

# 2020 Policing in Essex Precept Survey

## Report on Survey Findings

January 2021

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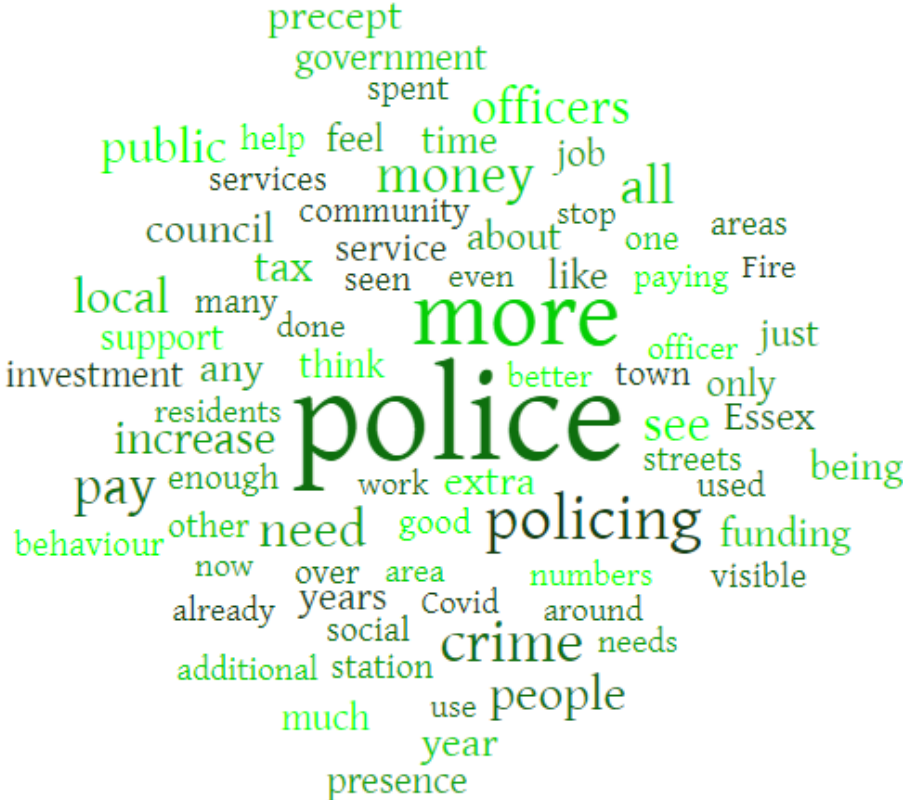
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*“They do an amazing job and don’t get the recognition or funding they deserve (as with all the emergency services).”*

*“All the serving officers and PCSOs do a wonderful job. They have my unending gratitude. If there is any way I can help this campaign please tell me. I owe my life to a police officer so have all the time and respect in the world for the force. Thank you, all of you.”*

*“All our emergency services should be looked after, that includes the fire service and importantly they should not feel under paid for doing a very difficult job.”*

## Introduction

Funding for Essex Police comes from two sources, central government (60%) and local council tax (40%) through the policing precept. Taking these two funding sources into account Essex Police receives the second lowest funding per resident of any police force in the country and has one of the lowest council tax precepts for policing.

Over the last three years, Essex Police has secured substantially more Government funding for policing and have been able to increase funds locally to increase the number of police officers. By March 2021 there will be 519 more officers in Essex than there were in 2018, of which 384 are a result of the increase in the local Council Tax precept and efficiencies achieved by Essex Police and 135 are from the national police uplift programme.

Essex Police has seen a reduction in recorded crime over the last year, with over 9,000 fewer offences recorded and fewer victims of crime between September 2019 and September 2020, compared to the year before. Even before COVID they were seeing significant reductions in burglary, theft and anti-social behaviour.

Previously Essex Police has consulted residents on their priorities, and the answers were reflected in the recent Police and Crime Plan Extension. They have invested heavily in local, accessible and visible policing, have reduced anti-social behaviour, helped protect vulnerable children and adults from harm and reduced serious harm on our roads working with our partners at the Safer Essex Roads Partnership. They are tackling gangs and organised crime as well as helping to break the cycle of domestic abuse. They have made significant progress against the priorities identified by residents but know they need to do more to reduce domestic abuse, violence in our communities and drug-driven violence.

The fire and rescue service in Essex does not have the same level of need for investment as Essex Police but does face several challenges including providing fire protection that can respond to the outcomes of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, training needs and continuous on-call firefighter recruitment.

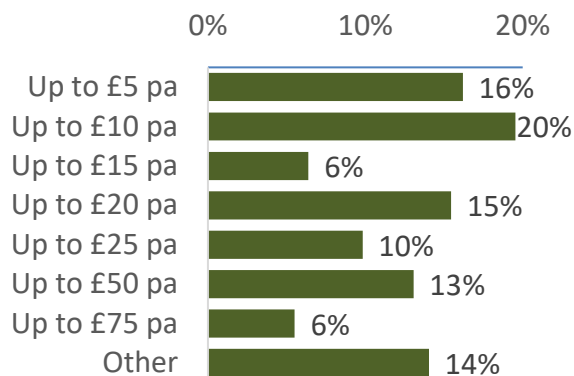
A fourth survey was carried out in order to find out the views of Essex residents to help inform the plan for police and fire service funding in 2021/2022.

The Police Precept survey was live between 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019 and 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020. The total number of respondents to the survey was 1,356.

## Executive Summary

- 56% (of 1,161 respondents giving an answer) said that in general, they would be prepared to invest more in policing to help improve the service provided. (significantly lower than in the three previous years and a ten percentage fall since the 2019 survey). Respondents aged 66-75 over and those in council Tax Bands E said they would be prepared to invest more.

- 72% of the 931 people who gave a view said they were prepared to contribute up to £10 per year or more to invest in policing<sup>1</sup>. This proportion fell significantly this year compared to the previous three years.



- Tackling gangs and drug related violence was rated as 7.9 out of 10 in importance, the first time it has been the highest rated priority. Local neighbourhood policing was rated as 7.8, followed by serious and organised crime and tackling anti-social behaviour.

Of the 1,356 total respondents, 420 provided a comment. The main themes were:

- As in the last three surveys, the highest number of comments related to having more visible policing or a greater police presence, including in rural areas. This was often linked with visibility acting as a deterrent to crime or lack of a visible presence leading to an increase in crime.
- Some respondents linked a police presence to the need to have police on the streets and/or having police stations open. Some wanted to see neighbourhood policing introduced or re-instated, often in relation to deterring or preventing crime through better local intelligence.
- Many comments related to funding, mainly that there should be no increase (especially as people cannot afford it in the current Covid circumstances), that respondents have not seen any results from previous increases in the precept, that residents are paying more money but getting a worse service or no services, or that they do not get value for money currently.
- A number of people suggested the police force could become more efficient or cut existing waste.
- A proportion of respondents wanted a better response to crime, including improved response times.
- 38% of the 999 respondents who answered the question said they would be prepared to pay 1.99% more for the Fire Service for inflationary costs and continued investment in fire protection, training and on-call firefighter recruitment while 27% said they would be prepared to pay a higher increase to pay for additional investment. 35% did not want to see any increase.
- 233 comments were made, with the main themes being that the Fire Service requires funding, including for front line officers. Some respondents felt that previous budget cuts have impacted adversely on the service. Other key comments were suggestions about expanding the role of fire officers and/or combining with other services.

<sup>1</sup> This percentage includes people who specified a relevant amount under "other" responses

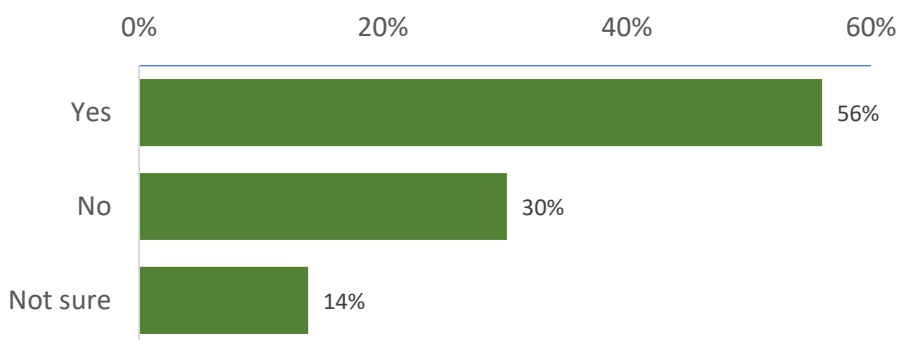
## Detailed Findings

### Policing Precept

Respondents were asked whether, in general, they would be prepared to invest more in policing to help improve the service provided.

