

Meeting	Police and Crime Panel
Date	3 Feb 2022
Report Title	PCC consultation on the policing precept 2022/23
Report presented by	Philip Wilkinson, Police and Crime Commissioner
Author	Emma Morton, Head of Communications and Engagement

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This paper provides the panel with a summary of the public consultation process undertaken by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on a proposed policing precept increase for 2022/23. It also provides a top-line analysis of the engagement and feedback received from Wiltshire and Swindon's residents.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONSIDERATIONS

Consultation with the public on a precept increase began in October with the launch of the PCC's Use Your Voice campaign. Residents were asked to consider whether they would support a rise in the policing precept – without knowing what that increase may be.

Post notification of the central funding settlement from government in late December, a further piece of consultative work, with specific proposals of an increase of £10 per year, per Band D household, was launched on 11 January 2022. This closed on 2 Feb.

Interestingly, those who supported an increase in the precept without knowing the final proposal of 83p a month per Band D household, supported an increase of more than the final proposal - with the majority supporting a £3 a month increase.

For the purposes of this report, a snapshot of all responses up until 26 January was taken and used to inform the following report. A further update on the responses received between the snapshot being taken and the survey closing will be given to the panel in person by the PCC.

This report will cover the survey responses from both consultation processes and will also give an indication of how widely the PCC engaged and consulted to ensure Wiltshire and Swindon's residents' awareness of the proposals. Both consultations and engagement with key stakeholders and the public was led by the PCC's communications and engagement team.

Questions within the short precept survey asked whether people would support an increase, their age and location, as well as which policing priority was the most important to them.

The main focus of this year's consultation was to ensure as wide an awareness of the proposed increase to this year's policing precept as possible, as well as a statistical significance to numbers of people responding to both surveys.

Feedback and engagement was consistently encouraged via an online survey, but options to respond via email and social media were also offered. Sentiment to the proposed increase from was monitored across all communications channels.

A wide range of zero-cost communication and engagement activities were carried out to ensure residents felt consulted and empowered to respond to the survey.

This included sustained, and wide-ranging, media coverage across Wiltshire's radio stations, television news, including a chunky segment on BBC Politics West, traditional print media, and their online editions, of all major Wiltshire and Swindon newspapers, and coverage in parish magazines throughout January. The PCC also utilised Community Messaging to inform and ask for survey responses alongside requests for responses from staff and officers via existing internal communications channels.

A consistent and sustained social media campaign ran throughout across all digital channels and the PCC took his precept consultation, alongside his consultation on his draft Police and Crime Plan, presenting it across 20 different events throughout January. These included audiences from the OPCC's key stakeholders and partners, commissioned services, his Youth Commissioners, MPs, parish, town, borough, city and Wiltshire councillors and Wiltshire Police officers and staff, as well as members of the public.

In person public events were planned across the county and Swindon but due to the sustained spread of Omicron during December, it was decided to take these public events online, using social media.

3. THE CONSULTATION

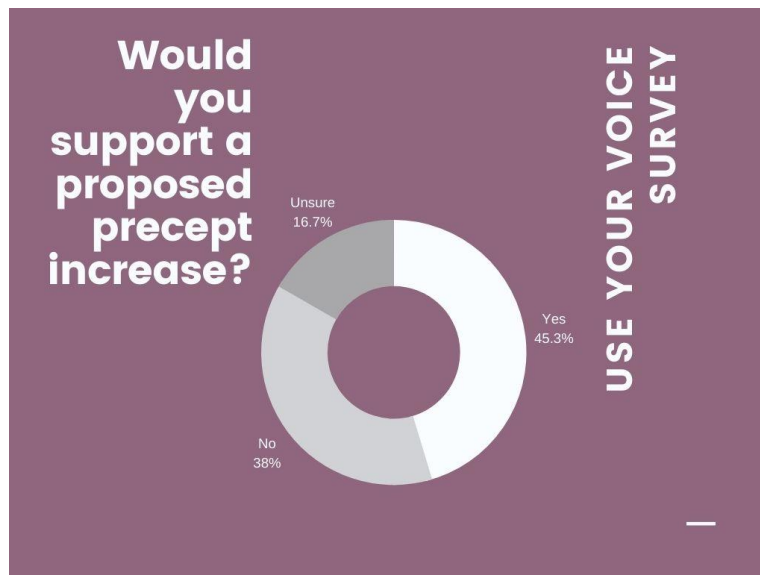
I have been pleased with the engagement on the precept increase, both in person, during my virtual Focus Groups and across social media, including a live Q&A session with the public.

This year, we have managed to engage with, and reach, more members of the public and key stakeholders than ever before. I believe in the importance of dialogue with the very people who are on the receiving end of their policing service.

