

ITEM 8(B)

Report on Police Precept Consultation 2018/19

Introduction

Every year, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire writes an Open Letter ahead of setting the police element of Council Tax precept. This sets out his principles and thoughts on the level of the precept and seeks to gather feedback from the public on what they think about the proposals.

In the Open Letter issued on 20th December 2017, David Lloyd outlined his guiding principles, which have always been to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policing, the protection of local policing, and the spending of public money wisely.

The Commissioner has always maintained that the precept should only be raised if he is confident that the style of policing in Hertfordshire cannot be delivered without doing so. In order to protect the neighbourhood policing model and strengthen the teams tackling burglary and other serious crimes, it will be necessary to raise additional funding from local people in 2018/19.

Local policing is at the heart of the PCC's Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan. Investment has been made to maintain this popular model and there are dedicated neighbourhood teams in each of the ten districts of the county with a chief inspector in place setting the local priorities.

The Government recently announced that the precept cap for policing has been raised from the previous level of 2% – giving PCCs the ability to go up to a maximum increase of £12 on a Band D Council Tax bill in order to be able to protect front line policing. Following this announcement, David Lloyd has proposed raising the police part of the Council Tax to £12 a year which will raise an additional £5.3m for policing in Hertfordshire in 2018/19.

This increase of £1 a month would enable the protection of strong local policing teams whilst delivering an improvement in capacity and capability to meet new demands.

An increase in the precept would mean that the vast majority of households would pay between 6 and 10 pence per week more than in 2017/18.

Table 1: Proposed Precept increase by Household Bands A-H

Precept	Band							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
2017/18	£101.33	£118.22	£135.11	£152.00	£185.78	£219.56	£253.33	£304.00
Proposed Precept 2018/19	109.33	£127.56	£145.78	£164.00	£200.44	£236.89	£273.33	£328.00
Annual Increase	£8.00	£9.34	£10.67	£12.00	£14.66	£17.33	£20.00	£24.00
Weekly Increase	£0.15	£0.18	£0.21	£0.23	£0.28	£0.33	£0.38	£0.46

Methodology

On 20th December 2017, the Open Letter was posted Herts Commissioner Website and circulated on the On-line Watch Link (OWL) network to over 131,000 households across Hertfordshire (recirculated on the 23rd January 2018). It also received significant coverage in the following local media across the county:

- BBC Three Counties Radio bulletins, 21st December 2017
- BBC News Online, 21st December 2017
- Bob FM News, 21st December 2017
- Welwyn Hatfield Times, 27th December 2017
- Potters Bar Times, 27th December 2017
- St Albans and Harpenden Review, 28th December 2017
- Hemel Gazette, 28th December 2017
- Herts & Essex Observer Column, 17th January 2018

A dedicated website – www.hertscommissioner.org/precept - was set up, which contained the Open Letter, an FAQ guide, press release and details of how to contact the OPCC. An email – your.views@herts.pcc.pnn.gov.uk was used for the last precept and was the main contact point again.

From the beginning of this consultation period (20th December 2017) to the point at which this report was compiled (25/01/2018), the precept proposal has been shared widely using **Facebook** (hertspcc and hertspolice) and **Twitter** (@hertspcc and @hertspolice) – with a combined reach of 175,000 people.

Prior to publishing his Open Letter in December, David Lloyd had mentioned his intention to raise the police precept of the council tax at a number of public engagements and interviews.

These included the Police and Crime Panel meeting (16th November) and the Home Affairs Select Committee meeting (14th November). He also spoke to a number of broadcasters, including: Bob FM (25th October 2017), LBC’s Breakfast Show with Nick Ferrari, ITV Anglia news, BBC Three Counties Radio and BBC Look East (14th November).

