

PFCC Decision Report

Please ensure all sections below are completed

Report reference number: 155-22

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

Title of report: Precept Survey 2023/24

Area of county / stakeholders affected: Essex

Report by: Liane Edwards

Chief Officer: Pippa Brent Isherwood

Date of report: 11/10/2022

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1. Executive Summary

To agree the budget for the creation, promotion, and analysis of the Commissioner's 2023/24 precept survey for policing and fire and rescue services in Essex.

2. Recommendations

That the PFCC approve the allocation of £4650 from the Communications and Engagement Budget 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. Background to 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.

Providing residents and businesses in Essex with the opportunity to hear about as well as contribute their views on the policing and fire and rescue precepts is important. Being open and transparent about how we are spending public money can help underpin trust and credibility in the PFCC.

It also gives the PFCC an opportunity to talk about the role of the office and engage with elements of the public they we may not normally reach, which will raise the profile of the role and the benefits it brings to our communities.

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. Proposal and Associated Benefits

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 the increase in inflation, interest rates and energy bills.

As in previous years, prior to setting the policing precept for 2023-24, 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 and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, 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.

5. Options Analysis

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 five 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. Consultation and Engagement

We will aim to communicate our survey to the widest range of Essex public as possible to encourage a high level of participation and engagement and to foster

authenticity and trust in the PFCC that the precept rise he is asking for will be used to make communities safer.

Targeted engagement will also take place the general public, stakeholders, partners, Police and Fire and Rescue officers and staff, MPs, Councillors and businesses. We will use a variety of media, hold meetings online and in person, and push through well-established partner communications.

7. Strategic Links

The precept is directly linked to delivering the priorities in both the Police and Crime Plan and the Fire and Rescue Plan.

8. Police operational implications

There will be no operational implications.

9. 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 £650
- 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 230,000
Total advertising package cost £3000+ vat
- Graphic Design costs £500

Total costs £4,284

10. Legal implications

There are no legal implications.

11. Staffing implications

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

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 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 monitor the responses received throughout the duration of the survey and taking targeted communication action to reach audiences who may not have taken part.

13. Risks and Mitigations

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.

14. Governance Boards

The decision to run a precept survey, the survey questions and its associated communications plan and approach to promoting it was discussed and approved by SMT on Monday, Tuesday 11th October 2022 .

15. Links to Future Plans

16. Background Papers and Appendices

Precept Communications Survey Plan
Precept Survey

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

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Date redaction carried out:

Chief Finance Officer / 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 / Chief Finance Officer

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign:



Print:

Roger Hirst

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: 18 October 2022

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

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Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: