

## Decision Notice

DN 02/2021 Date 08/02/2021

# Fire and Rescue Service Precept 2021/22

The Commissioner decided, after consultation with the public, to propose to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel a fire precept for 2021/22 of £74.14 for a Band D property within North Yorkshire. This would be an increase of 1.99% (or £1.45) per annum, from the 2020/21 level. The Panel agreed with the proposal and therefore the Commissioner has set the precept at this level.

## Background

Legislation requires that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner agrees their budget and associated precept and basic council tax for the forthcoming year before 1<sup>st</sup> March each year. However before doing so the Commissioner must notify the relevant Police, Fire and Crime Panel, by the 31<sup>st</sup> January, of the precept which they propose to issue for the following financial year.

The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was announced by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick MP, in a written statement to the House of Commons on 17 December 2020.

Within the announcement it was set out that fire authorities would be subject to the same council tax referendum principles as last year and this would require that any increase in the Fire Precept of 2%, or more, would require a referendum.

Consultation with the public of North Yorkshire has been undertaken to help inform the Commissioner of their views in relation to precept increase for the Fire Service.

The results of consultation with the public of North Yorkshire in relation to the level of Fire precept for 2021/22, which had 3,085 responses, has resulted in 72% of the responders supporting an increase of 1.99% or above.

The overall results are summarised below:

	Total (n=3085)	Telephone (n=974)	Online (n=2111)
<b>No more than I pay now – a precept freeze</b>	<b>28%</b>	29%	28%
<b>Up to £1.45, an increase of 1.99%</b>	<b>28%</b>	24%	31%
<b>Up to £5, an increase of 6.9%</b>	<b>26%</b>	29%	24%
<b>Up to £10, an increase of 13.8%</b>	<b>18%</b>	19%	17%
<b>TOTAL who support an increase of at least 1.99%</b>	<b>72%</b>	71%	72%

In looking at the public opinion, a clear majority (72%) support an increase to the precept. It is worth noting that 44% support an increase that would be in excess of the referendum principles.

A proposal was made to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel and, at a public meeting on 5 February 2021, the Panel agreed with the Commissioner's proposal for a Fire precept for 2021/22 of £74.14 for a Band D property within North Yorkshire. This would be an increase of 1.99% (or £1.45) per annum, from the 2020/21 level.

## Decision Record

The Commissioner, having consulted with the public and taken their opinion on board, has reviewed the advice of her officers in relation to the current financial position of the Fire Service and the service's need for an increase in funding to balance the current budget.

With this in mind, the Commissioner decided to propose to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel a Fire precept for 2021/22 of £74.14 for a Band D property within North Yorkshire. This would be an increase of 1.99% (or £1.45) per annum, from the 2020/21 level. The Panel have agreed to this proposal and therefore the Commissioner has set the precept accordingly.



Julia Mulligan  
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire

## Statutory Officer Advice

### Legal, Management and Equality Implications

The Commissioner's Assistant Chief Executive and Deputy Monitoring Officer, on behalf of the Commissioner's Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, having read this report and having considered such information as has been provided at the time of being asked to express this view, is satisfied that this report does not ask the Commissioner to make a decision which would (or would be likely to) give rise to a contravention of the law.

### Financial and Commercial

The Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer and S151 Officer has advised that the financial implications of this Decision are set out in the Executive Summary and/or the attached report. The decision will ensure that the Commissioner meets her legislative requirements in relation with the Fire element of the precept.

The CFO would like to bring the following to the attention of the Commissioner in making this decision:

- The Commissioner inherited a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) from the former Fire Authority that had an underlying £1.2m annual imbalance, and organisational plans that would have seen this imbalance increase to at least £2.5m across the life of that 4 year plan. A significant amount of work has been done to stabilise the financial position of the organisation since the transfer of Governance and it is now forecast that the Commissioner will set a balanced MTFP for the next 4 years with only a small reliance on reserves to balance the budget. This has predominantly resulted from additional COVID grants that have been received in 2020/21 but will be used beyond that financial year.

- This proposed Precept increase unfortunately does little to address the underlying need to invest in the Fire Service where there is a real need for investment in its estate and fleet which are outdated and in great need of repair, and to improve prevention work across the county to make the people of North Yorkshire safer. Progress has been made in terms of developing savings to invest in the estate however this will be a slow process without additional investment.