

PFCC Decision Report

Please ensure all sections below are completed

Report reference number: 155-21

Classification (e.g. Not protectively marked/restricted): **Not Protectively Marked**

Title of report: Precept Survey

Policing and Fire and Rescue Services Precept Survey

Area of county / stakeholders affected: Countywide

Report by: Emma Thomas

Date of report: 3rd November 2021

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1. Purpose of the report

To agree the budget for the creation, promotion, and analysis of the Commissioner's precept survey for policing and fire and rescue services in Essex.

2. Recommendations

That the PFCC approve the allocation of £2,759 for the precept survey and associated activity so as many people as possible can engage and provide their views. This includes reaching as many Essex council taxpayers as possible and reaching a wide range of demographic groups and audiences.

3. Benefits of the proposal

Running a precept survey means that the PFCC can make an informed decision on how much council taxpayers are prepared to invest in making their communities safer and whether they are prepared to pay more for policing and fire and rescue services. It also gives the PFCC an opportunity to talk about the role of PFCC and the importance of it to audiences across Essex who we wouldn't normally engage with as part of our usual business, raising the profile of the role and the benefits it brings to our communities. We have run a precept survey for the past four years and not to run one

this year to gauge public opinion could be interpreted as the PFCC not taking the public's views into account which is a statutory responsibility when setting the police and fire and rescue precept.

The promotional activity also supports the Commissioner in achieving his equality, diversity and inclusion objective of getting as many people as possible with different protected characteristics engaged in the work of the two services so they can help shape the way they work.

4. Background and proposal

The funding of Essex Police remains a regular topic of discussion both in the media and through public meetings, social media comments and correspondence. While the demand for greater police visibility is strong, backed by the Government's drive to recruit 20,000 officers nationally and our own priority to prevent crime and protect vulnerable people, there is also a clear need to understand and manage any impact that a potential rise in police precept funding could bring, especially when looked at alongside other proposed precept increases from our local authority partners and inflationary increases in the cost of living.

As in previous years, prior to setting the policing precept for 2022-2023, we will carry out a public survey to help inform the approach. The survey will seek to identify the general public's appetite for investing more in Essex Police, including what the public feel would be a reasonable level of additional investment and how the public would like to see any extra investment spent.

Last year, we ran a survey between November 30th and December 20th. The total number of respondents to the survey was 1,356. This was lower than 2019 (2,172 respondents, 2018 (4,187 respondents) and 2017 (5,044 respondents).

The reduction in response rates can be attributed to a number of factors, such as COVID in 2020, a reduced survey time in 2019 because of the restrictions in place because of the General Election and general lack of participation as residents felt that the position in regards to police funding was more stable and less of a concerning issue.

The survey will start on Friday, November 5th at 0600 and run for just over six weeks, closing at midnight on Sunday, December 19^h. We shall collate the results received as of midnight on Sunday, December 5th to provide a mid-survey indication of the responses received to help inform discussions at the Police, Fire and Crime Panel pre-budget meeting on Thursday, December 9th. Full survey analysis will be carried out after the survey closes.

5. Alternative options considered and rejected

The Commissioner does not have a statutory duty to consult on the policing and fire and rescue services precept so does not have to run a precept survey. However, he does have a statutory responsibility to take the public's views into account. Additionally, we have also run a survey for the past four years and the results provide a good evidence base for decisions made in respect of setting the precepts for both services. It also shows that we are open, honest, and transparent and take the views of residents into account when making decisions that affect them financially.

6. Police and Crime Plan

Additional resources for policing and fire and rescue services will have a direct impact on achieving the desired outcomes in both the Police and Crime Plan and Fire and rescue Plan. Extra investment will make a big difference in terms of prevention activities and protecting the vulnerable from harm.

7. Police operational implications

The results of the survey will help to inform decisions around the policing and fire and rescue budget so could have a direct impact on operational policing. Both Services have been engaged in the development of the survey and encouraged to promote it.

8. Financial implications

While most of the work will be undertaken by our existing communications and engagement team, some additional services will be required to host and promote the survey and analyse the precept survey results. To ensure details of the survey are communicated to as many Essex residents as possible including those who are not on social media we will have to place advertising with local media outlets. Additionally, to undertake the analysis of the results we will also use an independent external specialist.

- Analysis of survey and report by independent analyst Vanessa Baxter £625
- Social media advertising for survey (targeted Facebook posts) £1000
- Survey platform software (Smart Survey) £84 for monthly subscription plus £50 fee to force closure of partial responses.
- Local media advertising (digital and print via Newsquest Essex titles covering Greater Essex) including - Quarter page in the Echo – Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday x 1
Quarter page in the Daily Gazette – Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday x 1
Digital Awareness campaign runs over 28 days – Blended Targeted and Non targeted and Facebook enhanced ads delivered to users who visit the Essex sites www.gazette-news.co.uk, www.echo-news.co.uk
Facebook ads – targeted to the geographical areas of Essex
Total opportunities 139,460
Total cost £1000+ vat

Total £2,759

These costs are budgeted for within the Communication and Engagement Budget.

9. Legal implications

There are no legal implications in respect of the precept survey.

10. Staffing implications

Developing and promoting the precept survey will require significant input from the PFCC's Communications and Engagement Team.

11. Equality and Diversity implications

We will be widely consulting with diverse partners and communities to ensure they are listened to and their views considered regarding the funding of Essex Police and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. This is in line with the Commissioner's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objective. The survey asks several questions in relation to gender, age, ethnicity and protected characteristics and we will monitoring the responses received throughout the duration of the survey and taking targeting communication action to reach audiences who may not have taken part.

12. Risks

Asking questions about the possibility of raising the council tax precepts for policing and fire and rescue services can result in negative comments on social media and in the local media about the need and cost of the PFCC and their office/staff. However, it is important that the Commissioner has an indicative view on people's views of paying more council tax for a better service. Results from previous surveys have been used as evidence to lobby Government for more police funding both locally and nationally which has led to an increase of police officer numbers.

13. Governance Boards

The decision to run a precept survey, the survey questions and its associated communications plan and approach to promoting it was discussed by SMT on Monday, November 1st, 2021.

14. Background papers

[FINAL VERSIONS\Precept Survey.docx](#)
[20211103 FINAL Precept Survey Comms Plan \(v0.6\).docx](#)

Report Approval

The report will be signed off by the OPFCC Chief Executive and Treasurer prior to review and sign off by the PFCC / DPFCC.

Chief Executive / M.O.

Sign: 

Print: D Horsman

Date: 09/11/2021

Chief Finance Officer / Treasurer Sign: Julia Berry.....

Print: Julia Berry.....

Date: 15 November 2021.....

Publication

Is the report for publication? YES NO

If 'NO', please give reasons for non-publication (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State 'None' if applicable)

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If the report is not for publication, the Chief Executive will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

Redaction

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

1. Of Decision Sheet? YES NO 2. Of Appendix? YES NO

If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:

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Date redaction carried out:

Treasurer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only

If redaction is required, the Treasurer or Chief Executive is to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign:

Print:

Chief Executive/Treasurer

Date signed:

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: Roger Hirst

PFCC

Date signed: 17 November 2021

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

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Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: