

## **NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL**

### **REPORT TO THE NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

#### **Precept Proposals for Policing and Fire and Rescue – 2023/24**

On 27 January 2023 the North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (“the Commissioner”) formally notified the North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel (“the Panel”) of her proposed precepts for policing and for the fire and rescue service for 2023/24. The Panel is required to review the proposed precepts and report on its decision, including any recommendations, to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner by 8 February of the relevant financial year.

The Panel met at County Hall, Northallerton, on Monday, 6 February 2023. Membership of the Panel at the meeting was:

Craven District Council	Cllr Eric Jaquin
Hambleton District Council	Cllr Peter Wilkinson
Harrogate Borough Council	Cllr Michael Chambers MBE
North Yorkshire County Council	Cllr Carl Les
Selby District Council	Cllr Tim Grogan
City of York Council	Cllr Keith Aspden
City of York Council	Cllr Darryl Smalley
Independent Co-opted	Fraser Forsyth
Independent Co-opted	Mags Godderidge
Independent Co-opted	Martin Walker

The Panel would like to thank the Commissioner, Chief Constable, Chief Fire Officer and the Commissioner’s Chief Financial Officer for assisting in providing responses to the questions and issues raised by the Panel.

#### **Policing precept proposal**

The Commissioner presented a proposal to the Panel to set the police element of the Council Tax precept for 2023/24 at £295.08, which represents an increase of £14.03 (or 4.99%) over the 2022/23 level for a Band D property.

The Panel heard from the Commissioner that given the reviewed MTFP, continued inflationary pressures and potential pay awards, the budget gap for policing will continue to be a challenge over the next year and beyond. As such, the Commissioner is supportive of the Chief Constable conducting an organisational and operational review to restructure the organisation and improve delivery of frontline services. In proposing a precept increase of 4.99% for 2023/24, the Commissioner highlighted that a recent audit of services and processes identified a number of areas in need of investment within the service, particularly where the service needs to evolve to keep up with the changing nature of crime. The precept investment will underpin these improvements and will include the digital forensic unit, expanding the numbers of detectives, ensuring a uniformed response presence in communities and the planned investment into the Force Control Room to help improve the 101 and 999 services.

The Commissioner outlined her rationale in not seeking to request the maximum amount available (£15 increase on a Band D property). While she would like to ensure the Chief Constable has sufficient funding to pursue the above improvements, she would also like the police service to improve its handle on finances. The Commissioner is also acutely aware of the cost of living pressures many families are experiencing.

The Panel were concerned to emphasise that communities will need to be reassured of visible improvements in policing if they are being asked to pay more in 2023/24; particularly as the report outlined a pause in recruitment on PCSOs and holding vacancies within the force. The Panel were advised that the recent PCSO recruitment exercise had fallen well short of the standard and numbers required. Many of those who would have been interested previously in this campaign had instead chosen to apply for the police officer uplift programme and also the current market has made other career options more favourable. The Chief Constable highlighted that North Yorkshire also has a much higher proportional number of PCSOs than most other forces so the organisational review presents an opportunity to examine this further and re-shape the neighbourhood policing service, rather than holding budget on the assumption of PCSO recruitment.

The Panel sought further reassurance that as the organisational review will be examining the balance of police officers and staff, that communities are involved in these conversations. The Commissioner assured the Panel that visible neighbourhood policing remains a key commitment and that she will ensure that the service are held to account for delivery of this.

The Panel were satisfied with the Commissioner's plans for investment of the precept and with the commitment to continue to monitor the impact of any

workforce changes on service delivery goals. The Panel would like to receive a further update on the service's workforce planning and developments in neighbourhood policing at an appropriate juncture.

### **Decision – Policing precept proposal**

The Police, Fire and Crime Panel supported the Commissioner's proposal to increase the policing precept for 2023/24 to £295.08, which represents an increase of £14.03 (or 4.99%) over the 2022/23 level for a Band D property.

As far as the Panel is concerned, provision of this report ends its scrutiny process of the Commissioner's proposed precept for policing for 2023/24.

### **Fire precept proposal**

The Commissioner presented a proposal to set the fire and rescue element of the Council Tax precept at £80.61 for 2023/24, which represents a 6.6% increase (or £5) over the 2022/23 level for a Band D property.

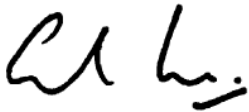
The Panel welcomes the flexibility afforded this year to North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service to be able to seek up to a £5 increase on a Band D property, following efforts in the last year by the Commissioner, Panel, local MPs and others to seek greater flexibility. The Panel noted the significant support from the public consultation for the service to receive a sum greater than a £5 increase but it is clear, having heard from the Commissioner, that the costs of imposing a referendum to seek a higher amount would outweigh the potential benefits to be gained. It will be key for the Commissioner to continue to lobby for fair funding for the service, particularly as this flexibility is unlikely to be given next year and the budget position is uncertain due to pay and non-pay inflationary pressures.

It was noted by the Panel that urgent investment is required for parts of the fire estate and also for renewal of the fleet. The Panel is conscious of the challenging position facing the service going forward, with budget/inflationary uncertainties and the need for investment and renewal. The Panel sought reassurances around the intentions of the Risk and Resource Model; particularly that prevention and protection work, along with the planned investments in On-Call, will still be implemented. It was pleasing to hear that the Commissioner does not expect to have to remove any elements of the Model agreed and that investments in the plan will be funded.

## **Decision – Fire precept proposal**

The Police, Fire and Crime Panel supported the Commissioner’s proposal for a precept increase of £5 (for a Band D property) for 2023/24.

As far as the Panel is concerned, this ends its scrutiny process of the Commissioner’s proposed precept for fire and rescue for 2023/24.



**Councillor Carl Les**  
**Chair, North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel**  
**7 February 2023**