



# Annual Policing Survey and precept proposal feedback

January 2018

# Contents

Introduction

Creating the survey

Circulating the survey

Annual Policing Survey responses

Demographics of respondents

Council tax

Appendix: Annual Policing Survey 2017 and PCC's precept proposal 'Boosting Kent's frontline'

## Introduction

Under the terms of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) must set the police and crime objectives for their area through a Police and Crime Plan.

On 1 April 2017 Matthew Scott published his Police and Crime Plan, titled **Safer in Kent: The Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan**. The plan set out the priorities that would drive the work of Kent Police, partners and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) until 2021.

However, the PCC also committed to updating the Plan regularly in line with what local communities want, recognising that he has a duty to consult with victims and the wider community. Accordingly, in the summer of 2017 the PCC launched his Annual Policing Survey.

This report details the findings of that survey, which are being taken into consideration as the PCC refreshes the Safer in Kent Plan for spring 2018.

The second half of this report deals with the PCC's precept proposal for 2018/19. He set out his plan to boost Kent Police's frontline by raising council tax by £1 per month for an average (Band D) property on 10 January 2018. Members of the public and partners were invited to contact the OPCC via email to make any comments.

# Creating the survey

When creating the Annual Policing Survey 2017, the OPCC gave consideration to the amount of questions being asked. There was a desire to reach as many people as possible across Kent and Medway's diverse communities, and also to extrapolate as much meaningful feedback from those members of the public and partners as possible. Too many questions would dissuade some people from completing it, but too few questions would represent a wasted opportunity to collect detailed feedback.

Mostly, multiple choice and yes/no questions were offered to simplify the experience of completing the survey and allow for the gathering of consistent data responses. The only use of a free text field in the main body of the survey was to allow for a suggestion of what could be done to make communities safer.

In summary, the questions were as follows:

- Part one related to the PCC's Ride Along Scheme, seeking further feedback on an idea first suggested in the 2016 consultation. The current scheme assists the PCC in holding the Chief Constable to account but only a small group of volunteers are able to take part. People completing the survey were asked their views on whether they thought allowing more people to take part in the scheme was a good idea; or whether the OPCC should establish a panel where members of the public could scrutinise police officers' Body Worn Video footage; or whether they had sufficient trust and confidence in Kent Police that they felt the scheme should just continue as it is?
- Part two invited respondents to select up to eight policing issues which were most important to them. This was a very similar question to one asked in the 2016 consultation and so allowed the PCC to gauge whether the people of Kent's priorities have changed.
- Part three related to the council tax policing precept - specifically whether people believed the 2017/18 precept of £157.15 to be too low, about right or too high. It also asked whether they would be willing to pay a little more to policing if necessary, and allowed them to suggest one thing to improve community safety where they live.
- Part four posed two yes/no questions about working with others, in light of the requirement from Government that emergency services have a duty to collaborate.
- Finally, part five asked non-mandatory questions about the person completing the survey. Any data collected from part five would allow the OPCC to compare the demographics of those responding with the demographics of the whole of Kent and Medway to measure how representative and reliable the survey sample was.

A copy of the PCC's Annual Policing Survey is included within the Appendix to this report.

# Circulating the survey

The PCC's Annual Policing Survey 2017 was made available online and as a hard copy leaflet from 23 June 2017. As in previous years, the OPCC determined that the reliability of the data collected would be directly proportionate to the number of people completing the survey, especially if the demographics of those participating mirrored the demographics of the whole of Kent and Medway.

A press release was posted on the OPCC website and issued to local media contacts on the launch date, and a link to the online survey was placed prominently on the homepage of the OPCC website. Information about the survey was also regularly posted on the OPCC's official Twitter feed, which during the consultation period surpassed 11,000 followers – the most of any individual PCC or their office in England and Wales.

A link to the online survey was sent by e-mail to more than 5,000 OPCC e-newsletter subscribers and key stakeholders including Kent's MPs, Police and Crime Panel members, representatives of victims' services providers and parish councils. Information about the survey was also posted on local community Facebook pages, and on the Kent Police intranet to encourage participation from police officers and staff.

Furthermore, copies of the survey leaflet were made available at public locations such as police station front counters, Compass House, Kent County Council's Sessions House and in some GPs' surgeries.

The OPCC is grateful to all partner agencies and individuals who assisted in promoting the survey either online or by making leaflets available in public buildings. Those partner agencies included:

- Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Kent County Council
- Kent Police LGBT+ Network

- Maidstone Borough Council
- Medway Council
- Medway Youth Council
- NHS Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group
- Relate East Kent
- Respect Yourself youth charity
- Sevenoaks District Council
- Shepway District Council
- Thanet Community Safety Partnership
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
- Victim Support.

In addition, the PCC made himself available to speak face-to-face with members of the public at events and high-footfall street stall locations across Kent and Medway, including:

- Armed Forces Day community event, Swanley
- Asda supermarket, Kings Hill
- Bluewater Shopping Centre
- Bouverie Place Shopping Centre, Folkestone
- Calverley Road, Tunbridge Wells
- Kent County Show, Detling
- Kent Police public open day, Maidstone
- Markaz Mosque, Canterbury
- Market Place, Faversham
- North Kent Asian community residents' meeting, Dartford
- Rochester High Street
- Pentagon Shopping Centre, Chatham
- St George's Street, Canterbury.