Residents have not been shy of making me aware of their concerns but also ensuring I am aware of where they would like to see their precept spent. Sentiment tracked throughout this campaign has seen a more negative tone overall when the question of a precept increase was proposed. Usually we would see a 65/35 split in favour of an increase at this point, where as now it is much more 50/50 in terms of sentiment.

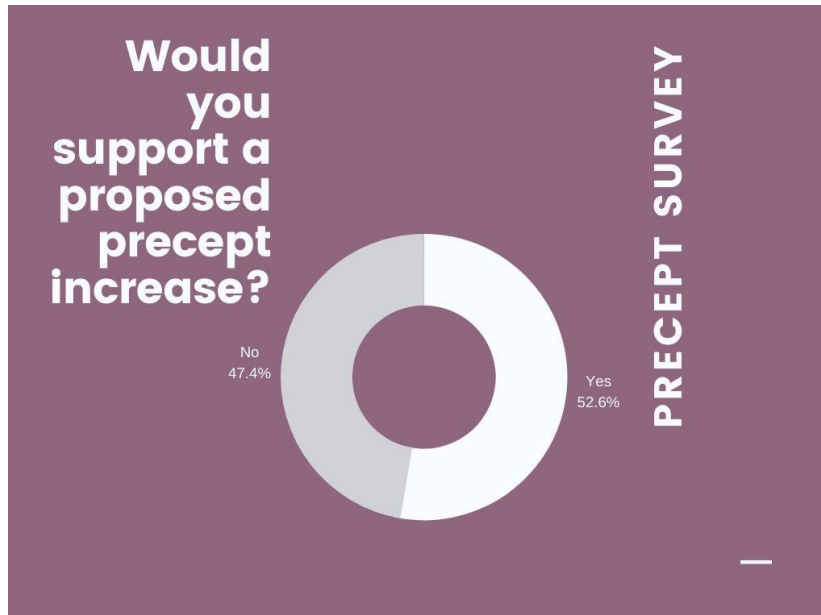
Responses from my Use Your Voice survey totalled 2,600 respondents who particularly answered the question: *would you support an increase in precept?*

You can see that 45% of people responded with a yes, 38% with no and nearly 17% of people were not sure.



Responses from my precept survey totalled just close to 1,200 responses on 26 January. An updated position on closure (2 Feb) will be presented by me, in person, at panel on 3 Feb.

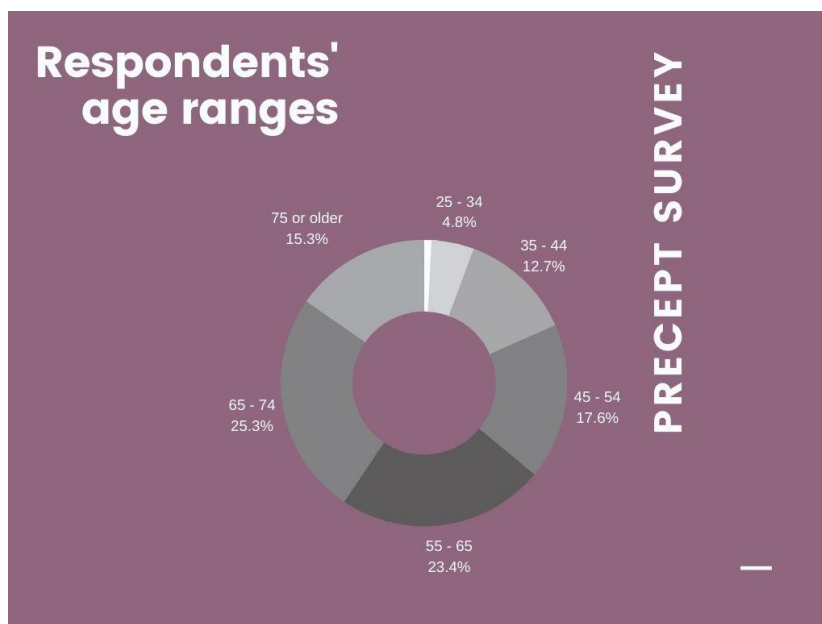
You can see the proposed increase survey on the precept is much more split down the middle, with only a smaller margin of people voting for the increase of £10 per year, per Band D household.



