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Comisiynydd Heddlu a Throsedd Gwent | Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent: Jeff Cuthbert B.Sc., MCIPD

REPORT ON THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR GWENT'S PROPOSED COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT FOR 2023/24

INTRODUCTION

1. This report is made in accordance with the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent's (Commissioner) statutory duty contained in Paragraph 5, Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

BACKGROUND

2. The Commissioner notified the Gwent Police and Crime Panel (PCP) on the 20th of January 2023 of his Budget Requirement and Council Tax Precept Proposal for 2023/24. The PCP considered this detailed report, annexe and associated appendices in support of the Proposal at their meeting held at Penallta House, Caerphilly Borough County Council on the 27th of January 2023 (PCP meeting).
3. Following a full debate regarding the proposed increase, considering both the impact on the residents and communities of Gwent and the needs for Gwent Police to maintain current levels of service, the PCP unanimously resolved to agree an increase of 6.82% on the Commissioner's Council Tax Precept for 2023/24. It was within the PCP's gift however, whilst supporting the Council Tax Precept Proposal increase, to recommend to the Commissioner an alternative increase for his consideration.
4. On the 3rd of February 2023, the Commissioner received the formal report on the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner's Proposed Precept for 2023/24 from the PCP, unanimously endorsing his proposed Council Tax Precept increase. Although in support of the increase, the report also highlighted the PCP's concerns that:
 - a) The Commissioner's Budget Requirement and Council Tax Precept Proposal report was very complex and detailed. For some PCP members it was difficult to understand in the time allowed and it was also acknowledged that it was a public document. The PCP suggested therefore that the process could be reviewed before next year, with the involvement of the PCP's Finance and Estate Sub-Group. It was recognised that there are time constraints within the process, which must be

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg, a phan ddaw i law, byddwn yn ateb yn y Gymraeg – ni fydd hyn yn gohirio ein hymateb. Os hoffech dderbyn gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg o hyn ymlaen, neu os ydych wedi cael eich gwahoddi gyfweiliad neu gyfarfod ac yr hoffech ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg, anfonwch e-bost at: Commissioner@gwent.police.uk. Darperir gwasanaethau cyfieithu.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and where received, we will reply in Welsh - this will not delay our response. If you wish to receive correspondence in Welsh hereafter or if you have been invited to an interview or meeting and you wish to use Welsh, send email to: Commissioner@gwent.police.uk. Translation services will be provided.

balanced against the desire to provide the most up to date information. It was agreed at the PCP meeting that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) would welcome the opportunity to work with the PCP's Finance and Estate Sub-Group during the year ahead, to improve the process;

- b) The affordability of the Estate Strategy should continue to be a focus for the Commissioner and be addressed in the recommendations from the Estate Strategy's current review. Of particular concern for the PCP was the balancing of operational need with current financial constraints. Importantly, the PCP required assurance that although the Gwent Police Operational Facility capital scheme has been deferred by two years, planning will continue, so that when funds are available the project can be started immediately. It was agreed that the PCP's Finance and Estates Group would be kept informed of the changes to the Estate Strategy going forward, with onus on the Gwent Police Operational Facility and the Joint Firearms Unit Training Range; and
- c) Having considered the Budget Requirement and Council Tax Precept Proposal report and the responses at the PCP meeting from the Chief Finance Officer, Commissioner, Chief Constable and other Officers of the OPCC, the PCP recognised the difficult environment in which the Force continues to operate. The PCP would therefore like to record that they do have concerns over the use of Reserves to offset the 2023/24 funding gap, whilst appreciating the funding situation.

CONSIDERATION OF THE GWENT POLICE AND CRIME PANEL'S COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT REPORT

- 5. The Commissioner and Chief Finance Officer met on Monday 30th of January 2023 to consider the PCP's initial verbal agreement to the Council Tax Precept increase given at the PCP meeting. Upon receipt of the PCP's formal report on the 3rd of February 2023, the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Finance Officer, Chief Executive and the OPCC's Head of Communications and Engagement met on the 8th of February 2023 to consider the PCP's report. In light of the concerns raised in the PCP's report and comments made at the PCP meeting, a further internal meeting was arranged between the five individuals above and the Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable, Assistant Chief Officer (Resources) and Gwent Police's Head of Corporate Communications on Friday 10th of February 2023.
- 6. At the internal meetings, the Commissioner commended the valued challenge, scrutiny and importantly the support the PCP provided during its meeting of the 27th of January 2023 and in particular the work of the PCP's Finance and Estate Sub-Group. The Commissioner also conveyed his appreciation regarding the thanks given by the PCP, for the work undertaken by the Chief Finance Officer for engaging the Finance and Estate Sub-Group and PCP in early discussions about the Commissioner's detailed budget and precept report and also for his detailed and comprehensive answers given at the PCP meeting.
- 7. Following the internal meetings, the Commissioner fully accepts the PCP's concerns raised in their report. In relation to the first two concerns raised on the budget setting process and the Estate Strategy, a detailed action plan is in the process of being drawn up, which will be discussed with the PCP Chair and Secretariat. The approved action plan will be enacted through the Chief Finance Officer with support from the PCP's Finance and Estate Sub-Group, to improve the budget setting process and Estate Strategy engagement during 2023/24.

8. In relation to the third concern on the use of Reserves, both the Commissioner’s Budget Requirement and Council Tax Precept Proposal for 2023/24 report and discussions at the PCP meeting, clearly identified the uncertainty of future funding and the financial challenges within the current Medium Term Financial Projections (MTFP) to 2027/28. Therefore, it is important to maintain consistent and ongoing dialogue with the PCP’s Finance and Estate Sub-Group and wider PCP, to ensure future risks and opportunities are considered and acted upon in a timely manner – particularly in relation to the revised Estate Strategy and its affordability. The Commissioner therefore maintains his commitment to robust financial monitoring (including the identification of savings) and timely engagement with the PCP on financial matters.

RECOMMENDATION

9. The submission of this report to the PCP (and its subsequent publication) concludes the scrutiny process for the Council Tax Precept for 2023/24.
10. The Commissioner will therefore issue his Council Tax Precept of £72,998,181 for 2023/24, equivalent to a Council Tax Band D of £324.52, reflecting an increase of 6.82% or £20.72 per annum.
11. The Council Tax Precept of £72,998,181 will be apportioned to each City/County/County Borough Council according to the following table:

Unitary Authorities	£	Tax Base Band D Equivalent
Blaenau Gwent	6,752,190	20,806.70
Caerphilly	19,839,572	61,135.13
Monmouthshire	15,504,946	47,778.09
Newport	19,787,776	60,975.52
Torfaen	11,113,697	34,246.57
Total	72,998,181	224,942.01

12. The Council Tax Precept shown in the above table generates the following amounts of council tax for the various bands:

Council Tax Band	£
A	216.35
B	252.40
C	288.46
D	324.52
E	396.64
F	468.75
G	540.87
H	649.04
I	757.21

13. The Commissioner requests that this report is circulated to PCP Members for their immediate consideration.