

## Agenda Item 7

Meeting	Police and Crime Panel
Date	18 January 2024
Report Title	PCC consultation on the policing precept 2024/25
Report presented by	Philip Wilkinson, Police and Crime Commissioner
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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This paper provides the panel with a mid-point summary of a public consultation process and engagement currently being undertaken on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on the proposed budget for Wiltshire Police, including a proposed policing precept increase for 2024/25. Further top-line analysis of the full engagement and feedback received from Wiltshire and Swindon's residents will be available at the next Panel meeting in February.

### 2. Precept 2024/25 consultation and engagement

- 2.1 Consultation with the public on next year's (2024/25) policing budget and police precept element of the council tax started on 4 Dec 2023 and will ended at midnight on 29 January 2024.
- 2.2 Insights from this year's survey presented in this paper were captured on 9 January 2024 however the survey remains open and collecting data until the above closing date to enable us to collate feedback from as many residents as possible. As mentioned above, further top-line analysis will be available for the next panel meeting with full survey analysis carried out and published by the beginning of April 24 on the PCC website.
- 2.3 This is the third budget consultation I have undertaken since taking office and the approach utilised by my office included a considered communications and engagement plan, using both offline and online communication tools.
- 2.4 I have always been extremely clear that residents should feel engaged and empowered to have their say on matters affecting their policing service. Setting the police precept and the police budget is one area where the public is able to have a voice which is actively listened to and is another avenue for me to be able to hear from local communities. In particular, the survey was adapted this year in response to feedback from residents who wanted more space to voice their opinion on several aspects of policing. The survey was broadened as a result to include safety perception questions as well as open text boxes so that detailed feedback on aspects of police service could be included.
- 2.5 In order to enable as many people as possible to be aware of the police precept, and to give their feedback about the proposed increase alongside police budget

spending, the team utilised not only online, digital, platforms but are also carrying out targeted in-person, face-to-face engagement sessions across the county, to increase engagement where residents' response is traditionally lower.

- 2.6 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 obtaining statistical significance numbers of respondents to the survey.

### **3. The consultation**

- 3.1 Using an online survey, residents were asked a variety of questions relating to the police budget, possible increases to the police precept element of the council tax, alongside other policing service questions, including safety perception and whether they had been a victim of crime. While the survey this year was deliberately broadened in direct response to user feedback last year, there was also an option for residents to only complete six questions – directly relating to precept increases – in order we captured as much feedback around this element as possible.
- 3.2 By using an online survey, we were able to create specific 'collector links' which enables the team to be able to track where responses have originated from and gives us key insights to which route was the most successful in terms of survey responses – and where we should concentrate effort and resource in the future.
- 3.3 An extensive social media campaign has been in action since 4 Dec 23 and will continue during the next few weeks the survey is live. The OPCC and PCC Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn channels were used to engage with the different audiences of each platform. The OPCC still maintains a presence on X (formerly Twitter) but we do not see the level of local community response to suggest we should continue to push the survey via this channel, although we maintain presence for visibility.
- 3.4 Static graphic posts were published and supported by short videos published as Meta stories. Each had a CTA (Call To Action) and linked to the survey for people to complete. These will continue with different themes in the coming weeks, ie a direct appeal from the PCC for further feedback and updated infographics depicting Wiltshire Police demand and outcomes during the last year.
- 3.5 Other optimisation functions that were used to reach more local people were carried out, which included sharing the posts in high membership, local community, Facebook groups and replying to as many resident's messages and comments as possible to encourage two-way communication and feedback with our communities. This has the added bonus of further extending the reach of the post.
- 3.6 So far, we have published 20 organic (not paid for) social media posts across Facebook, X, META stories, LinkedIn and Instagram. Each post reached approximately 2,500 people.
- 3.7 This year we have used targeted adverts across META and LinkedIn to try and boost responses from known demographics missing from earlier Use Your Voice consultations and engagements. The META ads have reached in excess of 135,000 people across the county in the last 28 days (to 9 Jan 24) and encouraged just over

6,100 engagements from residents including reactions, comments, shares and clicks on the post.

- 3.8 This year, we have used paid advertising within the digital space with inclusion in The Business Exchange, Swindon and Wiltshire, digital newsletter and website. This has a reach of 25,000 website views per month and encourages response to our survey from the business community and professionals.
- 3.9 Extra effort to reach more people not online was made this year and we utilised advertising in free newspapers directly delivered to people's homes. Using the printed, paid for adverts, in the Salisbury Gazette we were able to secure distribution to 25,000 people, including 6,000 through resident's doors.
- 3.10 Using our existing Community Messaging email system, allowed us to reach an audience that may not be using social media. They are more likely to not see our Precept 'content' but also are more likely to respond to the survey as they have voluntarily signed-up to receive emails from us. So far, we have sent four Community Messages, received and opened by up to 5,000 individual users each time.
- 3.11 The Communications and Engagement team have been active and visible across Wiltshire and Swindon directly canvassing people about the policing precept and encouraging survey responses. Schools, shopping centres and community groups were visited to fill the demographic gaps that the last precept survey highlighted. 25 in-person OPCC engagements are planned until the end of January. These include presences at high-profile sporting events in the area, an OPCC visible stand at high footfall shopping areas, with the military community and specific effort has been made to secure presence within the Hindu, Sikh and Nepalese communities within Swindon.
- 3.12 The team also utilised traditional media coverage, at zero cost, to secure sustained, media coverage across Wiltshire's radio stations and traditional print media, including online editions, of all major Wiltshire and Swindon newspapers. This will continue throughout January, along with coverage in parish magazines.
- 3.13 A digital toolkit comprising of social media and web graphics, Meta story videos, suggested copy and survey links were distributed to contacts among Parish and town councils, Swindon Borough Council, Wiltshire Council, Wiltshire Police and other OPCC stakeholders and partners, including all local MPs and councillors.

#### **4. Survey responses**

- 4.1 Last year the 2023/24 precept survey recorded 2,715 survey responses collected. This is an increase on the numbers gathered previously.
- 4.2 As of 9 Jan 24, this year's precept survey has prompted 1,970 responses. We still have four weeks of the survey to run and there will be a concerted effort to encourage as much feedback as possible. While we are observing plenty of engagement with the subject and the visibility of the content is reaching more people than ever, we are seeing less people clicking through to the survey to record their thoughts. Canvassing other OPCCs nationally, the same levels of engagement versus actual survey responses as Wiltshire is experiencing is being replicated across the UK at this point

in time. We will continue to monitor this via the APCC and look to understand the reasons behind this to inform any future consultations and engagement.

#### 4.3 Top-line results from the survey (1,970 responses) to date (9 Jan 24):

- **86.9%** of people want to see more investment to increase policing in their communities
- **93.9%** of people want to see more funding from Government
- **61.1%** of people would be prepared to invest more in policing to improve the service
- **69.5%** of people would support between £10 and £20 increase per year, per Band D property
- **30.5%** of people would like to see £0 increase to the police precept
- **30.35%** of people would support a £20 increase per year, per Band D property
- **13.4%** of people would support a £15 increase per year, per Band D property
- **25.7%** of people would support a £10 increase per year, per Band D property.
- **30%** of people are from the Swindon area
- **70%** of people are from the Wiltshire area

The top six priorities for Wiltshire Police to focus investment and priorities are: measures to reduce the numbers of people who commit crime repeatedly, improving police performance with more crimes detected, measures to address anti-social behaviour, crime prevention to stop people becoming victims, telephone (999 and 101), online, police station and public contact facilities and engaging with communities.

#### 4.4 We will have the final survey responses and top-line analysis ready for the next panel meeting, including an evaluation of how the consultation and engagement element of precept has been received. Fuller analysis of the results will be published on the PCC website by the beginning of April.

### 5. **RECOMMENDATION**

#### 5.1 Panel members are asked to note the report and consultation process with Wiltshire and Swindon residents so far.