

## Suffolk Police and Crime Panel

### Outcomes of Consideration of the PCC's Proposed Policing Precept for 2015/16

On January 30<sup>th</sup> 2015 the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel considered a recommendation of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Suffolk regarding the proposed precept level and Council Tax requirement for 2015-16 for policing in Suffolk. Eleven of the thirteen members of the Panel were present, including three substitute members. The PCC was accompanied by his staff and by the Deputy Chief Constable. The agenda and papers for the meeting are available on the [Suffolk County Council website](#).

The Panel reviewed the PCC's proposed precept report, the PCC's proposal to increase the precept by 1.997% in 2015-16, and the associated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

The PCC informed the Panel that this is his first increase in the precept since being elected. 79% of over 1600 responses to his online survey were supportive of an increase. The increased terrorist threat level, the costs arising from the decision to keep the control room in Suffolk, increased concern about child sexual exploitation and increased focus on domestic abuse were all factors that led to his decision to increase the precept.

The PCC said that on the brighter side, annual recorded crime in Suffolk fell by 7%, and the PCC has maintained his commitment to ring-fence £700k community safety funding support to the voluntary and community sector. The Constabulary is committed to undertaking a zero-based-budget (ZBB) exercise, as the foundation for radical service transformation, and stressed the need for engagement of other Suffolk public sector partners in order to improve effectiveness and lower costs.

The Panel questioned why the PCC regarded the precept increase as a 'one off', noting that the factors cited by the PCC were prior and ongoing concerns, and that the gap in funding in future years, illustrated on pg.27 of the papers for the meeting, would require further income to be embedded into the base budget. It was remarked that investment would be needed in order to achieve the savings and transformational change in approach.

It was noted that whilst recorded crime in Suffolk has reduced, the pattern of crime has changed and there are other cost factors such as increased use of social media / online crime, domestic violence and child sex abuse, which require better partnership working. The Deputy Chief Constable informed the Panel that a precept increase

would help to avoid more front line staff being diverted into dealing with the other areas such as child sexual exploitation, and achieve the right balance of officers and staff.

The Panel asked how realistic are the PCC's expectations regarding cost savings arising from changing public sector partnership working, given the past experience of slow change within some councils and also that it had taken over 2 years to commence the zero based budget exercise in the Constabulary. The PCC said that it needs 'bigger picture' leadership and vision, and for people to come to the table with the right attitude. There was a track record in Suffolk of working with other partners, including Norfolk.

The Panel also asked about the PCC's asset and property review, the sickness / absentee payroll costs, and the realisation of efficiency savings from previous years. The PCC's Chief Finance Officer said that the Constabulary has a good track record in delivering the savings planned in the MTFP, and he was confident that they will deliver the savings to balance the books in 2015/16.

### **The Decision of the Panel**

The Panel:

- 1) Agreed unanimously to approve the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposal to increase the precept by 1.997% in 2015-16.
- 2) Agreed that the Panel Chairman would make a formal report, on behalf of the Panel, on the PCC's precept, by the statutory deadline of 8 Feb 2015.

A copy of this report of the Panel will be put on the County Council's website.

Councillor Patricia O'Brien  
Chairman of the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel

4 February 2015