The PCC also engaged directly with partner agencies and promoted the survey at private briefings and residents' meetings including, but not limited to:

- East Kent Rape Crisis Centre
- Fort Pitt Grammar School, Medway
- Hartsdown Academy, Margate
- Kent Association of Local Councils
- Kent's Community Safety Partnerships
- Kent County Councillors
- Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel
- Kent Police Federation
- Kent Police's Volunteer Police Cadets
- Kent Wildlife Trust
- Kent Youth Council
- Medway Youth Council
- North Loose Residents' Association
- Penshurst, Fordcombe and Chiddingstone residents' group
- Rainham Rotary Club
- Rural Kent Coffee and Information Project, Adisham and Ulcombe
- St Paul's Primary School, Swanley
- St Mary's Island Residents' Association
- Wyvern School, Ashford.

# Annual Policing Survey responses

A total of 1,661 individuals and organisations completed the Kent PCC's Annual Policing Survey 2017 prior to it closing on 10 January 2018. This figure was very similar to the number who completed the 2016 survey (1,690) which was deemed a good number by the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel when it met in February 2017.

For comparison, a selection of other consultations run in 2017 yielded the following results:

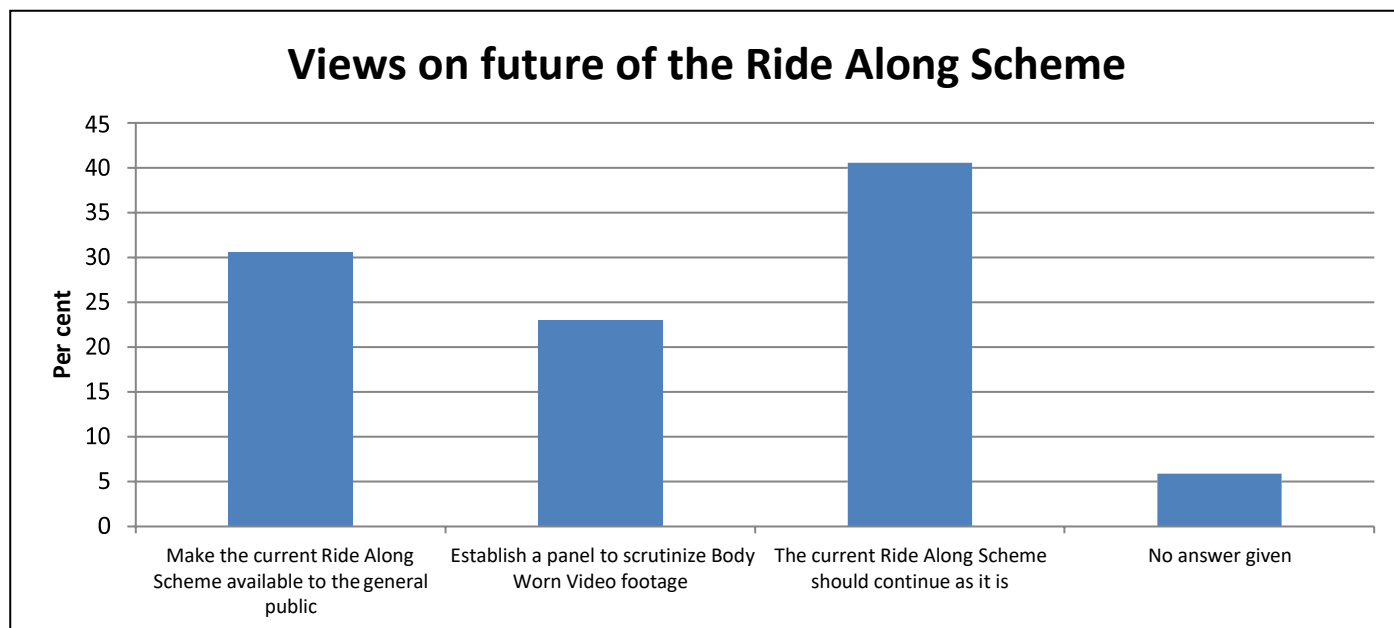
- Kent County Council's Budget Campaign and Consultation – 965 responses
- West Mercia PCC's Fire Governance Consultation – 1,307 responses
- Cambridgeshire PCC's Proposal for a Fire and Rescue Governance – 2,426 responses
- Essex PCC's Policing in Essex Precept Survey – 5,044 responses.

Achieving 1,661 responses out of a population of 1,820,400 – against the industry standard confidence level of 95% - equates to a margin of error of just 2.4% in the survey's final data. Thus, the sample achieved is statistically significant enough to offer reliable data but the OPCC will still continue to share best practice and research further opportunities to further boost participation in future consultation exercises.

Most responses came from individuals, but among the organisations which responded were:

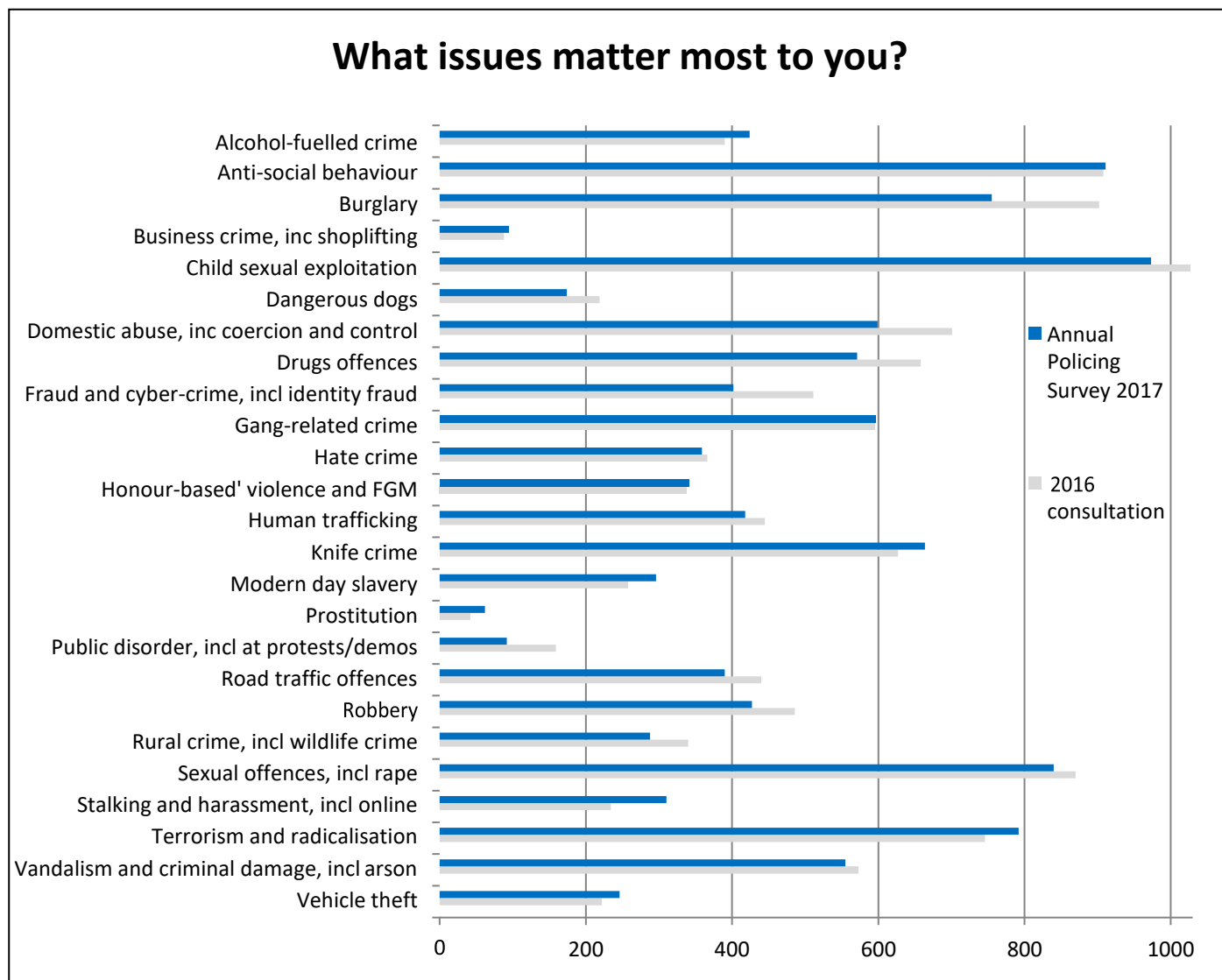
- Canterbury Baptist Church
- Capel-le-Ferne Parish Council
- Choices Domestic Abuse Service
- Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council
- DAVSS
- East Folkestone Together
- Folkestone Area Partnership Against Crime
- Hempstead Residents' Association
- Kent Equality Cohesion Council
- Minster Parish Council
- Nepalese Community Ashford
- Oasis Domestic Abuse Service
- SpeakUp CIC
- St Margaret's Parish Council
- Wye with Hinxhill Parish Council.

The responses received for part one were as follows:



Respondents to the Annual Policing Survey 2017 had mixed views on potential changes to the PCC's Ride Along Scheme. The most popular of the three options given was that the current scheme, using volunteer Independent Custody Visitors, should just continue as it is (40.56%). Just over half of the respondents favoured some sort of change to the status quo in order for the public to better assist the PCC in holding Kent Police to account, but they were split between those wanting to make the Ride Along Scheme available to the general public (30.64%) and those preferring the establishment of a panel whereby members of the public could scrutinise police officers' Body Worn Video camera footage (23.00%).

The responses received for part two were as follows:



The 1,661 people who completed the survey were asked to select up to eight issues each, out of a list of 25, which mattered most to them. A small number of respondents selected more than eight issues, and in those instances their choices were discarded. Others chose to select fewer than eight, which was fine. In total 11,580 'votes' were recorded and counted.

The graph above shows, in blue, the number of 'votes' recorded for each of the 25 issues in the PCC's Annual Policing Survey 2017.

The grey bars show, for comparison, the number of people selecting these same issues in the PCC's 2016 consultation. There is very little difference in the two sets of results, suggesting the views of the people of Kent have not changed significantly in the last 12 months.

Again, child sexual exploitation (973 votes) was rated as the number one concern for people across Kent and Medway.

The next seven top issues were:

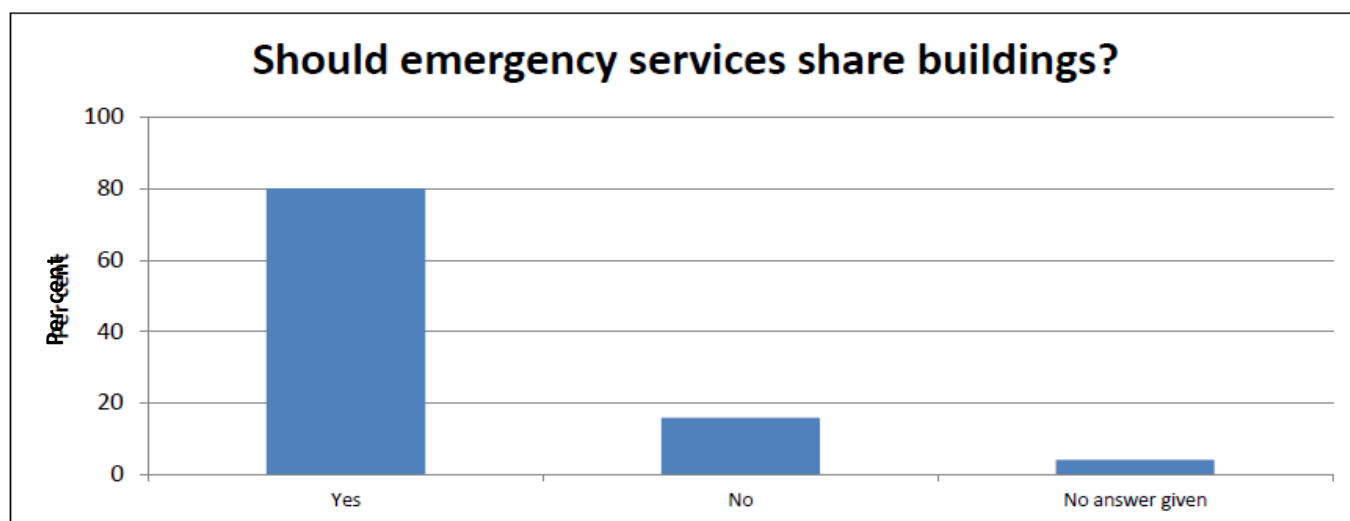
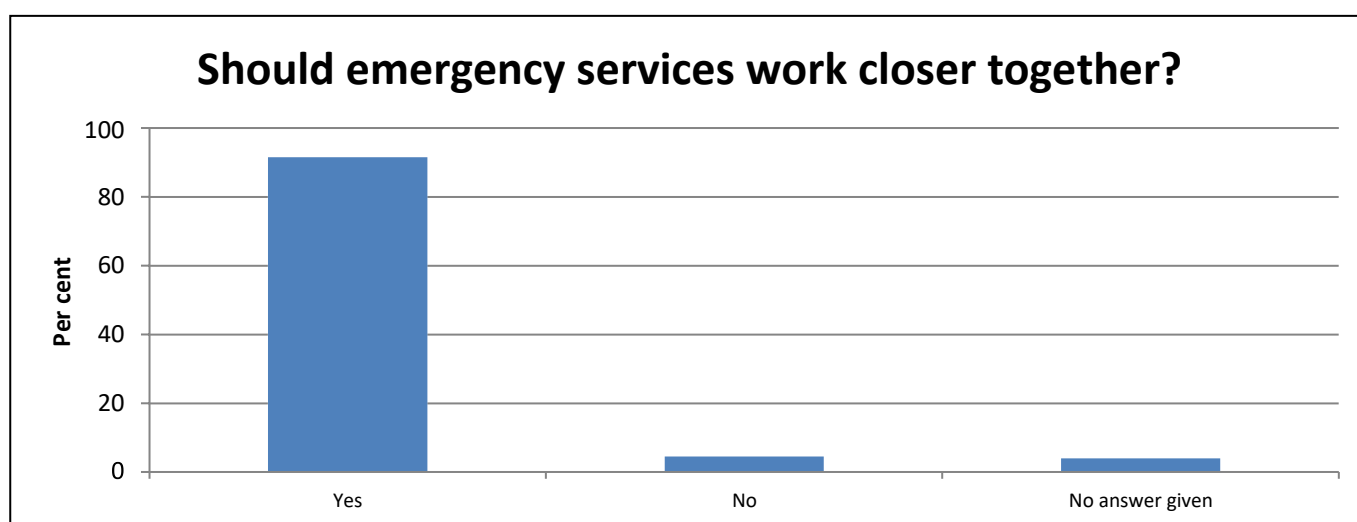
- Anti-social behaviour (911)

- Sexual offences including rape (840)
- Terrorism and radicalisation (792)
- Burglary (755)
- Knife crime (664)
- Domestic abuse, incl coercion and control (599)
- Gang-related crime (596)

The 'top eight' issues again indicate that the people of Kent and Medway are not only concerned about traditional neighbourhood policing issues like anti-social behaviour and burglary, but also about emerging threats to public safety like child sexual exploitation, gangs and knife crime.

Part three sought people's views on the council tax, and what could be done to improve community safety in their area. The responses have been included later in this report, alongside feedback received in relation to the PCC's 2018/19 precept proposal.

The responses received for part four were as follows:

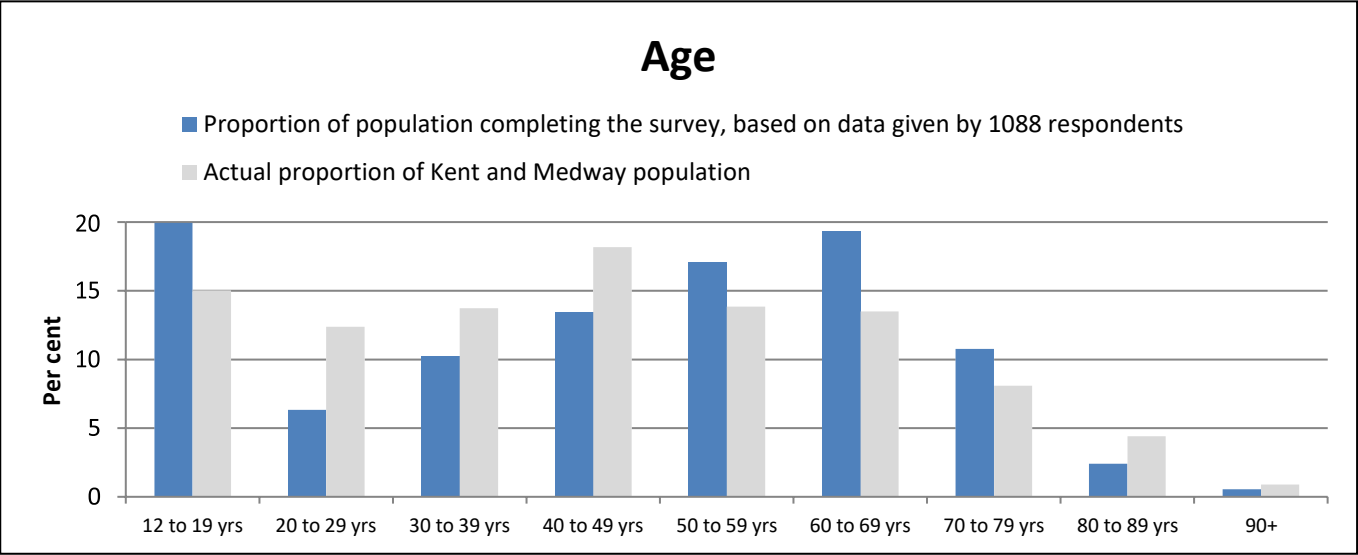
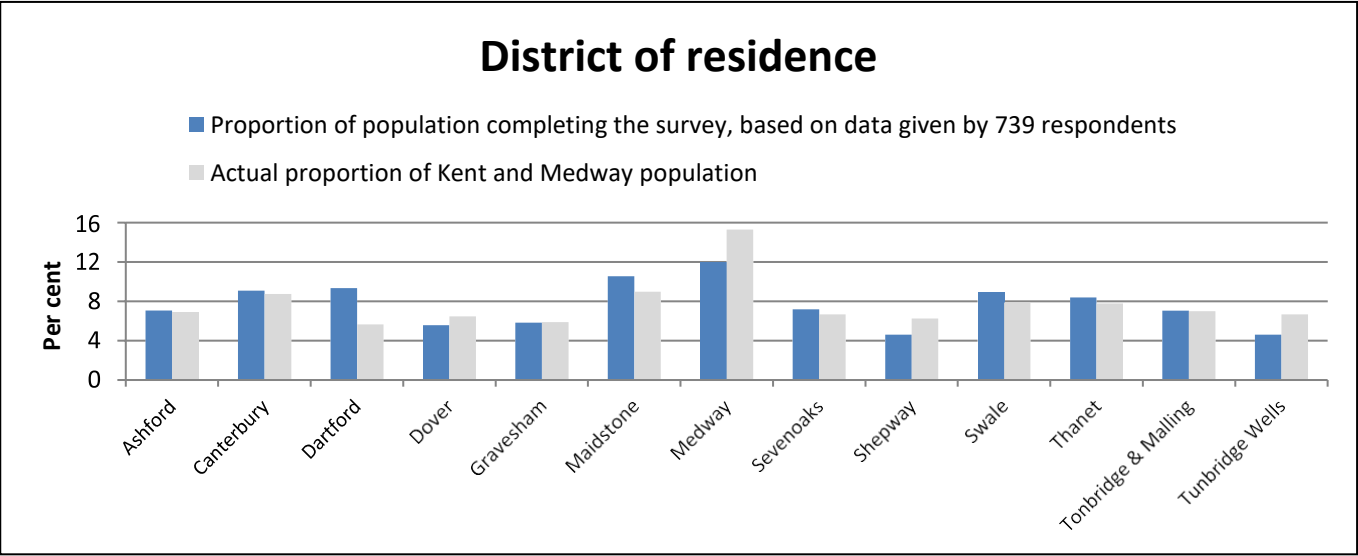


The PCC's Annual Policing Survey 2017 found there to be overwhelming support for emergency services working more closely together to improve community safety (91.51% in favour); and also for emergency services sharing buildings, providing that saved money and made them more responsive (80.07% in favour).

# Demographics of respondents

The following charts show the demographics of those who responded to the survey, based on the responses they gave to questions in part five relating to their address, age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and whether they considered themselves to be disabled. The survey made it clear there was no requirement to provide these details and so the sample sizes vary for each question.

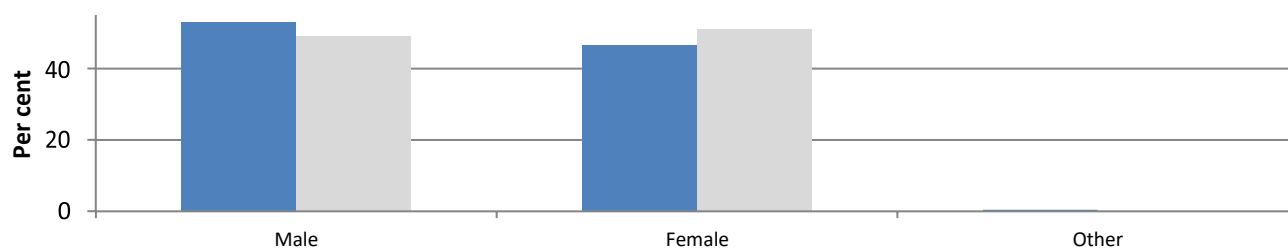
Where possible, the data supplied by those completing the survey (in blue) is shown alongside the actual demographics of the whole of Kent and Medway (in grey) as sourced from the [Kent County Council website](#), for comparison.





