

**AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL
REPORT OF THE AVON & SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER
24 OCTOBER 2013**

CONSULTATION ON 2014/15 COUNCIL TAX LEVEL - OVERVIEW

Purpose

This report provides an overview of the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's) strategy for dialogue with people living in Avon and Somerset regarding the amount of council tax they are willing to pay towards policing in 2014/15.

Pre-Consultation

Over the summer of 2013, the PCC and her team spoke to many people in Avon and Somerset about the amount they would be willing to pay towards policing in 2014/15. This took the following forms:

- a. Online survey
- b. Face-to-face dialogue at events

The same questions were asked both in the survey and at the face to face events. Event attendance was planned with the aspiration of coverage across the force area. A list of events visited can be found at **Annex A**. All respondents were asked if they paid council tax and the same background information on the budget was available both online and at events.

The purpose of this pre-consultation exercise was to get an indication of public opinion across the broad range of possible options. Given the early stage in the budget planning cycle a general indication of the possible impact of this decision was given via the equivalent value in officer and PCSO numbers, in order to help respondents' understand the impact of the decision.

These were:

- a. A 0% increase in the policing part of the council tax precept. This would be no increase which would secure no additional funding.
- b. A 2% increase in the policing part of the council tax precept. This would be a £3.36 increase per year (or additional 6p per week) for the average Band D household which would equate to additional funding worth the equivalent of 38 Police Officers or 57 PCSOs
- c. A 4% increase in the policing part of the council tax precept. This would be a £6.72 increase per year (or additional 13p per week) for the average Band D household which would equate to additional funding worth the equivalent of 76 Police Officers or 114 PCSOs

- d. A 6% increase in the policing part of the council tax precept. This would be a £10.08 increase per year (or additional 19p per week) for the average Band D household which would equate to additional funding worth the equivalent of 113 Police Officers or 170 PCSOs
- e. An 8% increase in the policing part of the council tax precept. This would be a £13.44 increase per year (or additional 26p per week) for the average Band D household which would equate to additional funding worth the equivalent of 151 Police Officers or 227 PCSOs
- f. A 10% increase in the policing part of the council tax precept. This would be a £16.80 increase per year (or additional 32p per week) for the average Band D household which would equate to additional funding worth the equivalent of 189 Police Officers or 284 PCSOs
- g. Don't know

Initial findings from the pre-consultation

Respondents

The key focus for the pre-consultation stage was attendance at community events and face-to-face dialogue. At the events attended by the (O)PCC between May and September 2013, the PCC and staff spoke in total to **1506** resident council tax payers.

The online consultation was available from 7 June until 9 September 2013. This was put online for attendees at events who were unable to complete the face-to-face consultation activity, or website visitors who wanted to take part but would not be attending the selected events. The total number of respondents who paid council tax was **98**.

Quantitative

From the events and online consultation in phase one, the results as a percentages are as follows:

Phase 1	0% increase	2% increase	4% increase	6% increase	8% increase	10% increase	TOTAL
Percentage	24.3	25.4	12.8	14.7	4.1	18.6	100.0

n=1604

Qualitative

As well as the respondents' view on the council tax level, the OPCC also captured comments at events which gave some insight into the reasons for their decision. A range of quotes from across the spectrum can be found below:

"My pay has been frozen, so should the council tax"

"I wouldn't pay any more, the Police response when I was burgled wasn't good enough"

"An increase in line with inflation such as 2% seems fair"

"It is long overdue that the public sector bore the same financial constraints that private business and its employees have been living with for six years."

"Relations with Police improving... would pay more to protect officer numbers"

"Do the Police need any more money? Why can't they be more efficient?"

"I think the police do a good job and should be given the funding to operate as they think necessary."

"I've noticed that this part of the council tax has stayed the same for quite a while, a moderate increase would be reasonable"

"If an increase in the precept would mean seeing some police on the street I would support it but I cannot see this happening."

Stage 2

Following the findings of the pre-consultation stage along with development of the budget, the PCC is now considering three realistic options. These are to freeze; increase by 2%; or increase by a large amount such as 10% (due to the cost of a referendum).

Given the complex nature of this consultation and the various options, the survey question is supplemented by an explanatory table (See **Annex B**) so that the impact of each option is clear.

The pre-consultation phase has also highlighted the importance of understanding the context to respondents' decisions and this will be a key feature of the second phase of consultation.

The second stage of consultation will focus on –

1. Online survey from 9 September – 15 November 2013
2. Discussion of this issue at all forthcoming PCC engagements e.g. Public Forum, Radio Phone-ins etc.

As with all OPCC online surveys hard copy surveys have been made available and the website offers translations into other languages. Moreover hard copies of the survey will be posted to stakeholders including parish councils and libraries. It will also be promoted via press releases and eNewsletters.

This question will also be asked in the joint Constabulary-OPCC Telephone Survey which will gather c1500 responses from a representative sample force-wide.

Results

The panel will receive a report detailing the overall findings at its December meeting.

Recommendations

Police and Crime Panel Members invited to promote the current survey to all contacts:

<http://www.consultation.avonandsomerset.police.uk/pcc/2014-15-council-tax-level-for-policing-phase-2>

Annex A - Events visited by the (O)PCC – Summer 2013

Date	Event	Location
Wednesday 29th May	South Gloucestershire Family Day	Kingswood
Thursday 30th May	Bath and West	Shepton Mallet
Saturday 1 st June	Bath and West	Shepton Mallet
Saturday 15 th June	Chipping Sodbury Festival	Chipping Sodbury
Saturday 22 nd June	Weston Air Show	Weston
Saturday 6 th July	St Pauls Carnival	Bristol
Saturday 13 th July	Bristol Pride	Bristol
Saturday 13 th July	Keynsham Summer Fun Day	Keynsham
Saturday 27 th July	Harbour Festival	Bristol
Sunday 28 th July	Harbour Festival	Bristol
Saturday 3 rd August	Taunton Flower Show	Taunton
Saturday 10 th August	Balloon Fiesta	Ashton Court
Wednesday 14 th August	Minehead Festival	Minehead
Sunday 25 th August	Islamic Cultural Fayre	Bristol
Friday 13 th September	Annual Crewkerne Community Safety Event	Crewkerne
Saturday 14 th September	Frome Cheese Show	Frome
Wednesday 25 th September	Bridgwater Fair	Bridgwater

Annex B – Explanatory Table for second stage consultation question

Scenario	Weekly increase	Annual increase	Impact on budget up to 2015/16	Impact on police officer and staff numbers up to 2015/16	Additional information
Keep it the same “freeze”	0	0	The police would receive a small, short term grant from the government, but the overall impact would be a £15m deficit over the next two years to be found from savings.	Savings of this scale would put over 200 police officer and staff posts at risk.	
Increase by 2%	An additional 6p per week for the average household	A £3.36 increase per year for the average household	This reduces the deficit from £15m to £14m over the next two years	In this case, the risk to police officer and staff posts is reduced by 20-30 posts.	
A significant Increase such as 10%	An additional 32p per week for the average household	A £16.80 increase per year for the average household	This reduces the deficit from £15m to £7m over the next two years	In this case, the risk to police officer and staff posts is halved .	A referendum must be held to approve this level of increase which would cost about £1m .

The average Band D household currently pays **£168** per year or **£3.20** per week towards policing. All figures quoted relate to the average Band D household.