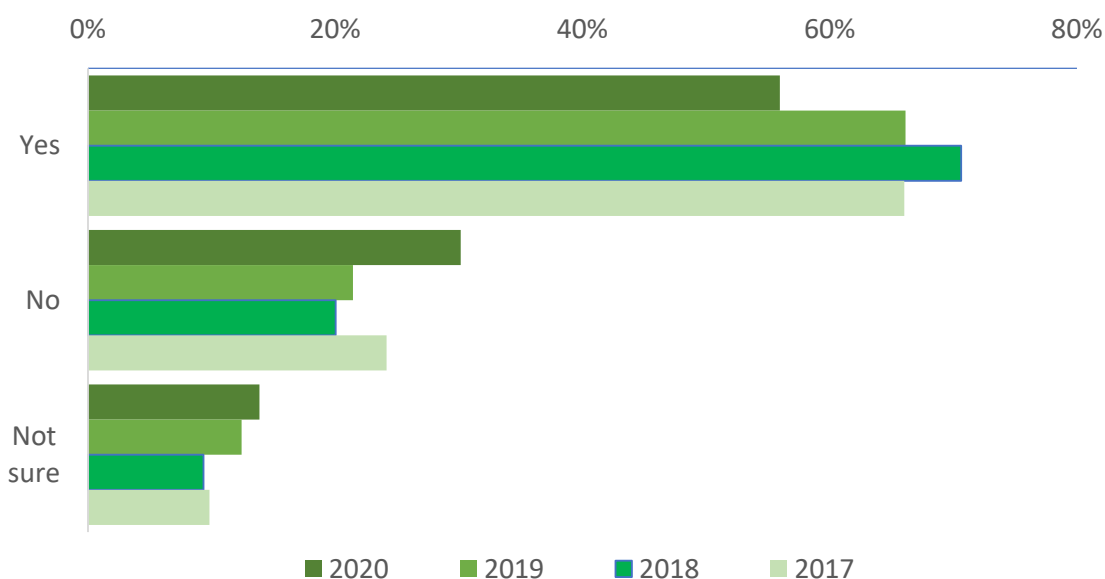
56% of the 1,161 respondents who gave an answer said that in general, they would be prepared to invest more in policing to help improve the service provided. This is significantly lower than in the three previous years and is a ten percentage fall since the 2019 survey.

#### Would you be prepared to invest more in policing to help improve the service provided?



	2020 n	2020 %	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
Yes	649	56%	66%	71%	66%
No	352	30%	21%	20%	24%
Not sure	160	14%	12%	9%	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,161</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Would you be prepared to invest more in policing to help improve the service provided?



Where respondents provided their postcode, these were matched to the most likely Council Tax Band for each postcode area and a total of 1,086 matches were made.

The results for Bands G and H were combined due to the small sample sizes within each band.

A higher proportion of respondents who are likely to be in Council Tax Band E said they would be prepared to invest more, but there were no other significant differences.

Council tax band	A&B	C	D	E	F	G&H	All respondents	
							%	n
Yes	52%	55%	56%	65%	57%	54%	56%	617
No	31%	32%	32%	24%	26%	31%	24%	322
Not sure	16%	14%	12%	11%	17%	15%	10%	147
<b>Number</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>61</b>		<b>1,086</b>

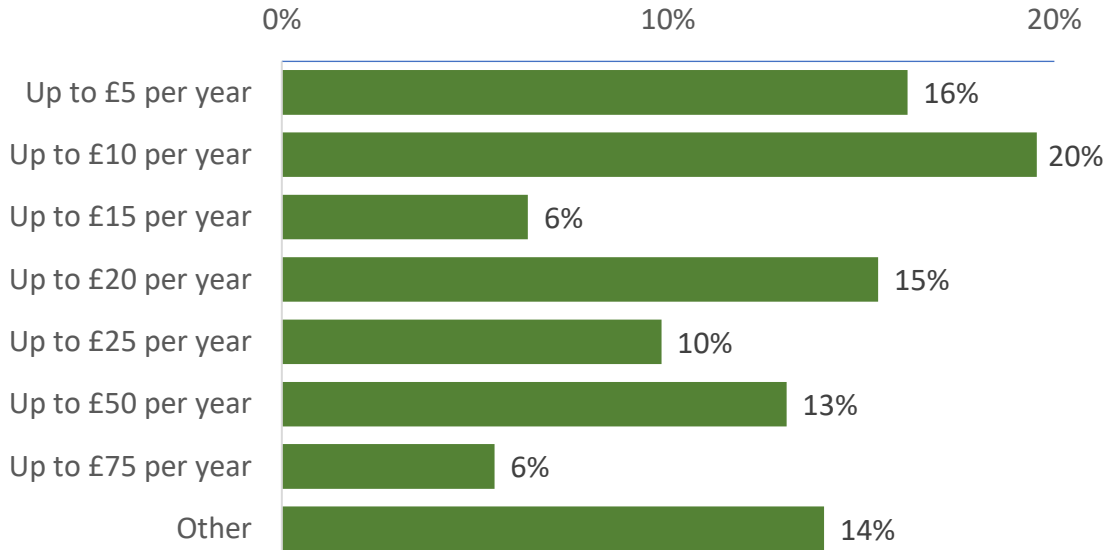
A higher proportion of respondents aged 66-75 said they would be prepared to invest more, while a lower proportion aged 76 or over said this.

Age	Under 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 55	56 - 65	66 - 75	76 or over	All respondents
Yes	70%	58%	55%	54%	58%	64%	62%	56%
No	13%	32%	33%	31%	28%	23%	17%	30%
Not sure	17%	10%	12%	15%	14%	13%	21%	14%
<b>Number</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>1,005</b>

The Band D Council Tax for policing in Essex for 2020/21 is £198.63. Respondents were asked how much more they would be prepared to contribute to support more investment in policing.

Of the 931 respondents who replied to this question, 72% said they were prepared to contribute up to £10 per year or more to invest in policing<sup>2</sup>.

