

Precept Consultation Report 2025-2026



Fire and Rescue

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1.0 Background and Consultation Approach

1.1 Background

Annual council tax bills inform residents about their contributions to local council services and other essential public services across York and North Yorkshire, such as the Police and Fire and Rescue Service. These contributions are known as “precepts” and vary based on the property band.

The Mayor is legally responsible for setting both the policing precept and the Mayoral General Precept, which now includes fire and rescue services. The Government sets national referendum principles that cap council tax increases before a referendum is required. These principles apply to the policing precept but not to the Mayoral General Precept.

When setting the policing precept, the Mayor must consider the views of council tax payers across York and North Yorkshire. Although consultation on the Mayoral General Precept is not legally required, it ensures transparency, accountability, and public engagement in decisions affecting local taxation and public services.

For the 2025/2026 period, it is assumed that the Mayor will not increase any ‘non-fire’ elements of the Mayoral General Precept and will only seek to raise the ‘fire and rescue’ element.

1.2 Consultation Approach

The Mayor’s precept consultation aimed to understand how much more the public would be prepared to pay via their council tax for policing and separately for fire and rescue services in 2025/2026.

Between 2 December 2024 and 20 January 2025, an online, self-completion survey was open to the public of York and North Yorkshire with paper copies available on request and to download. Questions around both precepting areas were combined within one survey. The order in which people considered each was rotated; 50% answered the policing precept question first, 50% the fire and rescue precept question.

To help gain a more representative sample, a number of targeted community engagement activities were conducted to increase participation from minority groups. These activities included high street outreach events across the county, interactions with local businesses and emails to seldom-heard communities. Over 2400 contacts were made, 1200 individual and 1200 via email, and many more promotional leaflets were distributed.

A comprehensive Communications Plan ensured the survey was extensively promoted via media releases and social media including; Facebook and Nextdoor (reaching 77,879 households in 421 neighbourhoods). Posters and leaflets were distributed to all North Yorkshire and City of York libraries to raise awareness of the survey. All users of the Community Messaging system in North Yorkshire and the City of York (16,000 people) were notified about the survey and an email was sent to all local MPs and Councillors in December, to raise community awareness. Stakeholders and York businesses were provided with a toolkit to help promote the survey and asked to engage their staff in the consultation. The Mayor also recorded three videos to help promote the consultation.

During the consultation period, responses were reviewed and targeted social media posts were used to increase responses from underrepresented areas and communities.

The consultation yielded 2,311 responses.

1.3 Response to Known Impact of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement

On 18 December 2024, Central Government announced the Local Government Provisional Finance Settlement which set out the funding arrangements for fire and rescue authorities for 2025/2026.

Consequently, on 30 December, a note was added to the survey to preserve the integrity of the consultation and allow people to make a more informed choice about how much more they would be willing to pay for fire and rescue services in 2025/2026.

**Important Update on Fire and Rescue Funding (added on 30th December)*

On December 18th, the Government announced its new funding package for fire and rescue services. From 1 April 2025, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service will receive around £2 million less than expected due to the removal and reduction of grants and higher national insurance contributions.

To maintain the current delivery of services AND provide investment, council tax for a typical Band D property would now need to increase by up to £24. The £15 option would no longer allow for investment.

A pre and post analysis of responses has been undertaken and detailed in Chapter 3 Consultation Response.

2.0 Respondent Profile

A total of 2,311 responses were received to the Mayor’s 2025/2026 precept consultation. The following tables provide a profile of the respondents. Figures may not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

The questionnaire was made freely available to any individual who pays council tax in York or North Yorkshire. This means that the response profile, particularly among younger age groups, may not be fully representative of the York and North Yorkshire population.

Table 1: Responses by Demographics (Mid-Year Population Estimates 2020 for age and gender; Census 2011 for ethnic group and disability)

Characteristic		Count	% Valid responses	* York and North Yorkshire population 16+ %
AGE	Under 25	20	1%	12%
	25-35	167	8%	14%
	36-45	196	10%	13%
	46-55	299	15%	16%
	56-65	451	22%	17%
	66-75	551	27%	15%
	Over 75	333	17%	13%
	TOTAL	2017	100%	100%
GENDER	Male	1182	59%	49%
	Female	828	41%	51%
	TOTAL	2010	100%	100%
ETHNIC GROUP	White	1933	97%	97%
	Other Ethnic Background	51	3%	3%
	TOTAL	1984	100%	100%
DISABILITY (self-defined)	Yes	510	26%	/
	No	1476	74%	/
	TOTAL	1986	100%	/

Table 2 below indicates that the responses are broadly representative by location (although York in particular is under-represented and Hambleton over-represented).

