

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>Police and Crime Panel 6<sup>th</sup> February 2025</b>
<b>DATE</b>	28 January 2025
<b>TITLE OF REPORT</b>	<b>Report on Police Precept Consultation 2025-2026</b>
<b>SUBMITTED BY</b>	Rafal Hejne, Interim Chief Executive, OPCC
<b>PURPOSE OF REPORT</b>	To inform the panel of the results of the public consultation on the police element of the council tax precept for 2025/26.
<b>DECISION(S) REQUIRED</b>	To note the content of the report on the public's feedback on the proposed policing precept element of council tax precept for 2025/26 to increase by <b>27p</b> a week ( <b>£14</b> per year) for an average Band D equivalent to <b>£265</b> per annum.
<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b>	To discuss in conjunction with the 2025/26 Budget Report
<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	None identified
<b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b>	None noted at this time
<b>EQUALITIES IMPACTS</b>	None identified
<b>FREEDOM OF INFORMATION EXEMPTION SECTION IF APPLICABLE</b>	Not Exempt

## 1). INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Police and Crime Commissioners have a legal obligation to consult with residents and those persons or organisations who appear to the PCC to be representative of those subject to non-domestic rates in their area on the police element of the Council Tax precept. In December the Commissioner consulted the residents of Hertfordshire on his proposal to increase the policing element of the precept for an average (Band D) equivalent by **£14 per annum or 5.6% per cent on the comparable figure for 2024/25, rising to £265 per annum.**
- 1.2 The Commissioner outlined his priority to maintain the local policing model and protect police officer numbers. It also noted that the police service is facing a very challenging financial outlook, in the wake of the government funding settlement having fallen short of what is required to meet the cost pressures that Hertfordshire Constabulary is facing. The increase in the precept is required to meet the significant funding pressures from pay increases, along with inflationary impacts on operating costs. Raising the precept by as much as legislation allows (without a referendum) would generate **£7.38 million** in income in 2025/26.

- 1.3 Table 1 shows the calculation for the budget and precepting requirement for 2025/26 across all household bandings A-H. Under the proposal, each household would see a weekly increase of between **18p and 54p** when compared with the 2024/25 precept.

**Table 1: Proposed Precept increase by Household Bands A - H (2025/26)**

Band	Ratio to Band D	24/25 Precept	25/26 Precept	Annual Increase (£)	Weekly Increase
A	6/9 (67%)	167.33	176.67	9.34	£0.18
B	7/9 (78%)	195.22	206.11	10.89	£0.21
C	8/9 (89%)	223.11	235.56	12.45	£0.24
D	9/9 (100%)	<b>251.00</b>	<b>265.00</b>	<b>14.00</b>	£0.27
E	11/9 (122%)	306.78	323.89	17.11	£0.33
F	13/9 (144%)	362.56	382.78	20.22	£0.39
G	15/9 (167%)	418.33	441.67	23.34	£0.45
H	18/9 (200%)	502.00	530.00	28.00	£0.54

## 2) Results of the Public Consultation

**Q1:** Do you agree with the proposal to increase the precept by £14 for 2025/26 (for an average Band D property)?

Voting	Count	Percentage
Agree	<b>809</b>	<b>62.09%</b>
Disagree	<b>335</b>	<b>26.05%</b>
Neutral	<b>142</b>	<b>11.04%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,286</b>	

**Q2:** Hertfordshire residents currently pay one of the lowest police precepts compared to other areas in England and Wales. It is £30 below the average. If the government allowed flexibility to increase the precept by more than the current £14 cap, would you be willing to pay more to support policing in the county?