**How much more would you be prepared to contribute to support more investment in policing?**

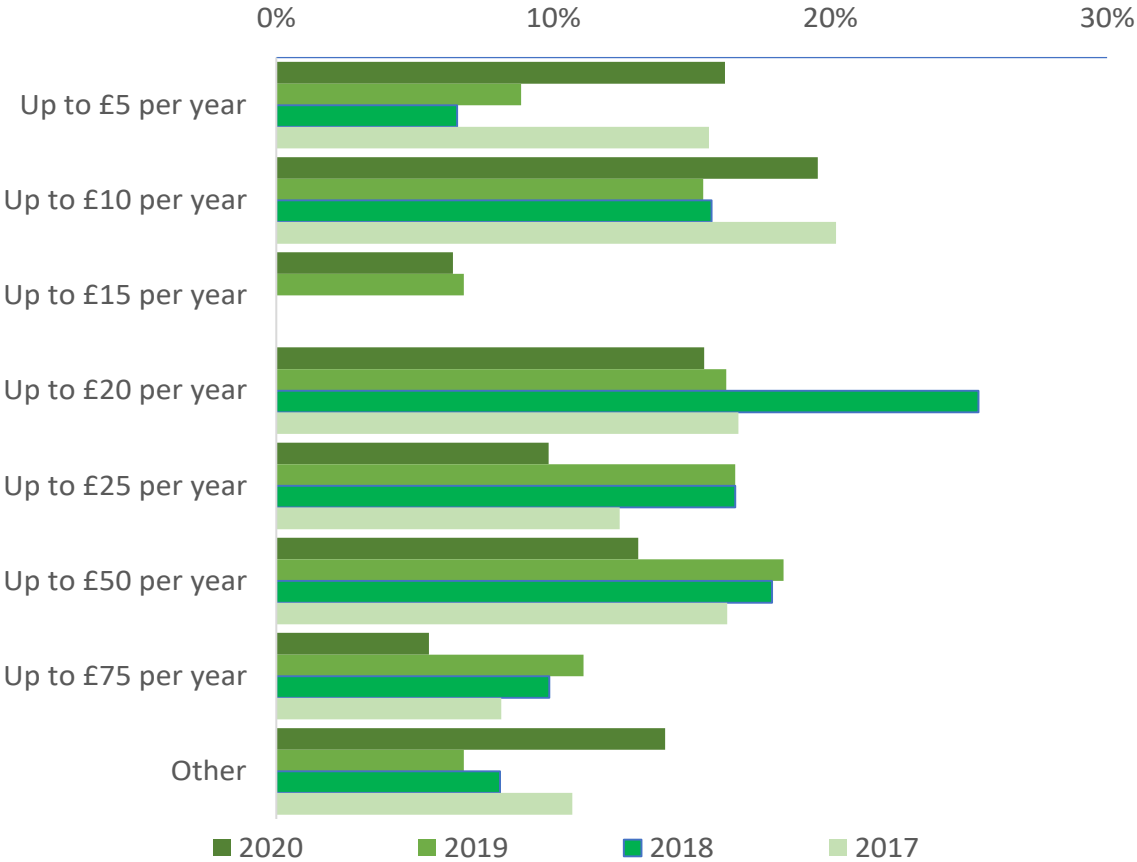


<sup>2</sup> This percentage includes people who specified a relevant amount under "other" responses

(NB: the data for 2019 and 2020 is not directly comparable with the data for previous years as the option of “up to £15 per year” was not asked in previous years.)  
 The proportion of respondents saying they were prepared to pay amounts of up to £10 per year or more fell significantly this year compared to the previous three years.

	2020 n	2020 %	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
Up to £5 per year	150	16%	9%	7%	16%
Up to £10 per year	183	20%	15%	16%	20%
Up to £15 per year	59	6%	7%	-	-
Up to £20 per year	143	15%	16%	25%	17%
Up to £25 per year	91	10%	17%	17%	12%
Up to £50 per year	121	13%	18%	18%	16%
Up to £75 per year	51	6%	11%	10%	8%
Other	133	14%	7%	8%	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
All saying up to £10 or more	351	72%	85%	85%	78%
All saying up to £15 or more	552	52%	76%	74%	57%

**How much more would you be prepared to contribute to support more investment in policing?**



14% of respondents suggested other amounts, as detailed in the table below. The 10% of other responses were about paying less, having no more increases or for the government to pay the increase.

*“Why should we keep footing the bill. Police never came to my aid when my car was vandalised they didn’t take a statement for a month. Now you asking for increase every year ludicrous !! I already pay 40% tax... the gov should pay more not the public as we pay enough taxes.”*

*“Need to show how services have a larger effect use of resources seems over subscribed does. Every incident need 4 police cars or at times 9 police cars seems policies are not right so not happy to invest more.”*

<b>‘Other’ amounts</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents who specified an ‘other’ amount</b>
Nothing	71%
Between £1 and £9 per year	6%
Between £10 and £100 per year	8%
An extra £120 per year	4%
£200 or more per year	2%
Other replies	10%
<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>123</b>

### **Areas for additional investment**

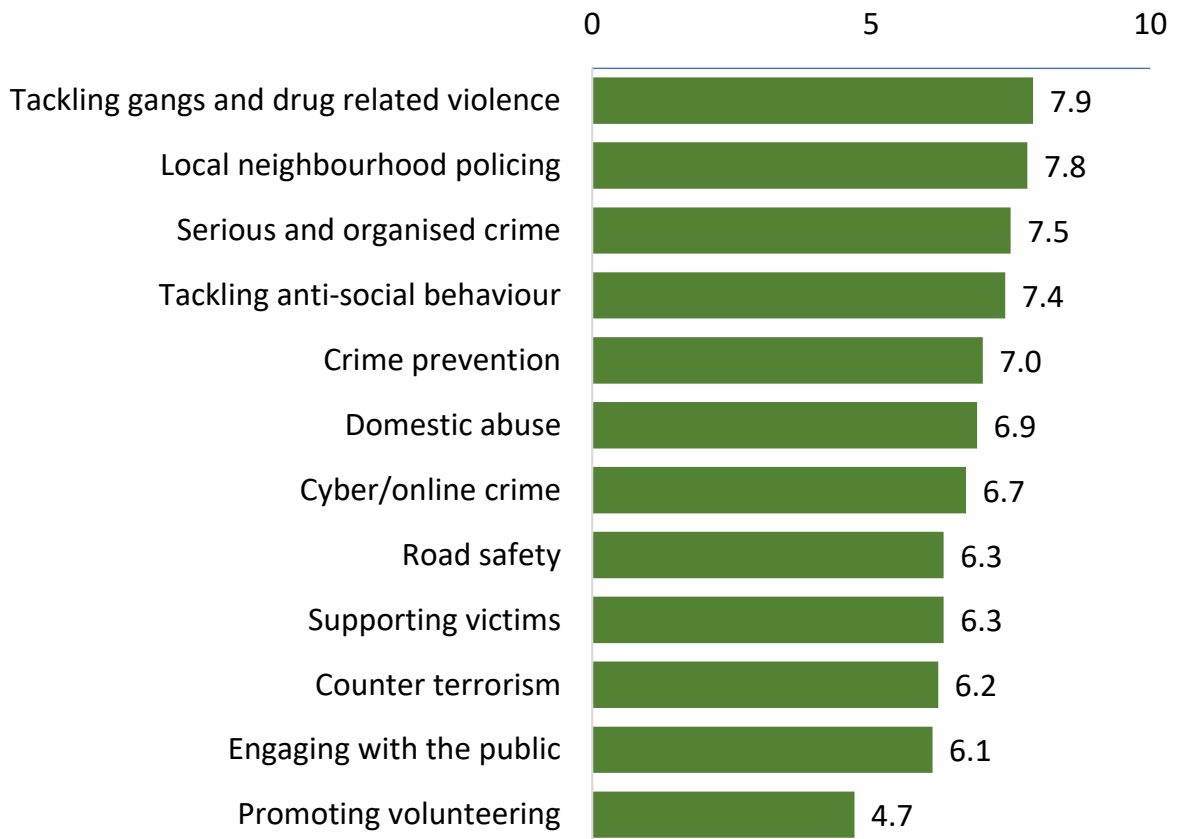
Respondents were asked how important they feel that extra investment is for a number of areas, on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important).

Tackling gangs and drug related violence was rated as 7.9 out of 10 in importance, the first time it has been the highest rated priority. Local neighbourhood policing was rated as 7.8 out of 10 in importance, followed by serious and organised crime (7.5 out of 10) and tackling anti-social behaviour (7.4 out of 10).

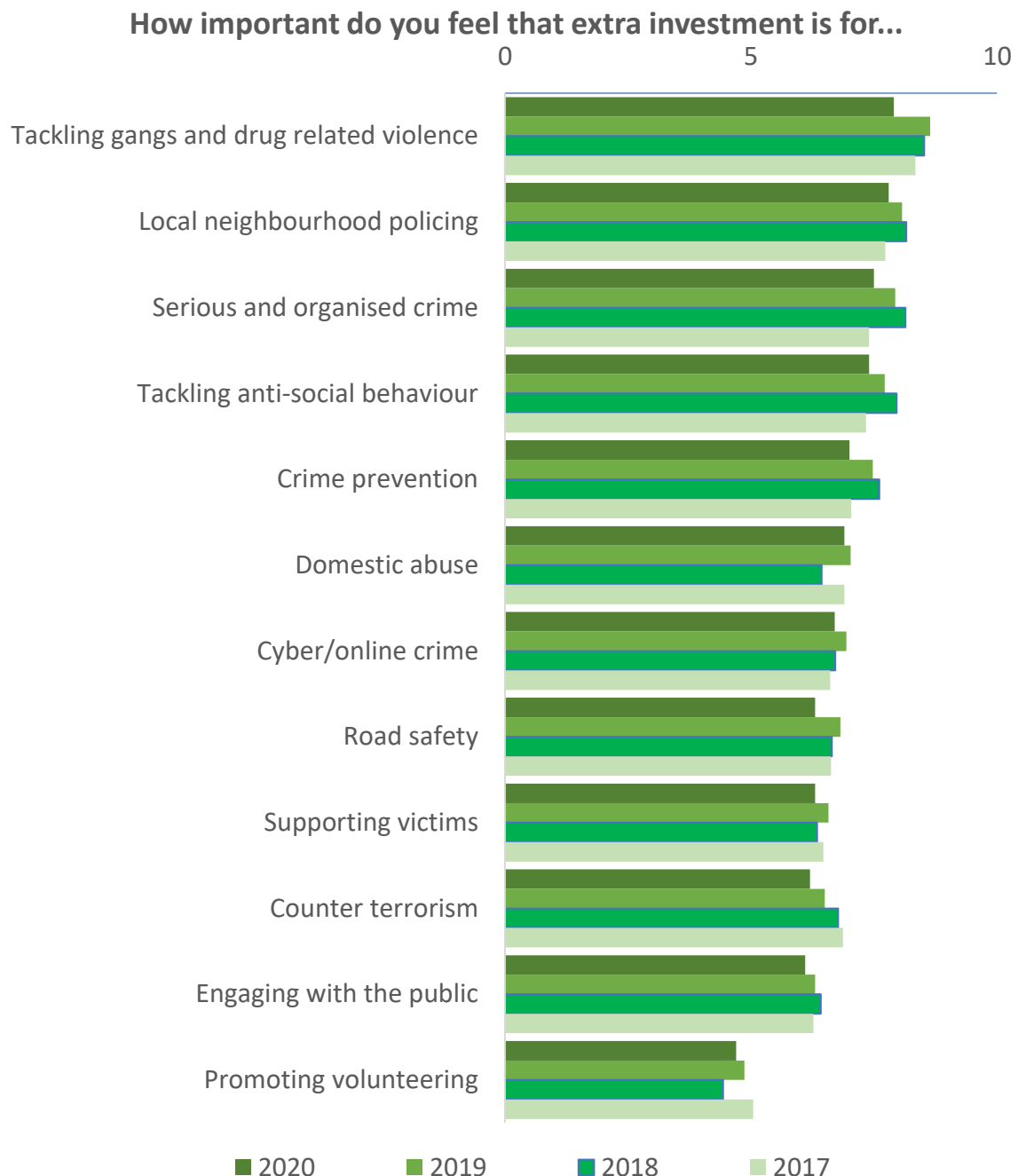
While the rating for tackling gangs and drug related violence have remained relatively stable over the last four years, the ratings for local neighbourhood policing, serious and organised crime and tackling anti-social behaviour are lower this year than in previous years.



## How important do you feel that extra investment is for...



	2020	2019	2018	2017
Tackling gangs and drug related violence	7.9	7.9	8.1	7.4
Local neighbourhood policing	7.8	8.6	8.5	8.3
Serious and organised crime	7.5	7.7	8.0	7.3
Tackling anti-social behaviour	7.4	8.1	8.2	7.7
Crime prevention	7.0	7.5	7.6	7.0
Domestic abuse	6.9	6.9	6.7	6.6
Cyber/online crime	6.7	6.8	6.6	6.6
Road safety	6.3	6.6	6.3	6.5
Supporting victims	6.3	6.3	6.4	6.3
Counter terrorism	6.2	6.5	6.8	6.9
Engaging with the public	6.1	7.0	6.4	6.9
Promoting volunteering	4.7	4.9	4.4	5.0



The survey asked whether there are any other areas where respondents would like to see extra investment, and 120 respondents provided a comment. The main areas mentioned were:

- A higher/greater police presence (14 comments).
- Improving response to crime/reporting crime (12 comments).
- Road policing/safety (12 comments).
- Tackling drugs, including people and gangs dealing in them (9 comments).
- Tackling burglary/theft/shoplifting (9 comments).
- Tackling rural/wildlife crime (7 comments).
- Tackling anti-social behaviour and low level crimes (7 comments).
- Training of police and/or technology/equipment (7 comments).

22 respondents providing a comment suggested the need to tackle other forms of crime or issues, including knife/gun crime, car crime, people trafficking/slavery, supporting homeless people, the behaviour of travellers, child abuse, domestic abuse, sexual violence, school bullying, noise pollution, anti-corruption, fraud and white collar crime, tax evasion, and dog stealing.

### Other comments

Respondents were asked whether there was anything else that they would like to say about the policing precept, and 413 comments were made.

### Policing and police visibility

As in the previous three surveys, the highest number of comments (by 52 respondents or 13% of all comments made) related to having more visible policing or a greater police presence. This was often linked to the visibility of police acting as a deterrent to crime or that the lack of a visible police presence has led to an increase in crime.

*"Citizens need to feel safe and a physical, impartial, responsive police presence is necessary for that."*

*"Visibility is Prevention this should be the slogan that will encourage more officers on the streets. More visibility deters crime."*

*"I believe a lot of the objectives in the various areas of crime reduction would be impacted positively by increasing the visibility of police in the community. In Brightlingsea where I live we very rarely see police patrols and I only generally see the police when they are responding into the area. To have patrols and drop in sessions in the town would greatly support residents feeling more safe, the reporting of all levels of crime and the reduction in any ASB."*

Some respondents also linked a police presence to the need to have police on the streets and/or having police stations open. 47 comments (12% of them all) related to having "bobbies on the beat" and/or the need for more police on the streets or more frontline police officers, while 34 respondents (8% of comments) said that they do not see the police. 16 comments (4%) were about having stations open or reopening stations. 4 people wanted a more visible presence in rural areas and villages or highlighted what they see as an absence of service in these areas.

*"On the street (foot) patrols would help bring down all crime. I have lived in Castle Point for 3 years, so far in that time I have seen the police three times:*  
*1. Sitting at a red traffic light at night without their headlights on (I tried to alert them but was ignored)*  
*2. Looking at their car from the side of the road as they had just crashed into a central reservation on the A13*  
*3. Driving around a private housing estate during the first Covid lockdown*

*In the meantime crime has been on the rise, consistent car break ins and car theft, petty vandalism and anti-social behavior. We don't need Police in cars, we need local Police on the beat where they can be seen and where they can interact with the public. Benfleet doesn't even have a police station!"*

*"Almost every day, as I walk around my local area with my children and grandchildren I see drugs being bought and sold. It's done openly. However, I rarely see police and NEVER see Police walking. Perhaps there's a connection?"*

*"We desperately need a greater police presence in Wickford. Since we lost our police station I have noticed the amount of crime but most of all anti social behaviour has gone sky high. We need more police on the streets."*

16 respondents (4% of all comments) said that they would pay more but only if the investment were to be in more frontline police/resources, while 12 comments (3% of the total) were by respondents who said that they would pay more but only for services within their locality.

*"I would prefer to pay most of any extra funding for local policing not county wide. When discussing issues with senior Police or politicians, the reason or excuse often given is that any problem in my town (Maldon) is not as bad as some other areas of Essex so resources are used accordingly. If you want public support for extra funding, people want to see local results."*

*"If the funding provides extra resources for, and higher visibility, of our Police Officers then it is money very well spent. I fully support the progress that has been made to date but more must follow. However I have more faith now, in the leadership of the Essex force, its Officers and its commitment to fighting crime and protecting all the County's law abiding population, than I have had for many years."*

17 respondents (7% of comments) wanted to see neighbourhood policing introduced or re-instated. This was frequently in relation to deterring or preventing crime through better local intelligence.

*"Extra investment in community policing helps intelligence gathering and builds trust and confidence and community relationships. It assists in counter terrorism, which has separate funding streams, and all areas of policing. It is at the forefront of crime prevention as well which is key in terms of violent crime and gangs."*

*"What we need are local community officers that engage with the community, at present on the rare occasion we see an officer on the streets there is no engagement with the community at all. Please stop the constant barrage of Facebook & Twitter posts telling us where officers have been, we're just not falling for this Social Media Policing anymore, we need a visible presence on the streets, not just when they are responding to a crime."*

*"PCSO's and PC's need to patrol almost daily in town centres and rural areas so we can approach them about any concerns and feel that they prevent crime instead of reacting to the aftermath more often than not. There's a reason old-fashioned policing worked so combining this with modern approaches will produce results and a even better public perception of Essex' Police in my view. I think criminals, victims and residents knowing who their local officers and PCSO's are goes some way to tackling more complex crime types."*

28 respondents (7% of all comments) wanted a better response to crime from the police, including improved response times. This was often clearly based on personal experience. 5 people mentioned difficulties in reporting a crime.

*"Police only have the resources at street level to attend incidents where the victim and suspect are both on scene. I don't know the breakdown of funding for the police, but there must be more uniformed street officers available to deal with calls from the public so they actually see an officer. Not all calls need an officer to attend, but there are many more that just get ignored due to lack of officers - and the ones that are attending calls are stressed, overworked and are running from one call to another."*

*"The role of the police is to uphold the law and investigate crime in the last 40yrs I have been a victim of crime several times I get fed up of being told there are no resources to investigate a crime call your insurer, I quote this from several occasions."*

*"Essex police are NOT value for money. I'm a former Police officer from another Force, we listened and took action. Essex Police shut down crime reports as soon as they're able. No investigation or consideration. No sharing of intelligence with the public. 30 +/- crime reports submitted for the same fraud and 18 months later Chelmsford Fraud haven't yet looked at it."*

18 people (5% of comments) wanted more engagement with the community – especially education in schools and with young people – or for police to be more proactive in crime prevention.

*"Community engagement with officers is good. Coffee with a cop is a great idea, more of this sort of ideas."*

*"The public, especially children, need more opportunities to meet police officers in organised scenarios such as open days."*

*"Investing in community policing and low level crime response and prevention helps build an undercurrent of support for the Police and a culture of law, order and safeguarding being everyone's responsibility."*

18 people (4% of all comments) wanted a better response to the kinds of day to day/low level crime that they see or that affect them and their communities - some also felt that this would prevent escalation in criminal behaviour. However, some respondents also felt that dealing with anti-social behaviour should not solely be the responsibility of the police.

*"Investing in community policing and low level crime response and prevention helps build an undercurrent of support for the Police and a culture of law, order and safeguarding being everyone's responsibility."*

*"I have had to contact the Police a number of times this year due to a huge increase in anti-social behaviour. Unfortunately I no longer feel safe in the Braintree Area. The response from the Police has been mixed, most of these anti social behaviour incidents has been down to mental health and the lack of resources to be able to deal with effectively. A lot of the time there was little the Police could do and more investment needs to be in effectively dealing with severe mental health anti-social behaviour."*

*"Anti-social behaviour is a concern in our society which should not be, tolerated, no matter which level of the community commits it. I have an anti-social neighbour who destroys any hope of relaxing at home."*

### **Police funding**

32 respondents (8% of all comments) felt that they have not seen any results from the previous increases in the precept.

*"While an increase for police has been included in council tax for the last couple of years, there has been no extra presence in my local community. While I appreciate a lot of policing is behind the scenes and the importance given to the more serious crimes, it is the ordinary law abiding citizen that is continually paying for this service but they very rarely see the benefits."*

*"Why should we keep footing the bill. Police never came to my aid when my car was vandalised they didn't take a statement for a month. Now you asking for increase every year ludicrous!! I already pay 40% tax... the gov should pay more not the public as we pay enough taxes. Basically we have NO policing the general outlook is pay more in the county for less policing. If you live in the larger towns around Essex you continue to get policing but in the smaller communities you are lucky to see a drive past. What is the use in paying for something you do not receive! Police on a walk round beat what a laugh."*

*"I have said it all in previous question. I do not approve of a rise and see no justification for you applying for it. As they said when I worked in the private sector. Work smarter. The residents of Frinton and Walton do not accept we have proper Police coverage otherwise our Town Council wouldn't feel they have to pay out £240000 every year for employing 6 PCSOs."*

Another 19 comments (5% of them) were to the effect that residents are paying more money but getting a worse service or no services, or that they do not get value for money currently.

*"I have only seen a drop in service and visibility in the previous years, not an increase like you claim!"*

*"Council Tax will increase next year due to the economic crisis. I don't feel we receive value for money at present so have no wish to have to pay even more."*

*"Already increased precept for what we were told was visible policing then millions spent on refurbishing Chelmsford police station when other stations were closed leading to increased crime in those areas."*

14 respondents (3% of comments) felt that funding should be increased.

*"Civilized nations pay higher taxes for the most important things in life; low crime, happy, healthy nation which encourages people to work whilst supporting those who have a GOOD reason not to. I think most intelligent people would be willing to pay extra to achieve that aim, I certainly do."*



*"I think that the police service has been underfunded for a considerable number of years and that the only way for the level of policing now required to tackle everything from violence, drugs, road and social crime needs to be funded by the public."*

However, 35 people (8% of comments) felt that no more money should be allocated and 3 said that the precept should be reduced.

*"At a time when many households are not seeing any raise in their household income, it rightly makes it hard for local councils and PFCC's to make decisions that lead to an increase in council tax. The increase in policing numbers that you have managed to achieve over the past two years is fantastic but I feel this may just be a year for consolidation."*

*"I find the strategy of making additional contributions offensive and I am against additional contributions. Any increase in police and fire allocations should come from economies elsewhere in the council tax budget or more efficient use of existing funds. Hence this questionnaire is fundamentally flawed in its objectives."*

12 people (3% of comments) said that they already pay too much or pay enough, while just 26 (6% of comments) said that they or others couldn't afford to pay more, especially in the current economic climate following Covid.

*"In these terrible time we are in at the moment with this covid19, people are losing their jobs and are struggling to pay their bills, so I cannot see how you can justify in any increase it is not the right time to ask people to dig deep, when they can not afford to."*

*"I find this disgusting that this is being considered. COVID has cost business and the individual thousands. To consider asking the public to pay more for Policing at this time just shows how out of touch you are with reality. Wages are not going up. Public sector are having their pay freezed and are being told to be thankful they have job as so many have lost theirs in the private sector and you are asking for more money."*

*"Where do you propose people find the extra money? Have you thought about that? Single mums working two jobs? Even two parent families working at finding it difficult. You're taking the absolute mickey."*

11 respondents (3% of all comments) said that the increase should reflect a better service.

*"Any increase must be seen as value for money through direct results."*

*"I would like extra funding linked to specific results achieved by police in specific areas. My main concern is anti social behaviour which I feel, if not dealt with properly, sends a message up the line and creates an atmosphere of acceptance to more serious crime."*

21 respondents (5% of all comments) felt that central government should fund policing rather than it coming from council tax.

*“Government should provide all the money that is needed to do a good job, that means taking it out of the taxes we already pay.”*

*“This is about public service. Free to the recipient at the point of demand like the NHS. This is about giving the police the funding for the job, but tax payers are struggling too especially if they are also public servants. The police must never be paid for separately otherwise only those who can afford them will receive the service. I know it is difficult to serve on such a tight budget but you must fight for more funding from central not the people. And when you fail in your service provision, speak out loud n clear that you need more resources from government, not us whom you serve. It's not easy prioritising. But I suggest you target the different areas of crime equally. It's tough on you I know, but you are our police, you are human beings and can only do so much. Draw the line and argue your case with the government harder!”*

9 comments related to taxation issues, with the main focus being that rates should be paid per capita rather than per household, so that people each pay a “fair” amount.

*“Make everyone who benefits from the service pay for the services, especially houses of multiple adult occupation.”*

*“The whole precept system is a farce, with each household paying the same amount, regardless of the number of working occupants. It is time that these “taxes” (including Council Tax) were part of Income Tax, to spread the costs more fairly.”*

Other suggestions were to: introduce a tiered system based on household income with a starting point of circa £14000 pa and weighted more heavily towards higher bands; reduce the amount for those living in a village; have a discount for those of employed by the Police who are likely to have a pay freeze; and increase taxation on the profits of large global internet companies and the top 10 % of British tax payers.