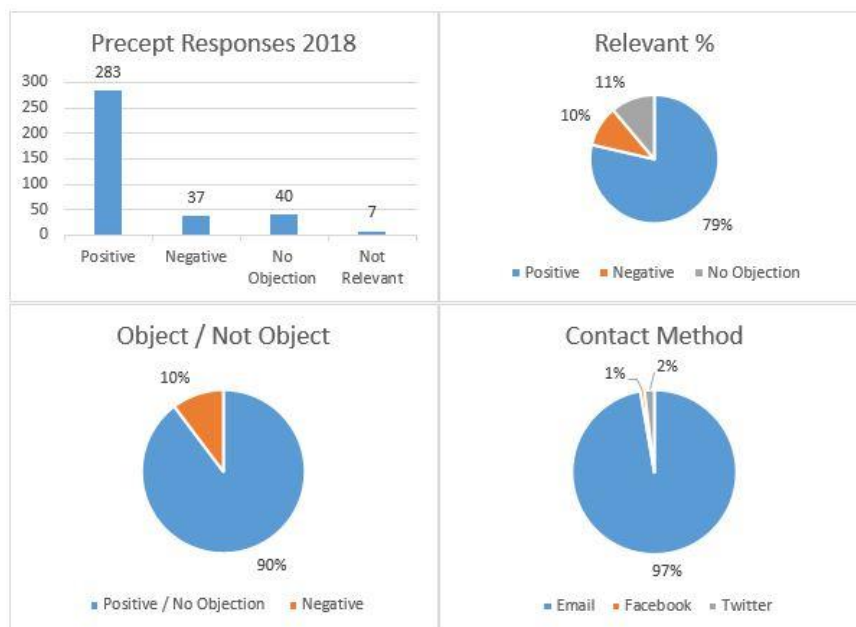
The Chief Constable, Charlie Hall, and his Chief Officers were also consulted and are in agreement that an increase in the precept is required in order to maintain a first class policing service that protects the public from harm whilst ensuring it remains value for money.

As part of the ongoing engagement with the public over the way the PCC spends the council tax, a leaflet detailing the amount of money raised and how it is spent will be sent to each council tax payer in the county with their annual bills.

Summary of the Feedback

To date there had been over 370 detailed responses to his proposal were received from members of the public and Councillors.

Table 2: Response Breakdown



Overwhelmingly, feedback on the proposed increase in the police part of the precept has been positive. 79% of all respondents were supportive. In total, 90% of those who responded did not object to paying the increased precept to protect neighbourhood policing and strengthen the teams tackling burglary and other serious crimes.

Some respondents who favoured an increase suggested that extra funding go towards the provision of increased visible policing and frontline policing, as well as an increase in resources to tackle issues

such as burglaries and antisocial behaviour. There was support towards the continuation of PCSOs and the current neighbourhood policing model.

A number of responses agreed that extra funding should go towards the Force Control Room – as some those who contacted the police have had to wait for longer than expected periods of time for their calls to emergency services to be answered.

Other areas that received support from members of the public included increased investment to tackle the threat of criminal and terrorist activity in Hertfordshire. Some members of the public also asked for more help in preventing scam and fraud crimes, particularly against the elderly and more vulnerable people in the community. In addition to this, some residents wanted more resources to go towards supporting victims of crime.

Enhance road safety and the prevention of anti-social driving were also other issues that members of the public felt should receive additional support and funding.

Some respondents who were in support of the increase said that they would be happy to pay even more than the proposed £1 a month increase:

- “I would support an increase of the proposed £1 per month, and even double that, to continue to support our community and broader police presence in Herts. I think they do a great job in increasingly difficult times and circumstances and need our support as much as we need theirs.”
- “I would be prepared to pay more than the suggested increase to ensure that the residents of Potters Bar and the wider locality continue to enjoy the safe and secure environment they deserve.”
- “A £1 monthly increase is actually not enough, I welcome the rise. Keep up the good work in keeping us safe and the community support.”
- “I am more than happy to support the increase in the council tax precept to be spent on policing. It is a small amount to pay for the many areas of policing covered in Hertfordshire.”

11% of respondents did not express a negative opinion or did not object to the proposals. Many of these respondents provided suggestions of where to spend the money and how their area needed more focus.

10% of those who contacted the PCC with their views were not in favour of the increase. Some of those that objected said that they didn't feel comfortable paying more for the services when they don't currently see police officers patrolling in their areas. Others expressed concern over the closure of police stations adding that it affects public confidence in the police. There were also several respondents who said incomes had not risen in parallel to the council tax rise.

Some others have called for more resources to be put into the Force Control Room to speed up the response time to 101 and 999 calls, which is part of the proposed use of the additional money.

A small number of people felt that they were already contributing enough through the £5 increase a year in 2017/18 and that this should be enough to cover the current service.

7 responses via email were not connected to the consultation and were passed to the Constabulary for follow up as operational related issues.