**OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

**LEAD CHIEF OFFICER:**Chief Finance Officer.

**TITLE:** Findings from the ‘Have your say on policing priorities’ public survey.

**DATE:** January 2024.

**TIMING:** Annual.

**PURPOSE:**To report the findings of the survey to help inform the Commissioner’s decision when setting the precept level for 2024/25.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) executive team considers and notes the findings within this report and utilises them to inform the setting of the 2024/25 precept level.

**INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND**

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent (Commissioner) must engage with ratepayers on the police budget, which includes the part of the council tax that is allocated to the Commissioner known as the precept. It is the responsibility of every Commissioner to set the level of the precept for their area annually.

The OPCC launched this year’s survey on Monday 16 October 2023. It closed on Sunday 7 January 2024 having run for a total of 12 weeks.

The OPCC used a dual approach for capturing the opinion of a wide selection of Gwent residents, with a major focus on face-to-face engagement in communities. In total, 25 face-to-face events were organised across the five local authorities. This equated to five in each council area, with four taking place on weekdays and one on a weekend. The OPCC attended an additional 10 community events across Gwent organised by partners, taking the total number of face-to-face engagement sessions to 35. This totalled 195 hours of public engagement, with the office speaking to more than 1,500 people face-to-face during this time.

This community engagement was complemented with an online survey that was proactively and repeatedly publicised via social media, local press and the OPCC website, as well as shared with community groups, partner organisations, the third sector and local authorities. In addition to this, the office created content for public partners, community groups and third sector organisations to share with their audiences via their channels. The survey was the main news item on the OPCC website throughout the 12 weeks, meaning it was the first thing visitors would see when visiting the home page.

The approach to this annual survey was part of a continued OPCC drive to deliver more efficient, effective and holistic engagement. Engaging with people in the communities in which they live and work increases visibility of the office and opportunities for members of the public to have their say. This also helps ensure that the office isn’t overly reliant on digital feedback from people who follow its channels, helps to combat digital exclusion, and captures opinions from a wider selection of people.

Given the uncertainties surrounding future income streams, it was requested that the office ask about different levels of funding from precept. The survey therefore asked the following question:

***Would you support the principle of increasing the council tax precept by:***

* ***£15 per year / £1.25 per month for an average band D property (This would leave Gwent Police with a funding shortfall of £9.7million in 2024/25)***
* ***£20 per year / £1.67 per month for an average band D property (This would leave Gwent Police with a funding shortfall of £8.6million in 2024/25)***
* ***£25 per year / £2.08 per month for an average band D property (This would leave Gwent Police with a funding shortfall of £7.5million in 2024/25)***
* ***None of the above***

If respondents selected ‘None of the above’ they were asked to comment, to establish whether they believed it should be higher or lower and their reasons why. The main survey was conducted bilingually.

**ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

It was agreed, prior to the launch of the survey, that a representative sample size of 600 would be used. This provided a confidence level of 95%, including a +/- 4 margin of error. This was in line with targets for previous surveys.

This year the OPCC almost trebled the representative sample required, with 1,663 answering the budget question. Of these, 668 responded during face-to-face sessions with residents, meaning a representative sample was achieved both online (995 responses) and in-person. There was again a great emphasis on the quality of the engagement, with more detailed conversations taking precedent over the volume of face-to-face interactions, which makes the above figures particularly pleasing. Due to the high level of response overall, the survey achieved a 99% confidence level that the answers received would be within +/- 4% margin of error on the actual results.

The survey was promoted in two releases to the press and appeared five times in print and online on news outlets. This totalled a reach of 1,074,834 and an advertising value equivalent of £28,256. There were four Facebook posts, 36 X posts (formerly Twitter), two Instagram posts, and it was emailed to residents on six occasions as part of the office’s ebulletin. In total on OPCC channels, the survey reached 4,496 people on Facebook and 5,289 on X (formerly Twitter). Gwent Police and all Gwent councils were provided with bespoke social media content to share on their channels. Gwent Police’s six Facebook posts had a reach of 83,669, while its six X posts had 27,043. More than 600 accessed the survey via the links shared by Gwent Police.

In addition to general promotion of the survey, a concerted effort was made to ensure the voices of people with protected characteristics were heard. Communications were cascaded to partners working with elderly residents, through groups such as 50+ forums, LGBT residents (Umbrella Cymru). All town, community and county councillors, plus public and third sector partners, were sent information on the survey to share in their role as community leaders. Th OPCC also provided the surveys and links to partners working in predominantly Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities and promoted it in Bengali, Polish, Punjabi and Urdu for partners to share.

