

OPCC Precept Consultation 2021 Results

Background

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act states that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) must make arrangements for obtaining the views of the people in that police area, and the relevant ratepayers' representatives, on their proposals for expenditure in that financial year.

During the Covid-19 pandemic it has not been possible to undertake face to face consultation, therefore the consultation was undertaken through an online survey focusing on:

- Public views regarding the amount of police precept people are willing to pay
- Public perceptions regarding the affordability of precept increases
- Public views on the priorities of commissioned services

The survey ran from 18th December to 15th January. During the same period Cleveland Police ran a Communities Survey focusing on public priorities around crime and antisocial behaviour, to determine where the community felt the police should focus their resources. The results of this survey will be added to the results of the OPCC Precept Consultation to provide a broader indication of where the public feel police funding should be focused.

Results

Demographics

181 responses were received.

Over a third of respondents (34.5% (62)) lived in the Stockton Local Authority area. 27.5%(50) lived in Redcar and Cleveland, 22%(40) in Middlesbrough and 16%(29) in Hartlepool.

Nearly half the respondents (48%) were aged 65 or over. No responses were received from under 18s. The full age groupings are shown below:

Age (years)	Percentage of respondents (%)	No of respondents
Under 18	0	0
18 - 24	3	5
25 - 34	5	9
35 – 44	14	25
45 – 54	12	22
55 – 64	18	33
65+	48	87

Nearly two thirds (62.5% (112)) of respondents were male, 37%(66) were female and one respondent identified as non binary.

Most respondents (94% (166)) identified as White British. Responses were also received from people identifying as White Irish, White Other and Pakistani.

Most respondents (98% (177)) stated that they were Council Tax payers. 10.5% (19) worked or volunteered within policing.

Views on Council Tax increase

52% (94) stated that they would be willing to pay more Council Tax to support policing. This figure rose to 58% (105) if the alternative meant cutting police services.

The results split by Local Authority area are displayed in the table below:

Local Authority Area	Willing to pay more CT % (no)	Including those who would pay if alternative meant cutting police services % (no)
Hartlepool	51.7% (15)	58.6% (17)
Middlesbrough	47.5% (19)	55% (22)
Redcar & Cleveland	51% (25)	55.1% (27)
Stockton	56.5% (35)	62.9% (39)

Views on this were only very marginally different when looking only at the respondents who worked or volunteered in policing – a small proportion more were willing to pay more Council Tax to support policing (52.5% (10)), this rising again to 58%(11) if the alternative meant cutting police services.

Of those who stated that they would be willing to pay an increased amount:

- 18% (19) would pay a small increase
- 44% (46) would pay a moderate increase
- 37.5% (39) would pay a larger increase

Those who worked or volunteered in policing were less likely to want to pay a larger increase (18% (2)), and were more likely to opt for a moderate increase (63.5% (7)).

Regardless of whether they would be willing to pay an increase, all participants were asked if they felt an increase would be affordable to them:

- 28% (50) stated that no level of increase would be affordable to them
- 13% (23) could afford a small increase
- 19% (34) could afford a moderate increase
- 38% (68) could afford a larger increase

Those who worked or volunteered in policing were more likely to feel that only a small increase would be affordable for them (21%(4)), although marginally less likely to feel that they could not afford any sort of increase (26% (5)).

Grants and Commissioned Services

In terms of funding for grants and commissioned services:

- 24.7% (44) felt funding should stay at the same level
- 38.8% (69) felt funding should be increased
- 11.8% (21) felt funding should be decreased
- 24.7% (44) felt that priority should be given to commissioned services for victims of crime and those protecting the vulnerable but other grants should be decreased

Those who worked or volunteered within policing were more likely to feel that funding should be increased (44.4% (8)).

In terms of where funding should be focused, several options were given, with differing levels of support. The following options are listed in order of the support received from the public:

- A recovery service should be available for children who have suffered exploitation and sexual abuse – 90% (161) supportive
- Specialist support should be available for victims of sexual abuse and violence – 86.5% (154) supportive
- Specialist support should be available for victims of domestic abuse – 85% (152) supportive
- To reduce demand on police resources, a range of prevention and early intervention services should be available to address vulnerability and prevent involvement in criminal behaviour, including serious violence – 79.5% (140) supportive
- Small grants should be available to support projects which help prevent or reduce crime or improve community safety overall – 72% (129) supportive
- Victims of crime should have easily accessible support services available, even if a crime has not been reported to the police – 66% (118) supportive
- Grants for initiatives that protect vulnerable people should be prioritised – 61.5% (108) supportive
- Any surplus generated through efficient delivery of retraining schemes for driving offences should be invested in road safety initiatives – 58.5% (105) supportive
- Drug, alcohol and mental health intervention services should be provided to reduce re-offending – 55.5% (98) supportive
- Grants should be available to help services involved in community safety cope with the impact of COVID-19 – 46.5% (82) supportive

Those who worked or volunteered within policing placed the highest importance on having support services for victims of domestic abuse. A considerably smaller proportion of these respondents supported having drug, alcohol and mental health intervention services.

General Comments

Nearly half the respondents provided additional comments through the free comments box, with the following key themes noted:

- How can a rise in funding be justified for a police force which is failing?
- Funding should be better managed rather than increased – look at what works through evidence based policing
- Residents are being asked to pay more at a time when less visible policing is available - 'paying more but getting less'
- It is unfair to expect people to pay more for policing at a time when many are suffering financial hardship as a result of the pandemic
- Any additional funding received should be prioritised for front line resources
- Additional funding should come from central government rather than putting the burden on local tax payers
- Several respondents expressed a lack of support for the 'expensive' OPCC
- Funding for victims should be prioritised
- Feelings around early intervention funding were split – some supported intervention measures such as HAT, some felt policing should focus more on core enforcement/zero tolerance
- Savings should be made around management posts and administration before asking the public for more funding