Table 2: Responses by Area compared to the North Yorkshire population aged 16+ (Census 2011)

Location (where live)	Count	% Valid responses	* York and North Yorkshire population 16+ %
Craven	158	7%	7%
Hambleton	455	21%	11%
Harrogate	337	16%	19%
Richmondshire	209	10%	6%
Ryedale	155	7%	7%
Scarborough	247	12%	13%
Selby	208	10%	11%
York	364	17%	26%
TOTAL	2133	100%	100%

3.0 Main Findings

3.1 Level of Support for Precept Increase

Respondents were provided with information about the funding and budget of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The questionnaire is appended for reference.

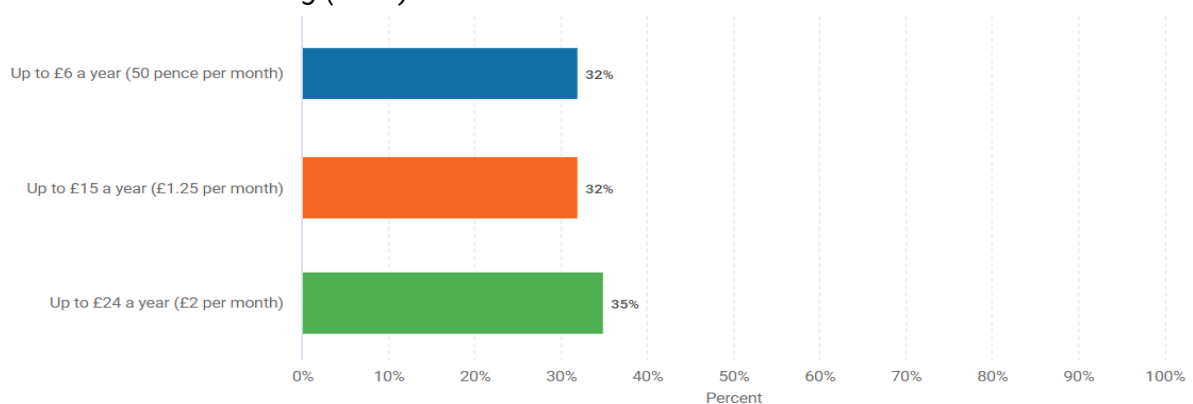
The following options are based on the amount of council tax an average Band D property would pay for fire and rescue services. This is currently £83.02 per year.

Question: How much more are you willing to pay each year for fire and rescue services in York and North Yorkshire?

- **Up to £6 a year (50 pence per month)**
This would raise around £1.9 million but could result in a reduction in the delivery of services and resources which may put firefighter and public safety at risk.
- **Up to £15 a year (£1.25 per month)**
This would raise around £4.7 million, allowing the Service to maintain the current delivery of services and make some improvements. For example, it would help fund crucial upgrades to fire stations, enhance firefighter safety and welfare with better equipment and training, and reduce debt, making your fire service more stable and financially secure.
- **Up to £24 a year (£2 per month)**
This would raise around £7.5 million, allowing enhanced investments in fire stations and other buildings, vehicles, training, equipment, and firefighter safety and welfare. It would reduce debt and create a financially secure Service for the future. It would also enhance other areas of service delivery from prevention and protection to emergency response which would help improve public safety.

Responses to the fire precept question are summarised in Figure 1 below. The majority of respondents (67%) would support an increase of at least £15. Just over one-third (35%) would support an increase of up to £24.

Figure 1: Additional amount people are willing to pay for fire and rescue
Base: All those answering (2063)



*figures may not add to 100% due to rounding

3.2 Central Funding Message – Pre vs Post Analysis

On 30 December (see chapter 1.3 of the report), a message was added to the survey for context:

On December 18th, the Government announced its new funding package for fire and rescue services. From 1 April 2025, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service will receive around £2 million less than expected due to the removal and reduction of grants and higher national insurance contributions.

To maintain the current delivery of services AND provide investment, council tax for a typical Band D property would now need to increase by up to £24. The £15 option would no longer allow for investment.

Table 3 shows responses before and after the addition of the funding message, highlighting very little variation in responses.

