

Suffolk Police and Crime Panel Outcomes of Consideration of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Proposed Policing Precept for 2021-22

1. On 29 January 2021, 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 2021-22 for policing in Suffolk.
2. The agenda and papers for the meeting are available on the [Suffolk County Council website](#).
3. On 17 December 2020, the Home Office published the [provisional police funding settlement for 2021/22](#). This set out the total amount of money going into policing next year, and how much each individual PCC is likely to receive. The Home Office advised that PCCs had been given the flexibility to increase local funding by setting the Council Tax referendum limit to **£15** per annum for a typical 'Band D' property
4. Eleven members of the Panel were present at the meeting and two substitute members. However, one Panel Member left the meeting prior to the vote on the precept proposal being taken. The PCC was accompanied by his Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Head of Communications and Engagement (HCE), the Chief Constable (CC) and the Chief Finance Officer (CFO).
5. The Panel reviewed the PCC's detailed precept report and the associated Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2021-22 to 2024-25, which included his proposal to increase the precept by **£14.94 (6.71%)** per annum for a 'Band D' property.
6. The PCC's Decision Papers in this regard are available on the [PCC's website \(PCC Decisions 2021\)](#); reference [2-2021](#) and [3-2021](#).
7. The MTFP was prepared following notification of the provisional 2021-22 settlements from the Home Office and in conjunction with a range of assumptions summarised within the report.
8. In introducing his report, the PCC acknowledged the current economic position across the country and the hardship felt by individuals during the ongoing pandemic, and expressed reluctance at having to increase the precept, but he considered this necessary to enable the Constabulary to continue to respond to the threats from serious crime groups, cybercrime, County Lines, rural crime and increasing levels of domestic abuse.
9. The PCC provided an update on the national "Uplift" programme with 53 additional officers being recruited in Suffolk in 2021-22 in addition to the 54 officers recruited during 2020-21. This, together with the additional c25 officers funded by the proposed precept, would mean an establishment of around 1,300 police officers (FTE) – the highest in the last ten years.

10. The Panel received an update from the PCC on his [survey](#) to capture the views of Suffolk residents on the proposal for the precept increase. The survey was open for responses between 5 January 2021 and 28 January 2021 and asked residents whether they agreed with the PCC's proposal to "*increase the policing element of the Council Tax for 2021-22 by 30p a week [for a Band D property]?*". The PCC advised that over 1,100 responses had been received, with 70% of respondents being supportive of the proposal.
11. 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.
12. In summary, Option 1 (an increase of £4.41 - 2.00% - per annum) would result in the Constabulary requiring further savings of £67k in 2021-22 to balance its budget and would not have left any surplus precept funding for further investment. Option 2 (an increase of £14.94 - 6.71% - per annum) would result in the Constabulary delivering a balanced budget and additional funding of £2.6m more than Option 1 allowing investment in the following areas:
 - **Improve public interaction** though the police control room;
 - **Provide increased specialist capability** improving investigations including fraud prevention;
 - **Enhance partnership working** supporting intelligence development in respect of criminal exploitation;
 - **Protect vulnerable people** in response to serious and complex crimes placing victims at the forefront of everything;
 - **Continue to transform and modernise the Constabulary.**
13. The Panel noted that approval of funding for the priority areas listed above would result in an increase in police officer numbers of around 25, and police staff numbers of around 26.
14. The Panel also noted that monitoring delivery of improvements in performance as a result of the additional policing resource provided through the increased precept would be undertaken at each of the PCC's quarterly public Accountability and Performance Panel (APP) meetings.
15. The Panel raised concerns regarding the PCC's Reserves Strategy and questioned whether this was the appropriate time to be building up reserves, in light of the wider financial challenges and demands during the pandemic. The PCC and the CFO provided the rationale for the Reserves Strategy. This included the requirement to meet the statutory limits for general reserves and also detailed the reserves earmarked to ensure adequate funding for future projects and programmes, and future spending commitments. The PCC assured the Panel that he would not allow the reserves to be built up unnecessarily.
16. The PCC outlined some of the other areas that the additional precept funds would be invested in. These include supporting vulnerable people subject to abuse and violence and investing in staff to investigate crimes and bring more offenders to justice, neighbourhood partnership teams - solving problems and crimes in local communities, preventing fraud, proactive policing and visibility,

tackling serious and organised crime and repeat offending, supporting victims and witnesses, and a focus on sustainability and the environment.

17. Members questioned the PCC on a variety of other matters including; demands brought about by increasing population and whether funding projections will provide sufficient police resources going forwards, commercial focus to increase income, savings resultant from the collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary and wider collaborative opportunities, police visibility and public confidence.

The Decision of the Panel

Following consideration of the information provided, the Panel:

- a) **supported** the PCC's proposal to increase the precept by £14.94 (6.71%) per annum in 2021-22 (9 votes in favour and 3 against) but, in doing so, formally raised its concerns regarding the PCC's Reserve Strategy, specifically the principal of increasing the precept whilst continuing to build up the level of reserves - particularly in 2021-22.
- b) **made** the following recommendations:
 - (i) that the PCC provides to the Panel clear evidence of the deliverables arising from the increased precept at regular intervals throughout the year;
 - (ii) that the PCC provides to the Panel clear criteria which measures the extra activity arising from the precept funding at regular intervals throughout the year e.g., Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), how the additional precept funds have been spent and the outcomes for local communities;
 - (iii) that the PCC and Constabulary considers strengthening its approach to responding to incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and domestic abuse and considers further actions aimed at improving victim support and satisfaction in these areas;
 - (iv) that the PCC and Constabulary consider enhancing its approach to visible rural policing, with reporting to the Panel on how this could be achieved and measured;
 - (v) that the PCC provides clarity around the more 'commercially focused' approach to maintaining and building income generation, as referred to in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- c) **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 2021.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Jepson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail.

Councillor Mark Jepson

Chairman of the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel

29 January 2021