Equality information was collected as part of the process and, of the people who chose to complete the equalities questions, the majority of people stated their ethnicity as White British. However, 102 people (7.5%) stated another ethnicity, which is slightly higher than the Gwent population percentage for Black, Asian and minority ethic residents.

Residents who responded live in the following areas:

* Blaenau Gwent 15.69%
* Caerphilly 22.73%
* Monmouthshire 17.98%
* Newport 18.52%
* Torfaen 25.08%

In total, 22% of respondents answered £15 per year, 11% answered £20 per year, 25% answered £25 per year, and 42% said none of the above. Therefore, 58% of respondents were in favour of one of the proposed increases.

A comment box was available for residents to provide extra comments if they selected ‘None of the above’. In total, 606 responders took advantage of this. This is in addition to the 1,500 people with whom the office engaged in communities.

As with previous years, there was a lot of feedback focused on police visibility, service received from the police and the affordability of any increases.

In addition to the budget survey, it is important to note that the OPCC also asked a budget question during engagement work in the summer. This only asked about up to £2 a month (£24 per year) increase. The OPCC asked this question at community events during a 13-week period and it was answered by 392 people, all of whom completed the survey face-to-face:

* **Would you support the principle of increasing the police part of council tax (known as precept) by up to £2 a month (based on a band D property) for 2023/24 to maintain policing at current levels?**

In total, 54% of responders said yes, 16% no and 30% were unsure. When combined, this means that, over the two surveys, there were 2,055 responses to questions about Gwent Police’s budget this year.

The detailed findings can be found in annexes A and B.

**SUMMARY**

In total, 1,663 responses to the budget question saw 22% of respondents answering £15 per year, 11% answering £20 per year, 25% answering £25 per year, and 42% said none of the above. Therefore, 58% of respondents were in favour of one of the proposed increases. In addition, of the 392 responses to the £2 a month question in the summer community remedy survey, 54% of responders said yes, 16% no and 30% were unsure.

**NEXT STEPS**

* 1. The findings within this report, along with feedback received both face-to-face and in the comment boxes, will be used by the Commissioner to inform the 2024/25 precept level.
  2. Once the precept has been approved, this will be communicated across OPCC channels.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION**

None.

**PERSONNEL CONSIDERATION**

No personnel considerations for this year’s survey; however, there is expected to be a significant amount of face-to-face engagement for future surveys, including weekend working.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Commissioner has a duty under Section 14 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act to engage with ratepayers on the budget.

**EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS**

This report has been considered against the general duty to promote equality, as stipulated under the Strategic Equality Plan and has been assessed not to discriminate against any particular group. As the survey was open to all it has supported the equality requirements.

Consideration has been given to requirements of the Articles contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998 in preparing this report*.*

**RISK**

The risk identified in this report is low as the Commissioner is discharging his statutory duties in carrying out this survey.

**PUBLIC INTEREST**

This report will be available to the public on the OPCC website.

**CONTACT OFFICER**

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| **Consultation:** | **Tick to confirm (if applicable)** |
| **Financial**  The Chief Finance Officer has been consulted on this proposal. |  |
| **OPCC**  The Head of Performance, Planning and Partnerships has reviewed the request and is satisfied that it is correct and consistent with the PCC’s plans and priorities. |  |
| **Legal**  The legal team have been consulted on this proposal. |  |
| **Equalities**  The Equalities Officer has been consulted on this proposal. |  |

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| **Chief Executive:**  I have been consulted about the proposal and can confirm that financial, legal, equalities etc… advice has been taken into account in the preparation of this report.  I am satisfied that this is an appropriate report to be submitted to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent. |
| **Signature:** |
| **Date:** |

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| **Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent:**  I confirm that I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct.  The above request has my approval. |
| **Signature:** |
| **Date:** |

**Public Access to Information**

Information in this submission is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and other legislation. This submission will be made available on the OPCC website following consideration by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

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| --- | --- |
| Are you satisfied that the contents and observations made are necessary and suitable for the public domain? |  |
| In producing this submission, has consideration been given to ‘public confidence’? |  |
| If you consider that this submission should be exempt from the public domain, please state the reasons. |  |