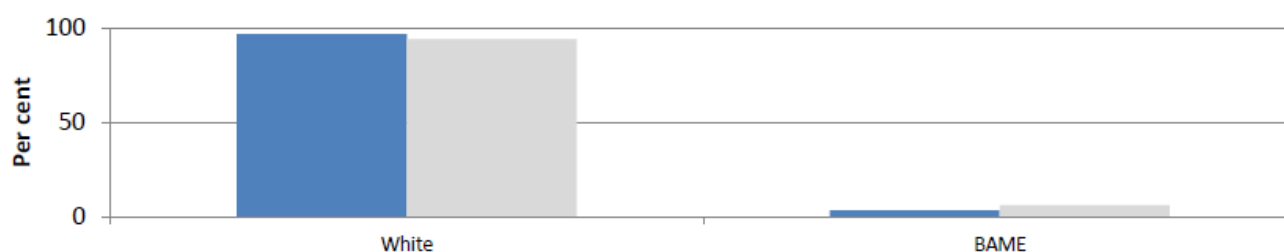
## Gender

- Proportion of population completing the survey, based on data given by 1167 respondents
- Actual proportion of Kent and Medway population



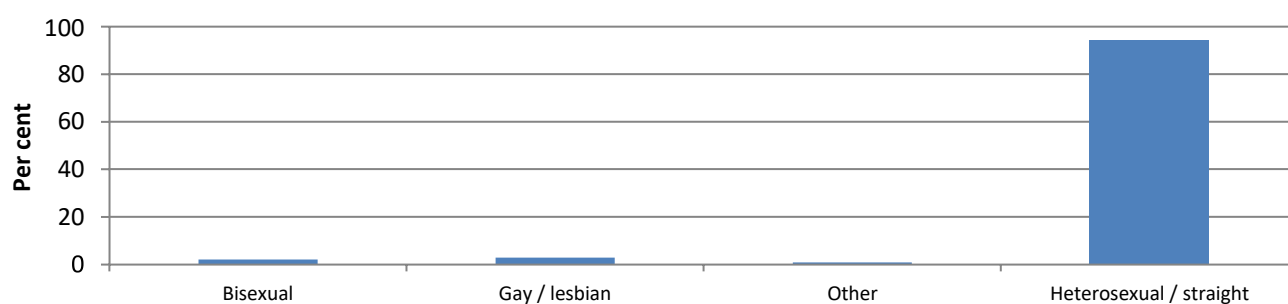
## Ethnicity

- Proportion of population completing the survey, based on data given by 962 respondents
- Actual proportion of Kent and Medway population



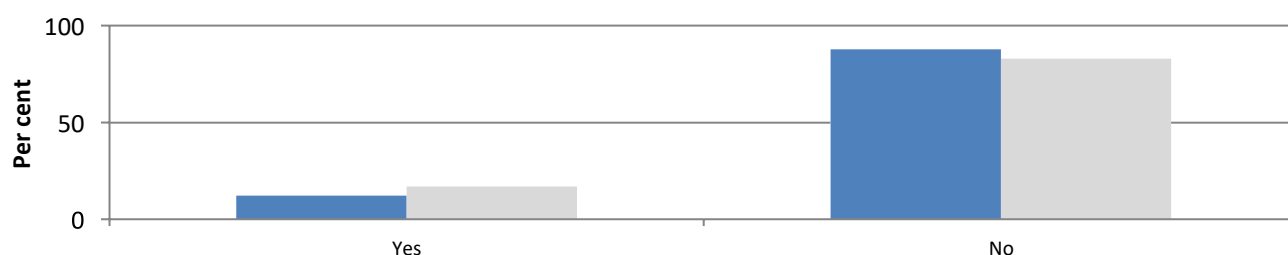
## Sexuality

- Proportion of population completing the survey, based on data given by 794 respondents



## Do you consider yourself disabled?

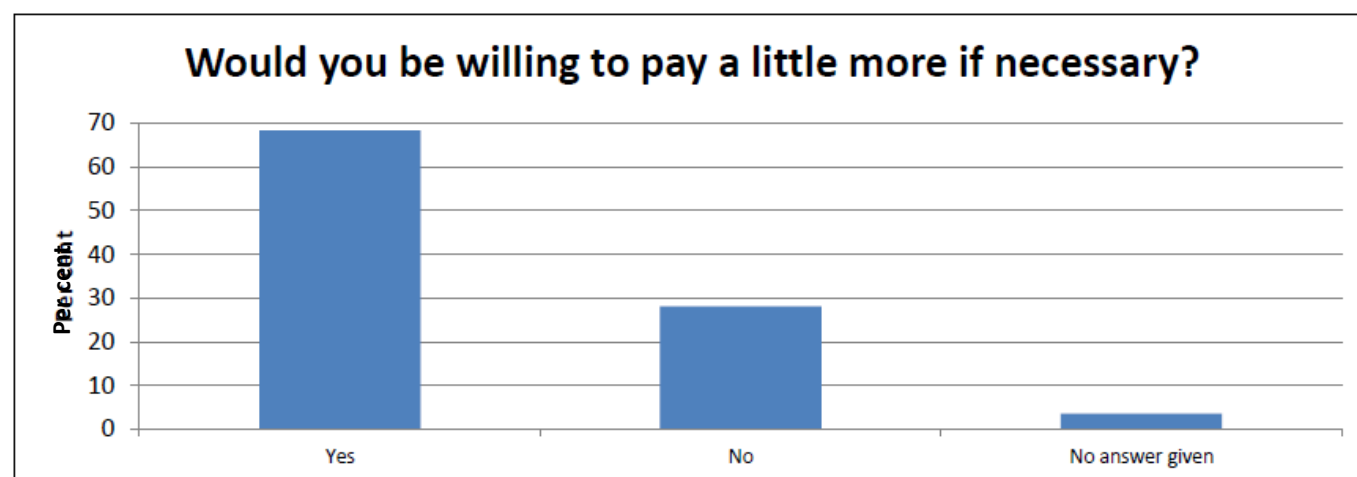
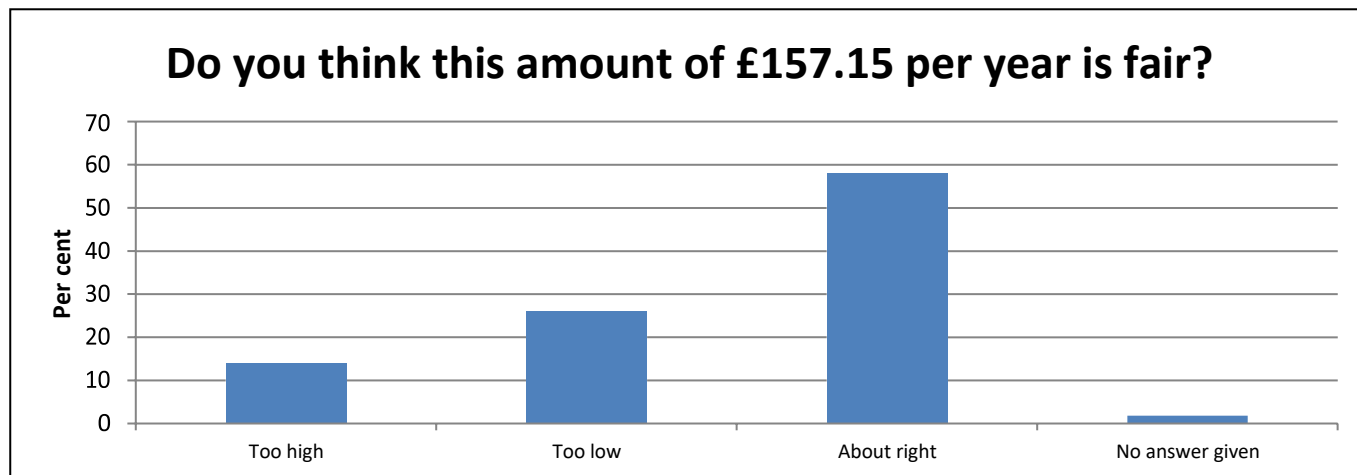
- Proportion of population completing the survey, based on data given by 1089 respondents
- Actual proportion of Kent and Medway population