Voting	Count	Percentage
Agree	<b>608</b>	<b>47.17%</b>
Disagree	<b>477</b>	<b>37.01%</b>
Neutral	<b>204</b>	<b>15.83%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,289</b>	

- 2.1 The public survey was open for **23** days between **20 December 2024 to 12 January 2025**. The survey was available to be completed online, via email or through a paper version. **1,289<sup>1</sup>** people responded to the online survey. **Most responses to the survey indicated agreement with the PCC's proposal to increase the council tax precept.** A fuller summary of the survey results can be found in the Background Papers section.
- 2.2 Of the 1,286 respondents who answered question 1, 62.91% answered "yes" when asked if they agree with the proposed council tax increase. Meanwhile, 26.05% said "no", while the remaining 11.04% answered to indicate they had no preference. Four respondents declined to provide an answer to this question. This

<sup>1</sup> 1,289 people filled in the survey in total, but 3 decided not to answer Q1.

indicates that a clear majority of those who took part in the survey are willing to pay more towards policing in Hertfordshire. Similarly, almost half (over 47%) of respondents indicated they would support an increase of the precept by more than the current £14 if it were so permitted by the government.

- 2.3 There was a sizable proportion of respondents who expressed support for the proposed increase, while using the open-ended question at the end of the survey to make clear their views that they expected to see results from the new investment. Many made specific reference to the fact they felt police visibility on the streets was a particularly important issue.
- 2.4 The survey was emailed directly to MPs, as well as all county, district and borough councillors. It was promoted via two separate messages sent to the 37,938 residents signed up to receive OPCC messages via Herts Connected. The survey was shared on the OPCC and Constabulary Facebook pages, garnering a combined 1,276 views. Meanwhile, equivalent posts on X collected 913 impressions.
- 2.5 Many of the respondents who responded in favour of the increase in the council tax precept felt that police visibility on the streets is a key issue, and that they'd be willing to pay more council tax in order to improve it:

*"Happy to pay more as long as there is a more visible presence of Police on the streets as a deterrent to those carrying out crime offences."*

*"I would be willing to pay a bit more than the proposed £14 providing the police officers are more visible to the public"*

Those who disagreed with the proposed increase did so on the basis they felt reluctant to pay more on account of being required to pay more for so many other items as part of the increase of cost of living:

*"The £14 increase seems modest but added to all the other increases in the pipeline and the likely low increase in pensions it is going to be very difficult for those who are over the pension credit level. Reluctantly I think that the increase should be kept below the £14 even though it will result in a reduction to the recent improvement in service."*

A fuller analysis of responses can be found in Appendix A.

### **3) RECOMMENDATION**

3.1 It is recommended that Police and Crime Panel:

- a) Notes the results of the consultation as outlined in this report.

## **Appendix A:** Summary of public feedback

Many of the respondents who responded in favour of the increase in the council tax precept felt that police visibility on the streets is a key issue, and that they'd be willing to pay more council tax in order to improve it:

- *"Happy to pay more as long as there is a more visible presence of Police on the streets as a deterrent to those carrying out crime offences."*
- *"I would be willing to pay a bit more than the proposed £14 providing the police officers are more visible to the public"*
- *I'm happy to pay more for policing if the police are visible on the ground especially in the rural areas where we don't see the police hardly at all. You could look at this both ways, and say well it's a great place to live, crimes low, no need for police presence but an officer who regularly made his presence known and whom we could communicate with would be ideal in my opinion. Fully appreciate the pressure the police service is under and how stretch you are at times, but any improvement would be beneficial to rural communities across Hertfordshire.*

A number of respondents gave their support for the proposed increase, while requesting information as to how the additional funding would be used. Others made specific comments relating to how they feel policing should be carried out:

- *"I would request advice on where the extra money would be used ie specific activity and planned improvements and results."*
- *"The above comes with the caveat that in paying for more I and those I speak to expect to see greater visibility not more and more officers to fulfil administrative functions. More investment must result in more yellow jackets visible on our streets and rural areas to provide reassurance and give the public confidence."*
- *"Only increase if there would be a guarantee of more police officers actually available to deter and investigate crime"*

Many of those who disagreed with the proposed increase did so on the basis they felt reluctant to pay more on account of being required to pay more for so many other items as part of the increase of cost of living:

- *"The £14 increase seems modest but added to all the other increases in the pipeline and the likely low increase in pensions it is going to be very difficult for those who are over the pension credit level. Reluctantly I think that the increase should be kept below the £14 even though it will result in a reduction to the recent improvement in service."*
- *"Until we know how bad the council tax bills rise is going to be in the current cost of living crisis residents need to be cautious of their funds"*
- *"All precepts too high"*

- “As a retired Hertfordshire resident who no longer receives winter fuel allowance, and facing ever increasing tax and financial pressure, no way can I accept another increase in the police part of council tax”

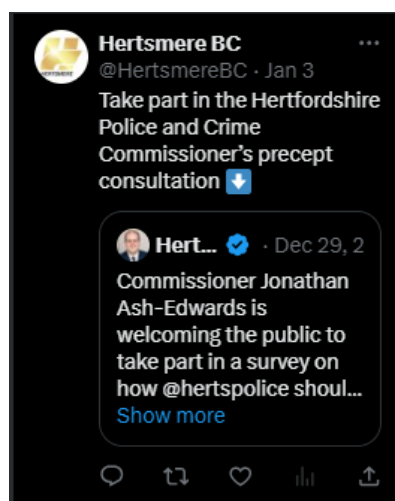
11.04% of the survey’s respondents remained neutral or indifferent with their response, with many expressing neither support nor objection to the proposal.

## Appendix B: Local media coverage

The Open Letter received the following media coverage across the county:

- **HEMEL TODAY:** Hertfordshire Police Commissioner recommends maximum increase to taxes <https://www.hemeltoday.co.uk/news/crime/hertfordshire-police-commissioner-recommends-maximum-increase-to-taxes-4922209>
- **BISHOPS STORTFORD INDEPENDENT:** Hertfordshire’s Police and Crime Commissioner contemplates 5.57% rise in residents’ law and order bills <https://www.bishopsstortfordindependent.co.uk/news/hertfordshire-s-police-and-crime-commissioner-contemplates-5-9397411/>
- **HITCHIN NUB NEWS:** Hertfordshire PCC looks to protect “record police numbers” with taxes set to rise <https://hitchin.nub.news/news/local-news/hertfordshire-pcc-looks-to-protect-record-police-numbers-with-taxes-set-to-rise-248450>
- **LIVING MAGS:** PCC Consulting with Residents on Policing Precept <https://www.livingmags.info/pcc-consulting-with-residents-on-policing-precept/>
  - The Welwyn Hatfield Times included a column about the precept survey on page 2 of their print edition on New Years Day.

Several outlets and organisations re-posted the survey on their own X channels, including Hertsmere Borough Council and Living Mags (which covers Berkhamsted and Tring).



## 2 NEWS

# Herts PCC consulting on policing precept

HERTFORDSHIRE'S Police and Crime Commissioner Jonathan Ash-Edwards is consulting residents on next year's contribution from taxpayers towards policing in the county.

The PCC's priority is to maintain the local policing model and protect officer numbers as he prepares to set the council tax policing precept. Following previous council tax and government investment Hertfordshire Constabulary has a record number of police officers working to keep the county safe.

But the Commissioner is warning that the police service is facing a very challenging financial outlook.

As a result, the force faces significant funding pressures due to increase in costs including pay increases for officers and staff along with inflationary impacts on operating costs.

Mr Ash-Edwards is due to set the 2025/26 policing budget by the end of January. Just over half (58 per cent) of Hertfordshire Constabulary's funding comes from government with the remainder from the policing precept part of council tax, fees and charges.

Mr Ash-Edwards said: "The government has assumed in its funding calculations that Police & Crime Commissioners will increase the police precept by the maximum allowed amount of £14 per year at Band D. I want to consider everyone's views before making my decision on this."

An online survey at <https://bit.ly/HertsPCCprecept> will close at midnight on January 12.