### **Spending and efficiencies**

39 people (9% of all comments) wanted the police force to become more efficient or to cut existing waste. The main suggestions were generally to become more efficient, or to reduce administration and paperwork in order to free up front line police officers. This includes not reducing the number of civilian workers undertaking administrative work so that police officers are not “stuck in offices doing tasks that were completed by those civilians whose numbers have been reduced - smoke and mirrors??”

*“Although in principal, we support the Police in the very tough job they do our pension is not limitless and we hope that all costs are scrutinised to get best value. Everybody wants more money especially after this dreadful year but we all need to be careful how much we spend.”*

Other specific suggestions were:

- Concentrating on efficient ways of policing. Examples given included: the reduction in locations with cells, which takes too many police away from local streets; not “ferrying an alcoholic home when he should be taken somewhere to dry out”; and not wasting hours on roadside policing “such as 6 to 8 x officers to attend in 3 or 4 cars for ““ONE”” collision blocking the flow of traffic,



*causing more people to stretch they're necks for a good look at a non-incident."*

- Working "smarter such as better inter or multi disciplinary models, flexible volunteering opportunities, local solutions for local issues, links to health and wellbeing agenda and so on."
- Reducing overtime and employing more officers on flat rate rather than using overtime.
- Sharing resources or infrastructure between the three emergency services.
- Cutting company cars for senior ranks.
- Buying less expensive vehicles and motor cycles than BMWs.
- Not spending money on PR and social media campaigns instead of appropriate police facilities and conditions.
- Looking at the cost of damage to police vehicles to stop crime vs whether the punishment or benefit outweighs this cost.
- Stopping retiring officers earlier than standard pension age.
- Contracting the collection of photographic evidence from fixed road side cameras to the private sector.
- Re-introducing PCSOs who are cheaper than officers.
- Reviewing whether all of the office space within Essex Police HQ is still needed.

20 respondents (5% of comments) suggested removing the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and/or using the resulting savings on frontline policing.

*"If we got rid of the Crime and Fire commissioner and his staff we could use his salary to fund better policing."*

11 respondents suggested that the police should not have to deal with non-policing issues – especially those relating to mental health - but that other partners (such as education, health, social care etc) should be tackling the wider issues impacting on policing services.

*"I would like to see the investment that the police would need in order that officers can prioritise policing over providing first response to those suffering mental health crises. I suffer with mental health issues myself and am very sympathetic to others like me. But I don't consider that it is an effective use of police resources to be tied up dealing with those in crisis for whom other agencies can offer more appropriate support."*

8 respondents (2% of all comments) suggested reducing management.

*"Why is Essex Police top heavy with Senior and Chief officer ranks compared to other forces?"*

### **Other comments**

21 respondents (5% of all comments) highlighted the good job that the police do.

*"I think the police do an amazing job with the resources they have but they are underfunded and understaffed in a very dangerous world. I couldn't do their job."*

*"I think they do a brilliant job but need more assistance to do an even better job."*

10 respondents asked for the provision of or publishing of evidence about how the police are performing or where the money is being spent.

*"Show how last year's LA increase in funding translated into lower crime statistics."*

*"I would like to understand better how the precept is spent across Essex. I do not consider that per head Uttlesford receives its fair share of spend. I speak as Band H council tax payer."*

9 comments related to the need for police to be supported by tougher sentencing with the legal system.

*"It is all well and good increasing the effort to protect the public but this is often counteracted by lenient sentencing."*

*"The police need to be given more power and not made slaves to Legal systems. They can't do anything is the perception as they can only collect evidence. You have to give more authority and not worry about the misuse a lot as the other side of the table never has to worry about it."*

8 people (2%) commented about sentencing or the criminal justice system, with most wanting tougher sentences or for the police to have more powers.

*"It is all well and good increasing the effort to protect the public but this is often counteracted by lenient sentencing."*

8 respondents wanted the police to focus on real crime or "the basics" of policing.

*"The police are spreading themselves too thinly across too many categories. They can't pick up all the pieces that have been left by family break up, inadequate schooling, too much emphasis on allowing children choices, especially of identity and diversity and leaving them confused and insecure. Police stick to good old fashioned policing and leave school and social workers to do their job in a good old fashioned way. Until we return to the basics of moral interaction it is a down hill slide."*

4 people commented on the need to increase morale in the police service or make officers feel valued, while 5 highlighted the need to increase public confidence and trust.

*"Police are expected to do a dangerous job protecting us and should be made to feel valued monetarily as well as having an increase in police numbers. They have to sleep at night as well after all."*

*"Get the Police back into schools and colleges to better connect with the youth. Gain a semblance of respect and trust back into the young communities."*

Other themes included:

- The need to invest in good or the right technology – such as CCTV on public streets or camera technology for monitoring road traffic and drivers. (4 comments)
- Greater use of PCSOs and volunteers. (4 comments)
- Using data monitoring and strategic planning to prioritise activity. (4 comments)
- Respondents would pay more precept to feel safe. (3 comments)
- The need for more police on the roads. (3 comments)
- Police officers should spend less time in cars. (3 comments)
- Other things or services should be cut by the council. (3 comments)
- A review of what the Police do with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. (2 comments)
- Reducing the number of officers committing offences. (2 comments)
- Cyber-crime and terrorism should be a national responsibility. (2 comments)
- Integration of all emergency services. (2 comments, with one person specifically mentioning integration in Kent, Essex, Suffolk with integrated command and control.)
- Decriminalising recreational drugs. (2 comments)

In addition, there were single comments about the following issues:

- More should be done to retain experienced officers.
- Improving diversity within the police.
- Stopping retirement at 50-55 with a pension. *“They should be put into the offices to do the work they were trained for till they reach retirement age and stop wasting money employing civilians who do not have a clue!!”*
- What is the cost of promotions shortly before retirement and non disclosure agreements to hide internal bullying and corruption?
- Good people being forced out by internal corruption and poor treatment.
- The Police need to police with consent and not in a partisan way.
- Why are police not able to hold meetings via Zoom?
- Avoiding prosecuting officers for *“ridiculous reasons and on criminals’ say so”*.
- Support for victims of violence.
- Pay rises that are at least in line with inflation for all current police staff and officers.
- Ensuring all police officers are trained to be empathetic towards general public.
- Introducing performance related pay.
- Use of more specials.
- Investigating the local MPs and councillors for their crimes in lockdown.
- Too much priority given to hare coursing.
- Internal challenges re expenditure (e.g. maintenance of highway outside HQ that was highway, not police owned, and was ripped up 2 weeks later by a highway scheme, controlled entry to police HQ car park using barriers that was redone as access couldn't be maintained for large vehicles, geo surfacing of police HQ field for parking that didn't work and left road covered in mud).
- Checking health and safety practices of supply chain/contractors.
- Police need to lead by example when driving, parking and behaving whilst in uniform (shopping, eating etc.).
- Too much is spent on traffic enforcement.
- Not passing issues between police and politicians.
- Less politics and politically correct priorities.
- Building trust with residents, especially within the BAME community.

- Investment in training so officers follow policy and procedures fully in accordance with UK law.
- Guidance for officers re hate crime with clear, robust Hate Crime Policies and ensuring that officers understand and fully implement them.
- Additional investment in road safety that also involves education (linked to prevention) not just more speed checks.