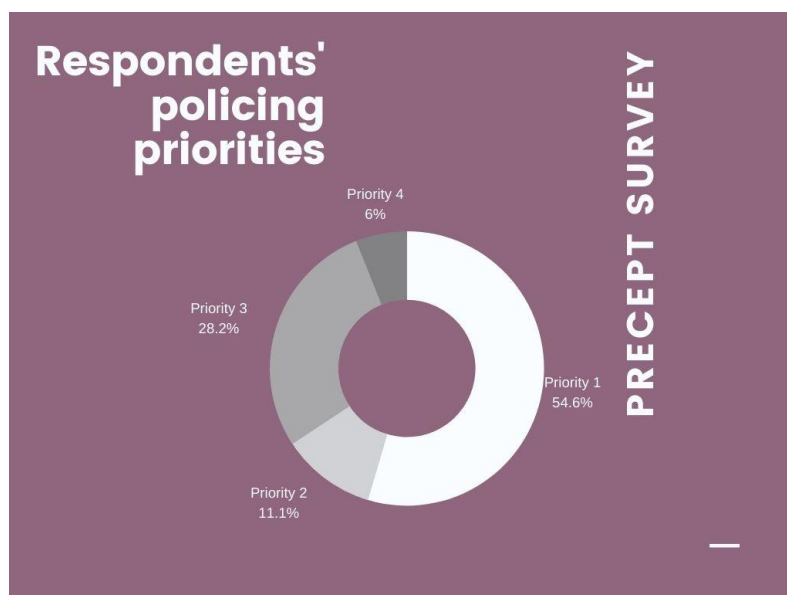
On 26 January, geographically we can say that 80% of our responses were from the Wiltshire local authority area and 20% were from the Swindon local authority area.

Having a response rate of 3,800 individuals is one of the highest rates, the OPCC has had to a police consultation in recent years. It is an increase in direct responses of 1,300 upwards from last year's figures of around 2,500 responses.

And while we can see that while Use Your Voice age demographics were in favour of our older population, responses from our precept survey were relatively evenly spread across the age ranges but I acknowledge that our traditional audience is slightly older.



I also asked the public which priority from my new Police and Crime Plan did they feel was most important. Nearly 55% of respondents said: *A policing service which meets the needs of its communities* was most important with nearly 28% of responses indicating Priority 3: *Tackle the issues that matters to communities* was next important.



We can also show that the level of engagement across our digital channels has been incredibly high with residents engaging with our consistent social media information campaigns – Use Your Voice, Making Wiltshire Safer and precept information.

Residents have been talking about the increase, and what it means to them (although this hasn't necessarily correlated with the click throughs to the survey). It is clear from the engagement that the dialogue and conversation in the 377 comments, in January alone, has been engaging and robust.

Performance data – Facebook (all posts) during Use Your Voice, Making Wiltshire Safer and Precept campaigns.

	Posts	People Reached	Engagement	Link Clicks	Comments	Shares	Reactions	New Followers
October 2021	18	39,400	1,218	183	57	78	74	10
November 2021	27	38,261	3,117	254	142	118	178	15
December 2021	30	22,349	1,204	132	44	69	119	12
January 2022 (25th)	20	20,800	4,352	405	377	119	169	11
Total:		120,810	9,891					

The engagement rate on Facebook for this four-month period is 8%. In terms of digital performance, a great Facebook engagement rate is considered to be over 3%.

The public have been able to respond via a survey, send in questions for response and have had the opportunity to question me in a virtual Facebook Live session. While the numbers on the evening fluctuated, the video has reached more than 2.1k viewers across Wiltshire.

Using insight analytics, we are able to see our Facebook audience is from a variety of towns across Wiltshire, with Swindon residents having the highest representation. All but a tiny percentage of our Facebook followers are from the Wiltshire county.

This far outstrips what we would have been able to provide at in-person events but I recognise the importance of in-person engagement and plan to continue with a sustained in-person engagement throughout the year, restrictions allowing.

Performance data – Twitter (all posts) during Use Your Voice, Making Wiltshire Safer and Precept campaigns.

	Tweets	Profile Visits	Impressions	Engagement Rate	Likes	Mentions	New Followers
October 2021	29	3,799	22,400	1.9%	48	31	12
November 2021	31	6,653	32,900	1.8%	117	52	2
December 2021	36	6,644	25,900	2.3%	112	205	16
January 2022	29	4,697	21,800	3.8%	52	158	9

During this period, the OPCC recorded a 2.45% average* engagement rate. A good engagement rate on Twitter is anything over 0.5%. A great Twitter engagement rate is over 1%.

Coupled with the qualitative responses sent via email, we have seen a far wider engagement with the precept discussion this year than in previous years.

There is a further wealth of information contained within both the Use Your Voice and precept surveys, along with the qualitative analysis, and this will take time to collate.

Nearly every respondent to the Use Your Voice survey provided a written response which we are currently collating and formulating into a qualitative results report.

We aim to publish the full results from both surveys on my website during the spring in an easily accessible, and understandable, format.

In order to take this engagement and consultation further, I have presented my proposals around the precept increase to eight Focus Groups sessions, 12 Area Boards, four internal engagement sessions with Wiltshire Police, and provided briefings to councillors ranging from parishes upwards, provided briefings to all Wiltshire MPs, as well as to my Youth Commissioners, during January.

RECOMMENDATION

Panel members are asked to note this report and the increased engagement and conversation with residents.