2022**

### **Report of the Communications & Engagement Manager**

## **CONSULTATION ON THE SETTING OF THE COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT 2020/21**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This report provides details of the consultation carried out with the public of South Yorkshire around the raising of the council tax precept for 2022/2023.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has a statutory duty to consult with the public and with rate payers to obtain their views before the precept is set.

2.2 The Government Spending Review and Autumn Statement, last month (December 2021), announced that South Yorkshire Police will receive central core grant funding of £233m in 2022/23, which is an increase on the previous year (£221.1m).

2.3 This central grant funding makes up 74% of the police budget. The other 26% is funded by the council tax precept. In the annual spending assessment the Home Secretary, The Rt Hon Priti Patel announced that South Yorkshire Police would have funding of £314mn – an overall increase of 5.8%.

2.4 However, the £81m funded by the council tax precept would only be available if the PCC raised the precept by the full amount the government was allowing - £10pa on a Band D property equivalent to a 4.69% rise for all households. If the precept is not raised by this amount, funding will be less.

2.5 Most households (around 75%) in South Yorkshire are Band A & B properties. The proposed 4.69% increase will equate to a rise precept rise of 55 pence per month (£6.67 p.a) on a Band A property and 64 pence per month (£7.78 p.a) on a Band B property.

2.6 The Government Spending Review (GSR) and Autumn Statement was published on 16 December 2021 and the formal consultation process began on 17 December and ended on Friday 14 January 2022.

### **3. INTRODUCTION**

3.1 Due to the Covid pandemic and limited opportunities for face-to-face engagement the Consultation and Engagement Team have conducted the consultation around the policing priorities and the council tax precept online

- 3.2 This year a pre-consultation on policing priorities and willingness to pay more was undertaken during October 2021 to act as a pre-cursor to the statutory consultation that took place in December and January. The aim of this was to gather the views of the public on policing priorities and to seek a view from the public as to their support for a possible increase in the council tax precept. As part of this process we also asked which areas the public would like to see more money spent on and asked if they would be willing to pay a little more in their council tax to maintain or improve policing services.
- 3.3 The results of the Priorities Survey showed that two thirds of respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay more in their council tax to improve policing services.
- 3.4 On 17 December we launched the formal statutory consultation around the setting of the precept. The results from this consultation showed a slightly different picture with just 46% indicating that they would be willing to pay up to £10 p.a (based on a Band D property) more and 54% indicating that they would not support an increase.

#### **4. CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT METHODS AND FINDINGS**

##### Priorities Survey

- 4.1 The Policing Priorities survey was launched on 6 October 2021 to identify public priorities to support the upcoming version of the Police and Crime Plan.
- 4.2 The survey was carried out online and was shared regularly throughout the month across the OPCC's social media channels and was also shared widely by partners. A total of 791 responses were received – it should be noted that respondents did not have to answer every question.
- 4.3 Primarily the consultation asked the public to identify what they wanted to see the police concentrating on as priorities in the coming year. It also asked whether they felt safe in their local community and how they feel the police deal with reported issues. They were also invited to prioritise which crimes they feel are more important for the police to tackle.
- 4.5 The final question on the consultation asked respondents if they would be willing to pay more in their council tax to be able to maintain / improve existing police services. Of the 667 respondents to this question, two thirds said they would be prepared to pay a little more:
- One third (33%) said they can afford to pay a little more
  - One third (36%) said they could not afford to pay more
  - Nearly one third (31%) saying they would pay a little more but no more than inflation

## Precept Consultation

- 4.6 The survey launched on 17 December 2021 and closed on 14 January 2022. During the 4 week period the survey was promoted heavily across the OPCC social media channels (Twitter and Facebook) and was supported by South Yorkshire Police social media accounts – both corporate and neighbourhood accounts – as well as on social media accounts of partners.
- 4.7 The Police and Crime Commissioner writes a weekly Blog which is circulated to over 1,200 individuals and organisations and information on the survey and the link were included in this Blog during the consultation period. It is also posted across the PCC’s social media accounts and was supported by a press release and articles within the local media, including an interview on BBC Radio Sheffield over the Christmas and New Year period.
- 4.8 A total of 1,042 responses were received and the results show that 46% of respondents (479) are supportive of up to a £10 (Band D property) increase. 54% (563) were not supportive of an increase.
- 4.9 Within the survey there was a free text section which allowed respondents to provide comment on why they were or were not supportive of an increase. Of the 1048 respondents, 520 provided a response. Of those responses 379 had responded that they would not want to pay anymore. The most prevalent theme amongst those not wanting to pay more was the rise in the cost of living. This accounted for nearly one third (107) of the comments. This is something that hasn’t featured heavily in previous precept consultation exercises.
- 4.10 These comment included:
- “To ask people to pay more, particularly in the current climate of the cost of living increasing across the board is unacceptable. People are taxed enough and the money should be gov funded.”*
- “We are already facing substantial rises in fuel and energy costs which in turn will lead to rises in food prices. Wages have not increased in line with these price rises so any additional rise on the council tax is not welcome.”*
- “Families are struggling and many are facing poverty and struggling to meet their needs.”*
- “We pay enough council tax at the moment it’s just not wise to increase it knowing people are struggling’*
- 4.11 There was clearly some confusion from some residents between the precept and the entirety of the council tax, as a number of comments received showed evidence of a lack of understanding around the precept. Several comments referred to paying enough for council services already. A number referencing bins, road repairs and social care.
- 4.12 The survey respondents can be broken down by each district as follows:

Barnsley

358 (36%)

Doncaster	126 (13 %)
Rotherham	205 (21%)
Sheffield	284 (29%)
Don't live but work in S Yorks	4 (0.4%)
Don't live or work in S Yorks	5 (0.5%)

4.13 The respondents can be broken down by property band as shown:

Band A	264 (27%)
Band B	135 (14%)
Band C	142 (14%)
Band D	199 (20%)
Band E	42 (4%)
Band F	23 (2%)
Band G	12 (1%)
Band H	5 (0.5%)
Don't Know	160 (16%)

## 5. Summary

- 5.1 Across the two surveys, there were 1709 responses to the specific question asking if people were willing to pay more for policing in the council tax precept.
- 5.2 Of those respondents who answered the Priorities survey in October 2021, 64% indicated they were willing to pay more in their council tax precept.
- 5.3 Of those respondents who answered the specific council tax precept survey in December 2021-January 2022, 46% of respondents were supportive of up to a £10 (Band D property) increase, and 54% were not supportive of this increase.
- 5.4 I have considered this mixed picture, as well as the timing of when the questions were posed, in my considerations before putting forward the precept proposal.

## 6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 That views of the public are noted in the decision to set the Council Tax Precept at the recommended level.

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