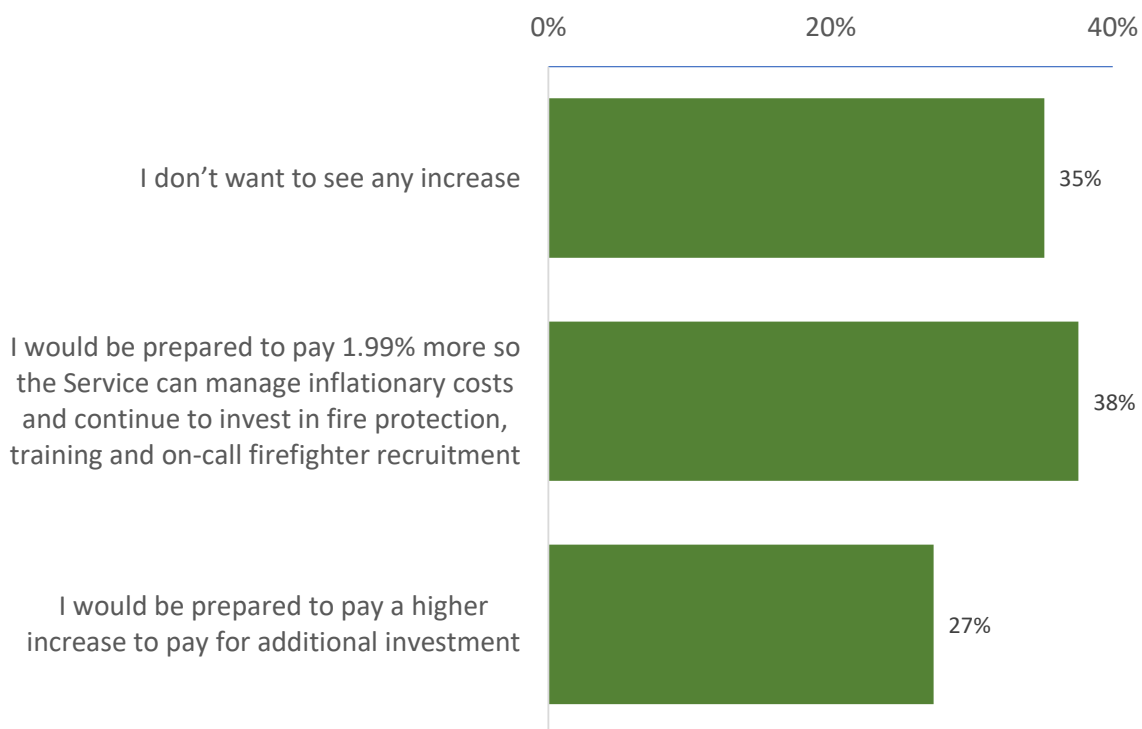
## Fire and Rescue Service precept

Respondents were asked about their views on the precept for the Fire and Rescue Service in Essex and what level of funding they would be prepared to pay for.

38% of respondents said that they would be prepared to pay 1.99% more so the Service can manage inflationary costs and continue to invest in fire protection, training and on-call firefighter recruitment. 27% said that they would be prepared to pay a higher increase to pay for additional investment.

35% of respondents said that they did not want to see any increase.

**Which of the three statements below best reflects your view?**



A total of 232 respondents commented on the Fire and Rescue Services precept.

26 said that the services requires funding or investment in it while another 11 suggested more funding for front line officers.

*"They do not receive what they deserve to do their jobs effectively. These individuals risk their lives and receive the least funding and support of the emergency services."*

*"I believe that we need to increase the number of front line operational firefighters."*

*"Aware that less fires take place now but no-one wants another Grenfell, fully support investments into fire protection and training."*

13 respondents felt that previous budget cuts have impacted adversely on the service.

*"We live in a largely rural area and we need comprehensive cover to cope with that, and to rebuild the services which have been eroded in recent years."*

*"Without a shadow of doubt the Fire Service consists of Heroes. But there has been no perceived increase in Fire staff recruitment, in fact all I do hear is reductions of staff and closures of fire stations."*

*"The under investment by central and local government in Essex Fire service has been disgraceful over the last 2 decades. Reducing people's council tax to win votes. Yes fires and deaths may have been viewed as falling bit that was on the back of previous checks by the Fire Service on businesses and other properties. A lack of checks and enforcement has put us all at risk. This must be reversed!"*

26 comments were suggestions about expanding the role of fire officers and/or combining with other services. However, there were also several comments made that policing should be run separately from the fire service or that fire service should not be prioritised over the police service.

*"There is spare capacity in the present fire and rescue service which needs to be more used to assist the other two emergency services."*

*"No additional money above inflation until fire fighters diversify into wider roles. Paying for people to sit around waiting for an emergency call is not good use of public money. It's better than it was but more needs to be done."*

*"Combining fire stations with an ambulance response could save both organisations money together, with a police presence would also be beneficial to the local communities."*

23 respondents highlighted what a good job the fire service does, and how valued fire officers are.

*"Another one of our emergency services who are under appreciated - they may not be used as often as police or ambulance but are there as an insurance for when that incident happens. Keep up the good work."*

*"They do a marvellous job and don't get the recognition they deserve and I'd like to see all people is police etc get more respect."*

*"They are such a loyal and willing body. We are privileged to have them."*

Similar to the policing precept, 19 respondents said that there should be no increase in the fire service precept while 16 said that they could not afford an increase and 6 that they already pay enough.

*"When many people are facing severe economic challenges precept should be frozen."*

*"I wish I was able to help with extra money, being an old age Pensioner our money doesn't go far. If I was rich I would certainly want to help the Police and Firefighters as both do a great job. Ask the Government to lower their wages by giving."*

*“Should be zero until I see evidence that the money they already have is spent wisely and effectively on public concerns and priorities not political projects of the people in charge.”*

There were 20 comments made about the fire service being more efficient or stopping waste.

*“As with the policing section I think reallocation or efficiencies are required rather than additional precepts.”*

*“It is already adequate, simply needs targeting better.”*

*“Throwing money at services is not the answer - improved management will help fund extra services.”*

24 comments were made about specific working practices:

- It should be run by paid staff, not volunteers (2 comments).
- The number of front line operational firefighters needs to be increased.
- Make more use of retained personnel.
- Are safe levels of fire cover maintained by relying on more retained firefighters than previously, despite population increases?
- Too much reliance on Retained Firefighters must lead to delay in response times. *“I would rather pay to not use people because they are available but not called upon, than not have them available when they are needed.”*
- There seems to be a gap in the availability of the retained service, with many instances in the log of the nearest station not turning out.
- If Firefighters are paid to work night shifts they should do just that and not be allowed to sleep whilst on duty – *“no other service allows there personnel to sleep thus to allow them to have secondary jobs”*.
- Our local Fire and Rescue Service seems to be frequently non-operational, which questions the continuing costs involved. Training is of course important, but the whole system needs a radical review.
- More discussion on the concept of on-call fire fighter – *“this system no longer appears to be fit for purpose”*.
- The precept is correct to have a focus on on-call firefighters with a large area of Essex covered by such stations.
- Use of on-call firefighters as opposed to re-instating full time appliances in some stations.
- Stop wasting money on On Call recruitment, this is no longer cost effective in training, PPE, HR, recruitment, and unavailability of fire appliances per head as there is a high turn over of personnel.
- Look at the job overall, shift patterns, day to day work, where can they fit in to help more?
- To help keep retained firefighters there needs to be more investment into helping families adjust to this way of working.
- It was a bad decision to remove the ladder platforms from local call in as it takes too long to get them in position when called from afar.
- There is no point in having ALP if they are not manned full time and then have to be brought from a long way away, as this puts lives at risk.
- Go back to the 2 days, 2 night, 2 days off and get rid of one of the watches.
- Southend on Sea is the only part of Essex on a peninsula having only two major entry points. Due to its size and population, manning levels should be



maintained so as no alternate manning of special appliances need occur. The population growth in the East of the town now requires a full time service.

- There is concern over the distribution and number of specialist fire appliances in the county. Harlow has over the years lost a rescue tender and more importantly the ALP (aerial ladder platform). The ALP is critical for high rise fires but is also important for other incidents, i.e. rescues at height, giving a "water tower" at large fires etc.
- Reinstate the designated crews for the services special appliances such as ALPs.
- One fire engine is not enough to even cover the rule that Two should be present to operate safely so that a fire engine has to wait for another to attend from a different area's fire service.
- The Animal Rescue Unit in Chelmsford has no changing facilities and they often have to change at the side of roads which is not ideal for privacy.
- There is significant over provision of operational resource and a severe lack of funding for community work.

12 people felt that the Government should fund the fire service while 4 said that the number of senior officers/management should be reduced.

