

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE & CRIME PANEL

REPORT TO THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

7TH FEBRUARY 2018

Subject:	Review of the Northamptonshire Police & Crime Commissioner's Proposed Precept for 2018/19
Recommendations:	That the Northamptonshire Police & Crime Commissioner: a) Has regard to this report by the Northamptonshire Police & Crime Panel arising from its review of the proposed precept for 2018/19 in accordance with the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 Schedule 5 Paragraph 5(2)(a). b) Gives the Panel a response to this report in accordance with the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 Schedule 5 Paragraph 5(2)(b).

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The report is intended to set out the results of the review by the Northamptonshire Police & Crime Panel of the Northamptonshire Police & Crime Commissioner's proposed precept for 2018/19.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 specifies that a Police & Crime Commissioner may not issue a precept under Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 until it has been subject to scrutiny by the relevant Police & Crime Panel according to the process specified in Schedule 5 of the 2011 Act.
- 2.2 Schedule 5 of the 2011 Act, supporting Regulations, and the Rules of Procedure for the Northamptonshire Police & Crime Panel require:
- a) The Commissioner to notify the Panel of his proposed precept by 1st February of the relevant financial year.
 - b) The Panel to review the proposed precept.
 - c) The Panel to resolve to:
 - i) Support the proposed precept without additional qualification or comment; or
 - ii) Support the proposed precept and make additional recommendations on it; or
 - iii) Veto the proposed precept provided that the Panel makes that decision by the required majority of at least two thirds of Panel members.
 - d) The Panel to make a report to the Commissioner on the proposed precept, setting out the results of its review, by 8th February of the relevant financial year.

- 2.3 If the Panel does not veto the proposed precept the Commissioner must:
- a) Have regard to the report made by the Panel
 - b) Give the Panel a response to its report and to any recommendations in the report. The response should also be published in a manner determined by the Panel.
- 2.4 The scrutiny process concludes at this point. The Commissioner may then issue the proposed precept as the precept for the next year, or issue a different precept but only if it would be in accordance with a recommendation made in the Panel's report.
- 2.5 If the Panel vetoes the proposed precept the Commissioner is required to produce a revised precept, which is then subject to further scrutiny.

3. Review of the Proposed Precept

- 3.1 The Northamptonshire Police & Crime Panel met in public on 1st February 2018 to review the Commissioner's proposed precept and budget for 2018/19.
- 3.2 The Commissioner presented the proposed precept and budget, which were based on an increase in the police precept of 5.74% representing an additional £12 per year in Council Tax at Band D. The proposed budget had needed to take into account factors including the flat rate of funding from central government; increased and increasingly complex demands on Northamptonshire Police; external financial pressures associated with police pay, inflation and national IT programme upgrades; and the need to build capacity to deal with key operational priorities. The proposed budget had been developed in collaboration with Northamptonshire Police and reflected continuing work by the Force to deliver efficiencies. It had been informed by consultation responses from 1,222 local residents. The increase in the police precept that the Commissioner now proposed would generate an extra £3.97 million that would be used in areas such as intelligence capability, domestic and sexual abuse investigations, rural crime, road safety and early intervention. The Commissioner considered that the increase represented good value and was not excessive. He recognised the need for residents to see that resources were being used well and would continue to work to support this aim. Overall, the Commissioner considered that Northamptonshire Police was on a positive trajectory whilst dealing with a difficult financial situation.
- 3.3 The Panel questioned the Commissioner about the benefit that the proposed budget would deliver. Members raised concerns about increased crime in different parts of the county and noted that single incidents in a particular area could have a significant on residents' perceptions. It was emphasised that residents should see a benefit from paying a higher police precept, particularly given that local authorities were also likely to increase Council Tax and add to the overall demand on taxpayers. A lack of visible policing or apparent reduced response to lower-level crime affected overall perceptions of community safety and individual wellbeing. The role of local policing in generating intelligence that could assist in dealing with serious crime was also highlighted.
- 3.4 The Panel was advised that the Commissioner and Chief Constable both agreed the importance of neighbourhood policing and that Police Community Support Officers would continue to operate in Northamptonshire. This formed part of the Commissioner's Police & Crime Plan and was reflected in actions such as the scheme to sponsor a PCSO and the co-location of police officers in district and borough council buildings. There was a need to recruit up to the capacity specified in the Service Delivery Model as

the Force was currently 45 officers under-strength, which was a situation that the Commissioner wanted to see addressed. It took two years for a new officer to be trained and fully effective in their role but once achieved this would also increase the effectiveness of policing in the county. The Commissioner was clear that efficiency savings by the Force included in the proposed budget should not involve a reduction in frontline capacity. He had developed a budget that would enable the Force to deliver an agreed level of service to Northamptonshire and it should do so.