# Council tax

This section of the report deals with residents' views on the amount of council tax which goes to policing and community safety – the police precept. In 2017/18, the precept was set at £157.15 for an average (Band D) property.

The views of those who responded to the PCC's Annual Policing Survey 2017 were as follows:



The most popular view given about the figure of £157.15 for a Band D household was that it was about right (58.10%). Furthermore, more than a quarter (26.13%) of the 1,661 respondents believed the figure to be too low. The amount of people stating they felt the figure was too high was only 13.91%.

In addition, more than two-thirds of respondents (68.33%) to the PCC's Annual Policing Survey 2017 said they were content to pay a little more towards policing if necessary. The percentage answering no was 28.12%.

The responses given as to what one thing could be done to improve community safety were dominated by requests for more, or more visible, police officers and/or PCSOs. In multiple cases, and especially in rural areas, the person responding to the survey specifically wanted community officers who are familiar with the local area.

Other themes to emerge were:

- More (or improved) CCTV
- More speed cameras and/or traffic officers to deal with speeding and other road traffic offences
- More (or improved) street lighting
- Improved police response times.



3. "More PCSOs are to be welcomed. They are well liked by rural communities and their regular attendance at parish council meetings is appreciated. The chairmen of parish councils, in my experience, give PCSOs priority at meetings so as not to waste their time. It would be much appreciated if ticketing or prosecution were allowed. Too often there is a traffic violation, such as ignoring a road sign, which is not followed up due to lack of officers."
4. "We are delighted that the problem of law enforcement is being taken seriously in Kent. However, this news of increased costs to tax payers to provide a service is very unwelcome. We would first like to see the local Folkestone police force actually working in the town instead of being regularly found chatting at the out of town Marks & Spencer's."
5. "Have read your bulletin with interest and support the additional investment all be it at a cost to households. Where I believe I and my fellow Kent residents would wish to be assured is that national matters are not funded by dint of geography. As gateway to UK it is Kent police who bear cost of such things as Operation Stack etc. Such costs are a national cost and should not fall wholly upon Kent."
6. "Being well aware of the pressures the Police are under on a 24/7 basis and the excellent service they provide, I would be more than willing to support this vital boost."
7. "I feel that there is an extra need for more police. However, how will our police stations be affected? Does this mean that more rural police stations will remain open? I live in a rural area, so this is important to me."
8. "I think the idea is great, exactly the direction the public wants to go! Well done Matthew."
9. "I would be prepared to pay an extra £100 per year and cut back my household expenses, but only if it meant we would see an active involved police force on the streets visible and dealing with the small issues that affect our daily lives... As it stands now I cannot see how an additional 280 officers and staff over the whole of Kent will scratch the surface... and as such I am not prepared to pay the additional £12 per year."
10. "I support many of your decisions so far (cutting the cost of your office; bolstering frontline policing and improving the problems with the 101 call centre) but would add one more which requires attention... speeding."
11. "I support the increase in your precept in line with your document."
12. "I'd welcome the small increase in council tax so you can afford to increase your officer headcount - as long as it's not wasted on bureaucracy, red tape and form filling."
13. "In theory I agree as long as the money goes only to recruiting police officers. My personal opinion is we need more sighting of police officers on the streets not in motor cars."
14. "Policing and other public services' performance must be maintained at established levels. So, given that effective resource management ensures best or improving value for money, a modest increase roughly in line with real monetary value is justified, I would support modestly increased precept for continuing good service in policing and other public safety services in Kent."
15. "Having read the PCC's proposals I think they represent the way forward. I would regard £12 per year extra as being a reasonable increase to ensure that we get more officers on the streets."
16. "I think this is a great idea, especially cutting costs in your office by £200,000. I am concerned if the reserves are depleted, how does this affect pensions and overall reserves? More police on streets is a good thing."
17. "I would be grateful if you would outline how the additional £1 per month the average household is expected to pay will affect Swanley? What is the likely impact of the £9m cost savings on Swanley? You indicate that there will be a minimal impact on the frontline, but there will be an impact nonetheless."
18. "This email is to say that we are generally supportive of the Funding Proposals, with the caveat that our proposals for the Police and Crime Plan 2018 should, please, be factored in once they are made and accepted."
19. "I am writing to fully support the planned £1 per month precept increase... We never ever see the police and there needs to be a return to focusing on rural policing and, sorry, real police not just PCSOs who have zero authority."
20. "We have no visible policing at all and it's not enough to say 'well a police car attended some address or other' - that's not the same thing! So I hope some of the new staff will be encouraged/deployed to areas like ours in the future."
21. "I am very unhappy that, yet again we are going to get another hike in the hated council tax to pay for more police officers. I firmly believe that the police should be properly funded by central government and not create an extra burden on pensioners who can barely afford to pay this hated tax in the first place... Trying to contact them is an absolute nightmare, hanging on the phone for twenty minutes listening to endless recorded messages. We really must get back to the old system of being able to call one's local police

