

Suffolk Police and Crime Panel Outcomes of Consideration of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Proposed Policing Precept for 2022/23

1. On 28 January 2022, 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 2022-23 for policing in Suffolk.
2. The agenda and papers for the meeting are available on the [Suffolk County Council website](#).
3. On 16 December 2021, the Home Office published the [provisional police funding settlement for 2022/23](#). This set out the total amount of money going into policing next year, and how much each individual PCC was likely to receive. For 2022/23 the Home Office gave PCCs in England the flexibility to increase local funding by setting a £10 precept limit for a typical 'Band D' property.
4. 11 members of the Panel were present at the meeting; however one Panel member was not present for the entire debate on the precept and therefore did not vote. The PCC was accompanied by his Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, Head of Communications and Engagement, Head of Policy and Performance and Temporary Chief Finance Officer. Suffolk Constabulary's Chief Constable was also present.
5. The Panel reviewed the PCC's detailed precept report and the associated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2022-23 to 2025-26, which included his proposal to increase the precept by **£9.99 (4.2%)** per annum for a 'Band D' property.
6. The PCC's decision papers in this regard are available on the [PCC's website \(PCC Decisions 2022\)](#); references [3-2022](#) and [4-2022](#).
7. The MTFP was prepared following notification of the provisional 2022/23 settlements from the Home Office and in conjunction with a range of assumptions summarised within the report.
8. In introducing his report, the PCC advised that nearly all of the 4.2% proposed increase would be invested in improvements in the control room and 101 system. The investment would enable calls to 101 to be triaged to assist swift resolution of issues, as well as a faster answering service and increased ability to keep in touch with the victims of offences.
9. The PCC understood that people were feeling financial pressure at this time, with high inflation and increased energy costs. However, people on low incomes did receive help with Council Tax costs, and the precept increase was needed to enable the Constabulary to keep up with the changing patterns of

crime in the county. Since the Covid-19 lockdowns, domestic violence and sex offences had increased across the county, and whilst a multi-agency approach was being taken, demand for the 999 service and communication in general had increased.

10. The PCC updated the Panel on the savings which had been achieved through joint working with Norfolk Constabulary, and assured Members that the Constabulary was always looking at areas to work more efficiently and effectively.
11. The Panel received an update from members of the PCC's staff on his [survey](#) to capture the views of Suffolk residents on the proposal for the precept increase. The survey was open for responses between 6 January 2022 and 27 January 2022 and asked: "As a Council Tax payer in Suffolk, do you agree with my proposal to increase the policing element of the Council Tax for 2022/23 by 19p a week [for a Band D property]?". There had been 1,166 responses to the survey, 62% of which supported the proposal.
12. The Chief Constable (CC) was present at the meeting and assured the Panel that the PCC would not agree to put forward any increase in funding unless the CC could evidence that he was making the best use of current funding. The Constabulary's mission was to keep the public safe by catching criminals, and the control room was at the heart of this. A modernised control room would be lean, with good use of technology such as live chat as well as direct support to victims of crime, and would assist in future proofing the organisation.
13. The Panel noted that two options had been considered by the PCC in determining the precept. The detail and rationale for each option are set out in the PCC's decision papers referred to above.
14. In summary, Option 1 (an increase of £4.68 [2.00%] per annum) would result in the Constabulary delivering a balanced budget in 2022/23, but with no surplus precept funding for further investment. Option 2 (an increase of £9.99 [4.2%] per annum) would result in the Constabulary delivering a balanced budget *and* additional funding of £1.4m, allowing investment in the following activities:
 - *Improving and transforming the Contact and Control Room to provide the public with a more efficient, effective and modern service when contacting the Constabulary. Benefits will include:*
 - *improved assessment of threat, harm and risk in calls received;*
 - *better identification of vulnerability, repeat victims and better allocation of operational resources; and*
 - *reduced abandonment rate for 101 calls.*
15. The Panel raised concern that there had been occasions when Forces had been unable to communicate due to incompatible technology, and the PCC assured Members that the planned changes to the control room would not affect the 999 system, but would introduce a range of options for the public to contact the Constabulary.
16. In response to a question regarding the public's ability to take further tax rises, the PCC advised that most homes in Suffolk were in Council Tax Band B, and thus the increase would be £7.77 per year. Whilst he understood the pressure

that people were under, he emphasised the importance of providing a service which was fit for purpose and reflected the changing patterns of crime in the county.

17. Members questioned the PCC on a variety of other matters including pay award assumptions, the Constabulary's Capital Programme, Operation Uplift, the courts backlog, electric vehicle trials and replacement of the Airwave system.

The Decision of the Panel

Following consideration of the information provided, the Panel:

- a) **supported** the PCC's proposal to increase the precept by £9.99 (4.2%) per annum in 2022/23 (9 votes in favour and 1 against).
- b) **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 February 2022.

A copy of this report will be uploaded onto the County Council's [website](#).



Councillor Mark Jepson

Chairman of the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel

28 January 2022