

Dear John,

Report on the Police & Crime Panel Meeting held on 1st February, 2021
(attended remotely)

I can confirm that I attended remotely the Police and Crime Panel meeting which was held on Monday 1st February 2021.

You will doubtless have already seen that the PCC's proposed 6.3% increase in the precept of £14.99 for Band D (equivalent to an increase of £1.25 per month), resulting in an increase of Band D council tax from £237.97 to £252.96, was approved. The Chair recorded that the decision was reached 'after concerns were expressed'. The vote called resulted in 9 votes in favour of the increase, one vote was against and one member of the panel abstained. It was noted that over the next year, the panel would consider carefully for the future the robustness of the information placed before the panel.

The meeting spent virtually the whole time considering the local police precept. The Chair commented that the proposed precept had resulted in more discussion and questions than in the past.

The PCC, with the assistance of Neil Tipton and Sara Ansell, presented the report which had been prepared to summarise the results of the two consultations. In the course of doing so, the following points were emphasized:

- The intention is that the police service will be carried on in the future with a balanced budget. This was essential as the level of reserves had been reduced in recent years and the stage had been reached when reserves should not be accessed in the future.
- Estates would be reviewed in 2021/22.
- There had been a 50% increase in special constables during the year, which increased police visibility on the streets.
- The MTFP focuses on a savings target of £1.5m and envisages reserves being kept at £10m (including £5m in general reserves).
- The first consultation showed that 67% of those responding were in favour of an increase in the precept. The second consultation produced less responses and 63% of those responding were in favour of an increase. Some who responded indicated that any increase would be difficult to afford. The largest group of those supporting an increase was in favour of the full increase proposed by the PCC.

A large number of questions were raised by the members. These included the following:

- Concern was expressed that the summaries provided in the PCC's report were inadequate. It was important that the figures could be reconciled with the figures appearing in the detailed budget. As indicated above, the panel will be reviewing the presentation of financial information in the future.
- Concern was expressed as to how representative were the views expressed in the consultation process. There had been more responses from older residents. Every effort should be made to engage residents in the 25 to 45 age group. The PCC commented that although the Covid-19 pandemic had reduced opportunities for face to face meetings, he felt that the consultation process had been more comprehensive than in the past.
- It was noted that of those responders who had supported an increase, less were in favour of the full increase proposed than those in favour of lower increases.
- The PCC was asked whether he believed in the financial viability and stability of the Warwickshire police. The PCC responded that he was optimistic about the future.
- The PCC was asked if the forecasted savings would be achieved by 1st April, which he confirmed he was confident would be achieved.
- The PCC commented that the ICT challenges faced would have existed if the West Mercia alliance had continued and would have cost more.
- The PCC confirmed that reductions had been considered to payments under the grant system and expected these to be reduced by £100,000.
- The PCC was asked what level of confidence he had that the September target would be achieved and what would be the financial impact if it was not. He responded that he was confident that the ICT system would be in place by the due date within budget and that the new Control Centre would be in place by the Spring of 2021. Sara Ansell stated that sums had been earmarked from the Government Support Grant to meet the cost.
- It was felt that all forms of lobbying should take place to alter the funding policy resulting in the level of Government grant received. The PCC indicated that all forces, whether in urban or rural areas, were unhappy with the results of the funding policy. He had attended one to one meetings, written letters and taken part in zoom meetings with the Home Secretary, Policing Minister and local MPs on this area and would continue to do so.

- The PCC was asked whether the Government's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050 was factored into the capital programme. He responded that an Estates projects review would take place. The pandemic may have the result of there being more remote working. No property disposals were envisaged. Consideration is given to LED lighting and heating where the occasion arises. In the context of reviewing the fleet, consideration is given to the possibility of electrical vehicles and charging outlets.
- The PCC was asked whether the savings of £1.5m over the next three years were achievable. He responded that he and Sara Ansell are seeking to see cost efficiencies achieved and considered that there was a better culture generally in that area.
- The PCC was asked if the reduction in front line staff would affect the service provided in the area of domestic and child abuse. He responded that the putting in place of specialist warrant officers, not necessarily uniformed, and equipped with powers conferred on them would be likely to provide an improved service and response.
- The PCC commented in response to a question raised that there had been fewer car deaths, a 40% reduction in vehicle crimes and burglary and an increased number of apprehensions. He expressed the hope that this trend would continue post-Covid19.

You will appreciate from the above brief summary that the police precept took up virtually the whole meeting. There is nothing else of substance I feel I need to report on. I took fairly full notes, so if you would like me to expand on anything, do please let me know.

Alastair Murdie

Copy to Gavin McArthur
Helen Knee
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