Table 3: Responses pre and post adding funding message to survey

Option	Total	Pre Funding Message Added (before 30 Dec)	Post Funding Message Added (post 9am, 30 Dec)	% Difference Pre vs. Post Funding Message
Up to £6	32%	33%	32%	-1%
Up to £15	32%	31%	33%	+2%
Up to £24	35%	36%	35%	-1%
Total	100%*	100%	100%	
No. Responses	2063	1021	1042	

*totals may not add to 100% due to rounding

3.3 Sub-Group Analysis

Table 4 below provides an analysis of opinion by Sub-Groups.

There is a positive correlation between household income and the additional amount people are willing to pay for fire and rescue services. Respondents with a household income under £20,000 were much more likely to choose the lowest increase of up to £6, while those with an income above £20,000 were more likely to choose the highest increase of up to £24.

Those living in Craven, Harrogate, Richmondshire and Ryedale, females and people aged 25-35 or over 66, and those without a disability or long-term health issue (self-defined) are most likely to support an increase of at least £15 (over 70% of respondents).

Table 4: Opinion by Sub-Groups (bases: those answering in brackets)

Sub-group	Up to £6	Up to £15	Up to £24	Total who support an increase of at least £15
TOTAL (2063)	32%	32%	35%	67%
BY AREA				
Craven (148)	27%	35%	39%	74%
Hambleton (429)	36%	29%	35%	64%
Harrogate (313)	31%	34%	35%	69%
Richmondshire (187)	25%	37%	38%	75%
Ryedale (137)	26%	38%	37%	75%
Scarborough (221)	37%	28%	35%	63%
Selby (191)	34%	29%	37%	66%
York (336)	31%	34%	35%	69%
Sub-group	Up to £6	Up to £15	Up to £24	Total who support an increase of at least £15
BY AGE				
18-24 (19)	42%	37%	21%	58%
25-35 (159)	26%	26%	48%	74%
36-45 (187)	34%	19%	47%	66%
46-55 (275)	39%	25%	36%	61%
56-65 (407)	32%	35%	33%	68%
66-75 (521)	29%	36%	36%	72%
Over 75 (307)	27%	40%	33%	73%
BY GENDER				
Male (1083)	33%	30%	37%	67%
Female (779)	28%	36%	36%	72%
BY DISABILITY (self-defined)				
Yes (457)	35%	29%	35%	64%
No (1387)	30%	33%	38%	71%
BY ETHNICITY				
White (1,796)	31%	32%	37%	69%
Other ethnicity (46)	46%	41%	13%	54%
BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
Less than £10,000 (53)	57%	30%	13%	43%
£10,001 - £20,000 (272)	44%	33%	23%	56%
£20,001 - £40,000 (454)	27%	34%	39%	73%
£40,001 - £60,000 (367)	26%	32%	42%	74%
£60,001 - £80,000 (191)	25%	27%	48%	75%
£80,001 - £100,000 (126)	32%	25%	44%	69%
More than £100,000 (93)	25%	27%	48%	75%

*Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding

Key		
		Under 60% support for at least £15
		Over 70% support for at least £15

3.4 General Comments on the Fire and Rescue Precept

People were asked to explain the reasons for their response.

Do you have any comments about the fire and rescue precept that may help us understand your response?

The main themes across the comments are detailed below.

Reasons to increase the precept:

- The fire service is essential and worth paying for (166 responses)
- Investment is needed including in staff, equipment and buildings (63 responses)
- The service has been underfunded too long (35 responses)

"I believe in the old adage that you only get what you pay for. The thought of underfunded 'blue light' services is not an option. I see the precept as an essential community insurance."

"A necessary service to save life and property."

"Training, equipment, and firefighter safety and welfare are essential. I am happy to pay the higher level to ensure safety, welfare of the staff and some investment for longevity."

"They have been starved of money for too many years."

Reasons not to increase/ limit the increase:

- Efficiencies and cuts could be made to free up money within the service (157 responses)
- Not willing to pay any increase in the fire precept (95 responses)
- Limited by affordability (95 responses), many noting the cost of living crisis, being pensioners and losing winter fuel payments

"As pensioners we cannot afford large increases in Council Tax precepts - we have lost our Winter Fuel Allowance."

"I would like to go for the maximum option, but costs are going up everywhere and I can only afford so much"

"I think we already pay enough Council Tax which should cover North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service"