Other specific comments included:

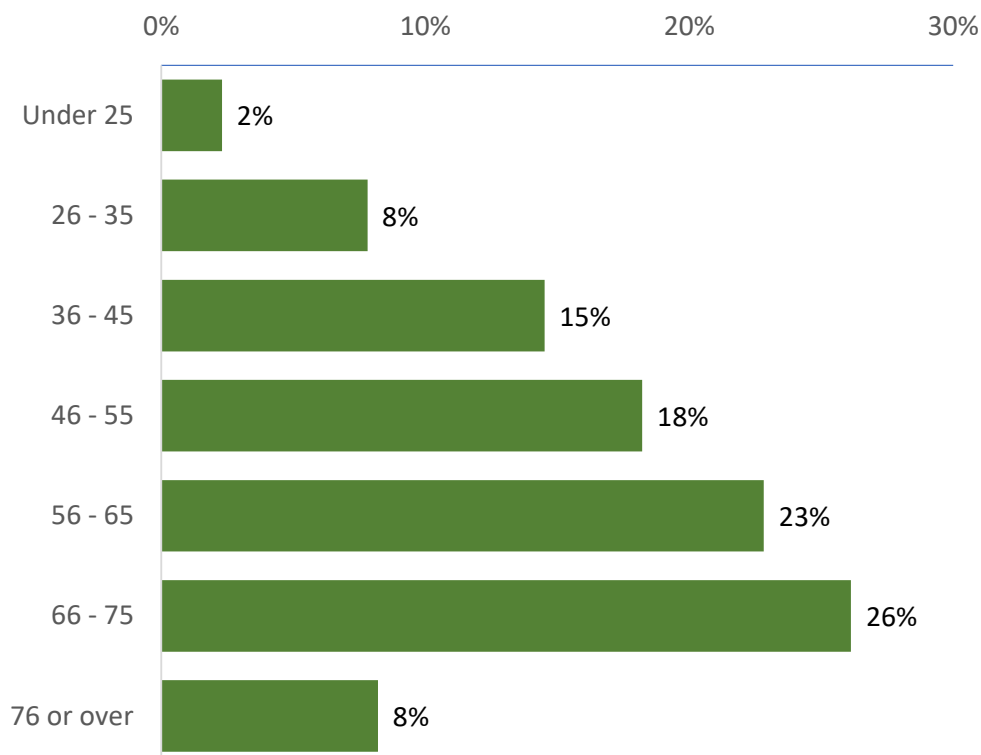
- The fire service needs to do more on education/prevention. (7 comments)
- Fire fighters should not have other jobs. (6 comments)
- The fire service precept should be funded from other sources. (5 comments)
- Keeping the local fire station open. (3 comments)
- More Firebreak courses and education in schools. (2 comments)
- Building safety is very important and the fire service should be involved in ensuring safe standards. (2 comments)
- If the current very flimsy housing build requirements were much higher, this should mean fewer calls.
- The increase should be inflationary only. (2 comments)
- Fire officers need a pay rise.
- On call firefighter pay should be equal to wholtime or at least pay rises.
- Get rid of unaffordable pensions.
- Give back authority back to the fire chief.
- The fire service needs to be more proactive in fire prevention and having a public presence.
- Fire officers are spread too thinly into projects that don't fit 'fire and rescue' but (like police) they are being asked to be social workers.
- Could the large commercial developments of recent years increase their contributions to fund equipment and training?
- Increase fire safety training in local schools and engagement with youth clubs etc.
- Much of the costs for road accident rescue services are incurred by "through" traffic from London.
- All of the Essential Services should have: \*the requisite level of personnel, and \*the requisite level of equipment, to enable services to be provided safely for both Service Personnel and the Public.
- All households should have fire alarms.
- The service needs to be well prepared for flood relief.
- Spending money on operational personnel rather than cadets and "vanity" headquarters.



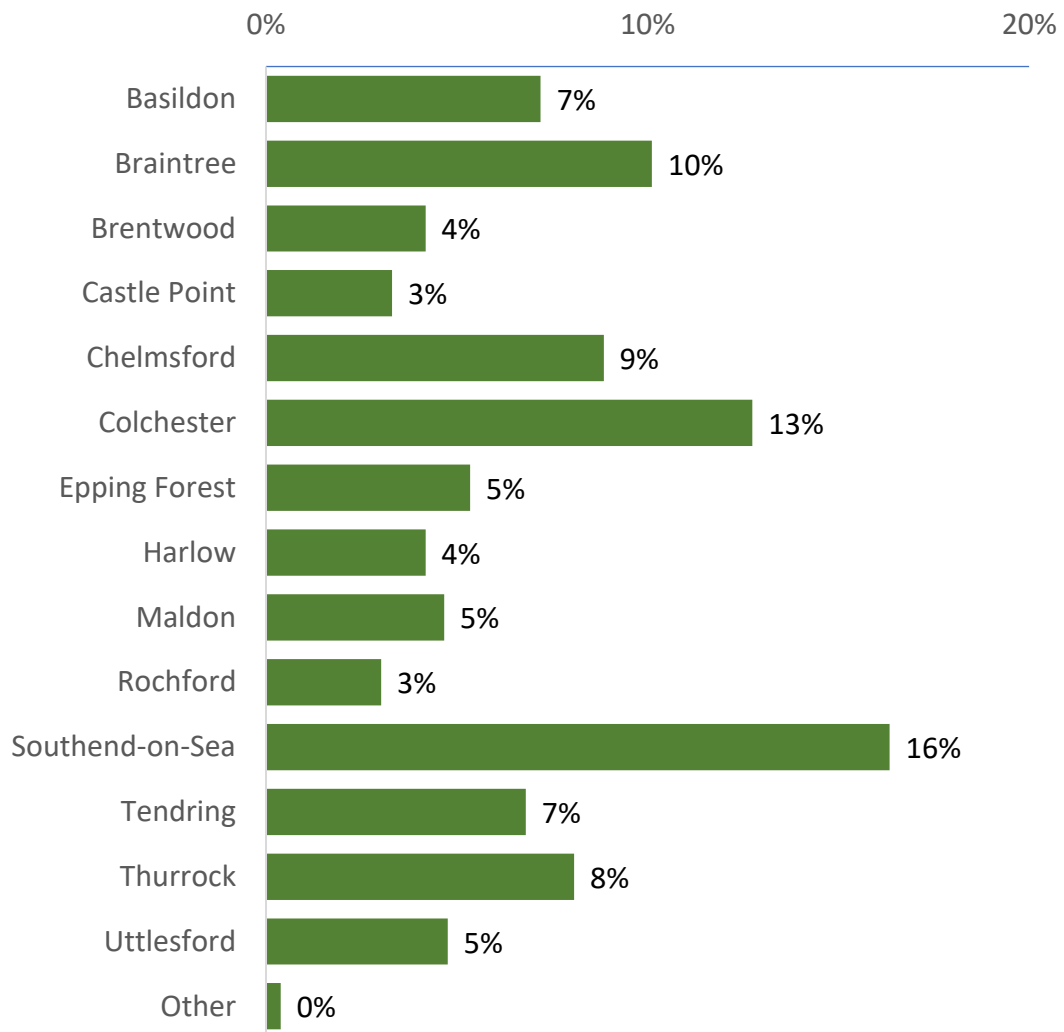
- Grenfell type cladding should be removed all over the country.
- There should be legislation against unsafe building materials, and all electrical and gas appliances should be subject to an annual safety check.
- Training in the fire risks of timber framed heritage properties with the least damage to the heritage structure.
- Training in large animal rescue (horses).
- Punitive fines on people who leave vehicles where they might obstruct fire engines, ambulances and other emergency vehicles.
- The trading arm of the ECFRS should be closed from a governance and funding point of view before asking for more money.
- Will the collaboration between ECFRS and the EEAST during Covid continue post pandemic? What has been the cost to the service and the use of wholetime firefighters?

## Who gave their views?

A total of 1,356 people responded to the survey this year (compared to 2,172 in 2019, 4,187 in 2018 and 5,044 in 2017). 64% of respondents were male, 93% described themselves as English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British, and 67% were aged between 46 and 75.



The responses by home district/unitary authority are shown below.



46% heard about the survey from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner website or email. 18% of respondents had heard about the survey via Facebook and 2% via Twitter, while 6% heard about it from a newspaper/news website and 6% from the radio.

This report produced in December 2020.

The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.