

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 – 2024/25

On 26 January 2024 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 2024/25. 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, 5 February 2024. Membership of the Panel at the meeting was:

North Yorkshire Council	Cllr Chris Aldred
North Yorkshire Council	Cllr Lindsay Burr MBE
North Yorkshire Council	Cllr Tim Grogan
North Yorkshire Council	Cllr Carl Les OBE
North Yorkshire Council	Cllr Rich Maw
North Yorkshire Council	Cllr Heather Moorhouse
North Yorkshire Council	Cllr Peter Wilkinson
City of York Council	Cllr Emilie Knight
City of York Council	Cllr Danny Myers
Independent co-opted	Fraser Forsyth
Independent co-opted	Mags Godderidge
Independent co-opted	Martin Walker

The Panel would like to thank the Commissioner, Acting 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 2024/25 at £306.86, which represents an increase of £11.77 (or 3.99%) over the 2023/24 level for a Band D property.

The Panel heard from the Commissioner that she had chosen not to increase the policing precept by the maximum amount permissible (£13) as she is concerned to only ask residents to fund what is absolutely necessary.

The Commissioner outlined that the funds levied from the precept would be invested back into priority areas such the Force Control Room and continuing to ensure an effective frontline policing response. Further to the realignment of police resources identified through the recent organisational design project at North Yorkshire Police (“NYP”), there will also be investment required into tackling areas of ‘high harm’. These included investments into specialist safeguarding teams, the Digital Forensics Unit and increasing the numbers of detectives at NYP. Other investments are also planned into the Professional Standards Unit, Neighbourhood and Criminal Justice. The planned capital programme will ensure replacement of police vehicles as needed, as well as investment in the estate and ICT infrastructure. The Panel’s attention was also drawn to the impact of the previous year’s precept investment into the Force Control Room and in ensuring that NYP meets its officer uplift targets.

The Panel noted that while the income for policing has increased, a lot of this has already been allocated due to significant increases in areas such as pay and the pension fund. Any efficiency savings found within NYP going forward will continue to be reinvested in areas of high demand.

The Commissioner advised that a 3.99% increase will achieve a balanced budget over the next four years, leaving NYP in a stable financial position for the incoming Mayor.

The Panel also noted that 61% of those residents who responded to the Commissioner’s public consultation regarding the 2024/25 precept supported an increase of £10 or more.

Decision – Policing precept proposal

The Police, Fire and Crime Panel supported the Commissioner’s proposal to increase the policing precept for 2024/25 to £306.86, which represents an increase of £11.77 (or 3.99%) over the 2023/24 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 2024/25.

Fire precept proposal

The Commissioner presented a proposal to set the fire and rescue element of the Council Tax precept at £83.02 for 2024/25, which represents a 2.99% increase (or £2.41) over the 2023/24 level for a Band D property.

The Panel noted that in spite of the best efforts of the Commissioner and support of the Panel, unfortunately fire and rescue authorities have not been afforded the precept flexibility granted to Shire District Councils this year and as such the Commissioner is seeking the maximum amount permissible.

The Commissioner advised that the financial position for the fire and rescue service ("the FRS") looking ahead to the next year has been made slightly more comfortable by the indication from government that the service will be given a 4% funding guarantee. This is expected to provide around £350/400k more than previously forecasted (to be confirmed shortly), which will enable the Commissioner to balance the plan for 2024/25. In turn, this means that the Commissioner has also been able to increase planning assumptions around pay awards and slightly increase the amount of general reserves. However, the Panel noted with concern that the position remains exceptionally tight and has committed to writing back to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to emphasise the precarious position for next year in the hope that additional flexibility will be granted.

The Panel noted that the FRS continues to look at creative ways to adapt around the financial position presented, such as replacing appliances with newer second-hand models. It was also noted that public support remains high for an increased precept level for the FRS, with 69% of respondents to the public consultation agreeing with an increase of at least £2.41 and 54% agreeing with an increase of at least £5.

Decision – Fire precept proposal

The Police, Fire and Crime Panel supported the Commissioner's proposal to increase the policing precept for 2024/25 to £83.02, which represents an increase of £2.41 (or 2.99%) over the 2023/24 level for a Band D property.

As far as the Panel is concerned, this ends its scrutiny process of the Commissioner's proposed precept for fire and rescue for 2024/25.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Les'.

Councillor Carl Les OBE
Chair, North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel
8 February 2024