- 3.5 The Panel sought reassurance that the proposed budget would enable the Commissioner and Northamptonshire Police to deliver the three priorities identified by the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service alongside the funding settlement: further cost efficiencies; a modern, digitally-enabled workforce that enabled police officers to focus on dealing with crime; and greater transparency in how public money was used locally. The Commissioner advised that he was confident that these aims could be addressed in Northamptonshire. Closer working between Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS) – including the introduction of common support systems – would produce efficiencies that would maximise frontline resources. His professional background was in technology and he was now the national Police & Crime Commissioner lead for this area so wanted to ensure that the benefits of working in new ways were realised in Northamptonshire. He had already taken various actions to improve local transparency and assist in achieving best value, including moving the management of some external contracts from the Force to his Office; reviewing the value for money of all inter-force collaborations; and restructuring the Voice service. He wanted Northamptonshire residents to see that resources were being used wisely: the decision to keep Northamptonshire Police headquarters at Wootton Hall, which had saved £1.2 million, was another example of this.
- 3.6 The Panel highlighted the importance of providing effective digital technology to police officers. A Panel member highlighted an example of an officer working on Operation Nightsafe still waiting to receive a tablet and officers not yet being able to complete arrest reports remotely. Further assurance was therefore sought about the capacity to deliver planned improvements in this area. The Commissioner emphasised that he had taken action to improve previous provision of digital technology. Further progress still needed to be made in the use of technology and data but he anticipated that this would be achieved over the next 6 to 12 months. The Commissioner considered that locally-led IT programmes were well-controlled. The new Emergency Services Network (ESN), which would have a significant financial impact on the Force, was led at national level. Funding was reallocated from police forces to support national police technology programmes including ESN. The reallocation had been increased in 2018/19, although further information was needed about the proportion of this that would be used for ESN. The Commissioner intended to take a strong line in any discussions about progress with the implementation of ESN.
- 3.7 The Panel sought further clarification and assurance on different aspects of the proposed budget. It was advised that borrowing listed in the proposed Capital Programme for 2018/19 to 2022/23 was made up of internal borrowing from reserves as far as possible. If external borrowing was necessary the Office would use the Public Works Loan Board. The Reserves Strategy proposed that the Office should investigate the potential to use part of the balance built up in an earmarked reserve for ill-health or injury retirements to offset other costs: this did not refer to the pension fund for Northamptonshire Police. Those areas within Northamptonshire Police that had not yet

been subject to Priority-Based Budgeting – which were largely support functions – would be covered during 2018/19 and Priority-Based Budgeting would then be repeated on a regular basis. The Panel was also advised that the Chief Constable considered that the efficiency saving of £500,000 included in the proposed budget for 2018/19 was manageable and that a change programme to support this was already in-place. It would be more challenging to achieve the further proposed saving of £619,000 in 2019/20 due to tighter parameters. However, the Commissioner would be able to monitor delivery and identify if the need arose to consider alternative options.

3.8 During discussion Panel members expressed support for joint working between Northamptonshire Police and NFRS and for the more rigorous oversight of financial resources that the Commissioner seemed to have established. Panel members also expressed concern about the potential impact on community safety in Northamptonshire of proposals by Northamptonshire County Council to make savings in Trading Standards. The Panel subsequently noted that different parts of the public sector were all currently seeking a fairer funding settlement from the government and questioned the scope to achieve this for policing. The Commissioner highlighted that Northamptonshire Police was not in the worst position of all the forces in the country. The overall situation concerning the sustainability of police funding created the need for a national resolution about how available resources could be used to best effect. He had continued to make a case for this to the Home Office and would welcome any similar representations by the Panel. At the same time Northamptonshire Police being able to show that it was operating as efficiently as possible strengthened the case for fairer funding. The Force needed to be proactive about identifying opportunities to operate more effectively and making progress to implement them.

Outcome of the Review

3.9 At the conclusion of discussion the Panel ultimately resolved unanimously:

To support the Northamptonshire Police & Crime Commissioner’s proposed precept for 2018/19.

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Background Papers:	Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 The Police & Crime Panels (Precepts and Chief Constable Appointments) Regulations 2012 Northamptonshire Police & Crime Panel Rules of Procedure