

**Gwent Police
and Crime Panel**

**Panel Heddlu
a Throseddu Gwent**

REPORT ON THE GWENT POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S PROPOSED PRECEPT FOR 2020/21

Background

This report is made in accordance with the Gwent Police and Crime Panel's statutory duty contained in Paragraph 3(2), Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

Review of Proposed Precept

The Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner notified the Panel on 24th January 2020 of his proposed Police and Crime Budget and Precept for 2020/21.

The Panel considered a detailed report outlining the proposed precept for 2020/21 at their meeting held in Monmouthshire County Hall on 31st January 2020. A copy of the report is available on the Panel's website www.Gwentpcp.org.uk

The following Members of the Panel were present:

Mrs Gillian Howells, Chair (Co-opted Member)
Cllr Colin Mann Vice-Chair (Caerphilly County Borough Council)
Cllr Jonathan Millard (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council)
Councillor Mrs Lisa Winnett (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council)
Councillor Mrs Christine Forehead (Caerphilly County Borough Council)
Cllr Gez Kirby (Caerphilly County Borough Council)
Cllr Peter Clarke (Monmouthshire County Borough Council)
Cllr Tony Easson (Monmouthshire County Borough Council)
Cllr Jason Jordan (Newport City Council)
Councillor Mark Spencer (Newport City Council)
Cllr Mike Jeremiah (Torfaen County Borough Council)
Cllr Emma Rapiet (Torfaen County Borough Council)
Mr P. Nuttall (Co-opted Member)

The Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner recommended a 6.99 % increase in the 2020/21 precept and a budget requirement of £133,623,773. The Panel debated the proposed increase and, in particular, considered the impact on

the residents and communities of Gwent who are under increasing financial pressures.

The Panel acknowledged that the Commissioner has identified planned efficiency savings in 2020/21 of £539k and further planned efficiency savings of £1.137m (totalling £1.676m). Clarification was sought in respect of the likelihood of efficiency savings being achieved by the reduction in overtime. It was recognised that it will be a challenge but the aim is to also improve staff wellbeing by reducing long work hours. It is hoped that the recruitment of additional officers will help to achieve this efficiency saving but this must not be at the expense of the effectiveness of the service.

The Commissioner updated the panel with the details of the core grant from the Home Office which provided the up-front budget for the police officer recruitment uplift announced last week. The settlement figure for 2020/21 has increased from the predicted £1.464m to £5.463m plus an additional £1.725m of special grant if recruitment targets are reached. The initial expectation was that the additional costs such as Fleet, ICT and Training would be allocated at a later date, once recruitment targets were achieved. However the Home office has elected to fund not only the salary and direct employment on-costs of the 62 Police Officers, but also the entire consequential costs of the full target of 165 Police Officers. Therefore, over the medium term the uplift is cost neutral but is not available to offset existing pressures and financial deficits with the Force. The Panel were advised that this accelerated funding has no impact upon the 2020/21 proposed Council Tax Precept increase.

The Panel were advised that some of the Operation Uplift funding from the Home Office has been received as a revenue stream; it must still be targeted toward capital investment (such as the Estate and Fleet). Therefore, this funding provides an additional 'Revenue Contribution to Capital' and will reduce the Commissioner's external borrowing requirement from 2021/22 and beyond.

Assurance was sought with regard to the outcome of the public consultation on the proposed Council Tax Precept for 2020/21 which appeared contrary to views expressed to a Panel Member in his local area. The Panel were advised that the consultation consisted of both an online survey and a series of 25 face-and face-to-face engagement events across all local authorities. These were held with venues chosen based upon areas of high footfall and with good accessibility. Combining the three sources of responses outlined in the report, the overall position showed that when asked if they were in favour of a Council Tax increase up to £2 per month, 1,136 (66.6%) were in favour, 391 (22.9%) were against and 180 (10.5%) were unsure (based on the returns from Gwent residents).

Following a detailed discussion with the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Finance Officer, the Panel considered the Commissioners proposal to a 6.99% increase in the policing precept but did not have the required majority to veto the proposed precept. The panel did

however wish to make a recommendation to the Commissioner and asked if full consideration could be given to their proposal.

The Panel wished to place on record their thanks to Mr Darren Garwood-Pask, Chief Finance Officer, for engaging the Panel in early discussions about the Commissioner's Medium Term Financial Plan and the detailed budget and precept report.

Recommendation

Following a full debate about the proposed Precept, Gwent Police and Crime Panel unanimously made the following recommendation to the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner:

The Panel have considered the request for a 6.99% increase in the 2020/21 precept but did not agree to veto by the 2/3rd majority required. However the panel request that you review the budget proposal and reduce the precept increase to 6%. The reasons for this proposal include:

- **Financial pressures upon Gwent Council Tax Payers.**
- **Better than expected core grant settlement from the Home Office.**
- **The opportunity to reduce planned borrowing which results in the ability to secure financial returns on up front funding received.**

Recommended to the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner:

31 January 2020