



HUMBERSIDE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

RESPONSE TO THE HUMBERSIDE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S PRECEPT PROPOSALS FOR 2017/18

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to set out the Humberside Police and Crime Panel's formal response to the Humberside Police and Crime Commissioner's precept proposals for 2017/18.

INTRODUCTION

The Police and Crime Commissioner has a statutory requirement to set an annual Police and Crime budget and, as part of that process, to consult with the Police and Crime Panel regarding any proposals in relation to the council tax precept.

At the meeting of the Police and Crime Panel on 6 February 2017, the Commissioner set out his proposed Police precept for 2017/18 and the medium term resource strategy for 2017/18 to 2021/22.

ROLE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act (2011) states that the Commissioner must notify the Police and Crime Panel, by 1 February, of the precept which the Commissioner is proposing to issue for the financial year 2017/18.

Under the requirements of the Act, the Police and Crime Panel must review the proposed precept notified to it and must make a report to the Commissioner on the proposed precept. The report may include recommendations, including recommendations as to the precept that should be issued for the financial year.

The Police and Crime Panel has the power to veto the proposed precept if at least two-thirds of the Police and Crime Panel members (the full membership rather than those present at a meeting) vote in favour of making that decision.

If the Panel vetoes the proposed precept, the report made to the Commissioner must include a statement that the panel has vetoed it.

COUNCIL TAX

As part of the budget setting process, the Commissioner is required to consider whether or not to propose any changes to council tax. The amount of the council tax precept is a decision for the Commissioner who will take account of the views of the Police and Crime Panel and the Government's Council Tax increase limit in making that decision.

The Commissioner has proposed a precept increase of 1.99%. The financial implications for residents are that the Band D Council Tax amount would increase to £187.33 for 2017/18, an increase of £3.66.

On 23 November 2016, the Chancellor in his first and last Autumn Statement, confirmed that spending plans would be in line with the arrangements set out a year earlier in relation to Comprehensive Spending Review 2015 which indicated that policing would be protected. This was in sharp contrast to announcements earlier that summer. The earlier announcements suggested that policing would not be protected with PCCs and forces expecting to have to find budget reductions of between 25% and 40%.

The CSR announcement was reflected in the draft 2016/17 Police Grant Report, details of which were confirmed in February 2016. In addition Ministers changed direction and adopted a significantly different approach to identifying the resources available for policing by assuming that all PCCs would implement increases in precept up to the maximum allowable without requiring a referendum.

This was very different to the pressure and financial inducements offered in previous years to freeze and to limit increases. Notwithstanding the more favourable financial position, Government indicated that savings and efficiencies would still be required and reforms would need to continue at an increasing pace in order to identify resources for reinvestment to address the new challenges facing the service.

The Provisional Police Grant Settlement 2017/18 continued this arrangement by once again including the projected income from Council Tax in the amounts regarded as part of the total resources available for policing. The calculations in relation to the distribution of grant to PCCs replicated the arrangements previously whereby the all receive the same level of reduction, 1.4% against general grant.

More detailed analysis of the information for 2017/18 identified that the Government had recognised that their assumptions of the amounts generated in 2016/17 from the Council Tax were more than they had anticipated due to the fact that the tax base was higher than the 0.5% increase that they had assumed. The Minister was then able to suggest that as the total available was higher, this allowed for more investment in the Transformation Fund and other initiatives by top slicing, whilst enabling all PCCs to receive a flat cash settlement compared with 2015/16.

This was on the assumption that all PCCs would increase precepts by the maximum amount possible without requiring a referendum.

Referendum limits were confirmed as 2% for the majority of PCCs, including the PCC for Humberside, with those PCCs with the 10 lowest precepts nationally being able to increase by £5.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendation which the Police and Crime Panel were asked to consider by the Police and Crime Commissioner was as follows –

- To endorse the Commissioner's preferred option of increasing the precept for 2017/18, by 1.99% (from £183.67 to £187.33 for a Band D property), the increase that the Commissioner consulted upon.

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S EXPLANATION FOR THE PROPOSED INCREASE IN POLICE PRECEPT

- 1) In publishing the Provisional Grant Report for 2017-18, the Government has assumed (as for 2016-17) that all PCC's will increase their precepts by the maximum amount possible without requiring a referendum (1.99%). Ministers have indicated that PCCs will receive a flat cash settlement when compared with 2015/16.
- 2) As part of the budget consultation, local residents have stated that they want to see more visible policing on the streets of Humberside and more officers on the beat helping their communities with the problems that matter to them.
- 3) A new approach to the utilisation of Humberside Police Force's resources could see up to 200 new Police Officers being recruited over the coming years.
- 4) Police officers and staff carry out a variety of duties from emergency response to criminal investigations, from roads policing to specialist roles such as firearms and counter terrorism, but at the core of Humberside Police services are neighbourhood beat officers and PCSOs. They are the front line in local communities and provide the visible daily presence and reassurance that our residents expect. The increase in precept will allow for the protection and, where possible, enhancing neighbourhood policing.

DECISION

The Police and Crime Panel considered the Commissioner's proposal to increase the precept by 1.99% and the reasoning behind that proposal.

Having considered the evidence submitted by the Commissioner, Miss Cook, Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Mr Bates, Deputy Chief Executive and Treasurer at the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and their responses to questions from members of the Panel, the Panel made the following observations –

- 1) The Police and Crime Panel wholeheartedly agrees with the Police and Crime Commissioner that communities are desperate to see an increase in police visibility. If an increase in the precept allows for the recruitment of additional Police Officers to be delivered then the Panel is in agreement that this is a small price to pay. However, in supporting the precept increase, the Panel respectfully ask that **the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable of Humberside Police provide evidence that, as a result of the increase in police precept, there has been a significant increase in Humberside Police Officer numbers deployed in neighbourhood policing and that police visibility has increased.**
- 2) At the Panel's meeting on 10 January 2017, it unanimously endorsed the Police and Crime Commissioners Police and Crime Plan for April 2017 to March 2021. In doing so, it made three recommendations. Following on from recommendation 2, the Panel **respectfully asks that once the Chief Constable and Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner finalise their respective delivery plans, that the Panel be provided with the plans and a detailed breakdown of the resources that will be assigned to the plans to ensure that they are implemented and can be monitored.**
- 3) As stated in (1) above, the Panel wholeheartedly supports the recruitment of additional Police Officers. However, the Panel does have reservations that there may not be sufficient capacity within the Force to ensure that all new recruits receive the appropriate training and access to mentors. The Panel would therefore like to see **additional resources set aside to ensure that all new recruits have access to suitably qualified mentors.**

Therefore, bearing in mind the aforementioned, the Humberside Police and Crime Panel unanimously agreed to -

- Endorse the Commissioner's preferred option of increasing the precept for 2017/18, by 1.99% (from £183.67 to £187.33 for a Band D property).