

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 – 2022/23

On 28 January 2022 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 2022/23. 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 informally (via Microsoft Teams) on Monday, 7 February 2022. Membership of the Panel at the meeting was:

Craven District Council	Cllr Patrick Mulligan
Hambleton District Council	Cllr Peter Wilkinson
Harrogate Borough Council	Cllr Michael Chambers MBE
North Yorkshire County Council	Cllr Carl Les
Richmondshire District Council	Cllr Helen Grant
Ryedale District Council	Cllr Lindsay Burr MBE
Scarborough Borough Council	Cllr Carl Maw
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 and her Chief Financial Officer, Michael Porter, 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 2022/23 at £281.06, which represents an increase of £10 (or 3.69%) over the 2021/22 level for a Band D property.

The Panel heard that the proposed 3.69% increase would achieve a balanced budget for 2022/23 with no unfunded shortfall. The Panel heard that the income levied would not only support the policing budget by meeting the anticipated considerable increases in costs (pay and non-pay inflation) but would also ensure the recruitment and training of new officers under the national uplift programme in addition to investment around victims' services.

Members sought further reassurance as to the rationale for setting the precept at the maximum permissible and that the impact of this levy would be discernible to the wider public. The Commissioner and Chief Constable spoke to the police service's plans for deploying the additional police officers to improving public contact, enhancing place-based neighbourhood problem-solving, victim engagement and roads policing (including prevention). The Commissioner also sought to reassure that she will hold the Chief Constable to account for a clear return on the investments made and that performance targets would be set to ensure that the service becomes more efficient, especially across its capital programme. The Commissioner also emphasised the importance for the force in taking up the opportunity of the precept flexibility to deliver these priorities, particularly where such flexibility cannot be guaranteed or recovered in the future.

Members noted that over 40% of the public who responded to the Commissioner's consultation had supported an increase of £10 and that 65% had supported some level of increase on last year's levy.

The Panel would like to continue to monitor the budget position and the progress being made against the priorities outlined at the meeting, to ensure that the investment gained is delivering an enhanced service for the public.

Decision – Policing precept proposal

The Police, Fire and Crime Panel supported the Commissioner's proposal to increase the policing precept for 2022/23 to £281.06, which represents an increase of £10 (or 3.69%) over the 2021/22 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 2022/23.

Fire precept proposal

The Commissioner presented a proposal to set the fire and rescue element of the Council Tax precept at £75.61 for 2022/23, which represents a 1.98% increase (or £1.47) over the 2021/22 level for a Band D property.

The Panel heard that government funding is failing to keep up with the organisation's costs and investment needs, and that both pay and non-pay inflationary costs are expected to present a significant challenge moving forward. The Commissioner is seeking the maximum permissible increase for the service, before a referendum would be triggered.

The Panel noted that reserves are being drawn on to balance the planned budgets for 2022/23 and 2023/24 but that thereafter there is currently an unbalanced budget position. Members expressed their concerns at the precarious financial position that the service is currently forecasted to be in over the next few years and that planning assumptions around pay and non-pay costs are fairly tight for 2022/23.

The Panel noted the strong support from the public for a £5 precept increase (50%) and that 71% support some level of increase. However, it is disappointing that in spite of the efforts of the Commissioners and other local partners, including the Panel Chair and Vice Chairs, the government has not afforded North Yorkshire's fire service the same £5 flexibility that has been awarded to some other fire and rescue authorities for 2022/23. The Panel would like to continue to support the Commissioner's efforts in seeking to influence future spending reviews in this respect.

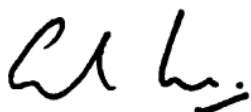
Panel members were keen to understand how sustainable efficiencies can be delivered and welcomed the Commissioner's offer to engage with the Panel around the developing work on the Risk and Resource Model in a few months' time. It was also noted that work is underway to try to link up the police and fire IT systems and that once this is given Home Office approval this should afford greater efficiency too.

The Panel welcomed the Commissioner's offer to revert to Panel on any progress made in getting additional precept flexibility in future and to access any pockets of grant funding available. The Panel will continue its regular monitoring of the overall budget position.

Decision – Fire precept proposal

The Police, Fire and Crime Panel supported the Commissioner's proposal for a precept increase of £1.47 (for a Band D property) for 2022/23.

As far as the Panel is concerned, this ends its scrutiny process of the Commissioner's proposed precept for fire and rescue for 2022/23.



Councillor Carl Les
Chair, North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel
8 February 2022