station and then, just maybe, we can get some action when it is needed. At present I won't bother to call the police on the 101 number it's just a waste of time."

22. "What is wanted by residents is visible police on the streets. As it is PCSOs are managing too large an area to be really effective as a deterrent to crime. Residents are opposed to paying additional levy for backroom staff."
23. "Need to get Swanley better buildings... Like the changes."
24. "I am absolutely disgusted you are asking hard working tax payers to pay extra council tax for a police force who can't protect victims of crime and are just quite frankly full of excuses!! I read in the KM you want to recruit 200 more officers to just waste the tax payers money even more. This really isn't on when other emergency services and voluntary organisations get far less funding and do a lot more in our community to protect the vulnerable and people at risk. Why in all honesty should Kent Police take another penny when at the moment you can't offer a proper service as it is?"
25. "I for one, wholeheartedly support the proposed increase in the Policing precept, as I believe there should be more police officers and staff available to make the county of Kent & Medway a safer place to live."
26. "I have read your newsletter about expanding the number of officers in Kent Police and other measures. This has been long overdue after many years of cutbacks. I therefore fully support your request for an increase in the precept. I would, however, like to challenge your assertion (and the Government's) about levels of policing and their effects on crime. Crime levels may be falling in certain categories but it is clear that the police have been forced by the cutbacks to prioritise crimes and the way they are dealt with... The problem of drugs is getting worse and whilst I read with interest your plans and ideas in your consultation paper I would urge you not to totally focus on the new and glamorous crimes, such as cyber, important though it is, but to also consider the 'old crimes'."
27. "I congratulate you on your proposal to empower the Chief Constable to recruit up to an additional 200 Police Officers in the next year. Boosting staff numbers in the areas you highlight is of great importance to protect and provide reassurance to the wider public of Kent and I also agree with your views that there should be no excuse for using extra council tax to prop up inefficient practices and where better value for money can be delivered."
28. "Whilst any efforts to protect the frontline of policing are laudable I am of the view this proposal falls far short of what is needed. £12 a year on the average household council tax can't possibly make a difference - and frankly neither will another 200 officers. I would willingly pay more than double if we would see another 400 officers for the county."
29. "Our family (5 adults) support your proposals and accept that the increase in charge as wholly reasonable."
30. "Within the CSU departments the PC officers are sadly tied down doing administrative work or answering emails or queries from public sometimes about very minor issues... The police officers within these departments should be there to use warranted powers."
31. "These proposals have my full support."
32. "I fully endorse the proposals. Kent has a very large geographical area and manpower is needed for the rural areas so that criminals can be stopped that they are easy pickings. I do not mind paying the extra pound."
33. "I would suggest that more money be invested in rural policing... to prevent rural crime rising year on year, and give the people who live in the rural the confidence to report crimes knowing that a police officer will attend and not just be given a crime reference number. I'm sure that this would boost public confidence and bring the rural in line with town policing."



# Appendix

## Annual policing survey



Please complete and return this form to:  
Annual Policing Survey, PCC's Office, Kent  
Police HQ, Sutton Road, Maidstone, ME15 9BX  
Or fill out the survey online at:  
[www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/consultations)

### Part one – Ride Along scheme

My office runs a Ride Along scheme, designed to promote public trust and confidence in Kent Police by ensuring processes and procedures are transparent. Currently, volunteer Independent Custody Visitors are given the opportunity to observe policing patrols and then report back to me on what they have seen. Opening this scheme up to other members of the public, provided they first pass a vetting process, could further assist me in holding Kent Police to account but the scheme would have to be managed carefully to ensure the safety of all involved.

An alternative idea would be to allow members of the public to sit on a panel, reviewing footage of police officers dealing with a wide range of incidents. The footage would have been routinely recorded on the officers' Body Worn Video cameras.

My question is:

- ☐ Would you like to see the current Ride Along scheme made available to the general public?
- ☐ Or, would you like to see my office instead establish a panel where members of the public scrutinise police officers' Body Worn Video camera footage?
- ☐ Or, do you have sufficient trust and confidence in Kent Police that the current Ride Along scheme, using volunteer ICVs, should just continue as it is?

### Part two – What matters to you?

Which of these issues which Kent Police deals with are most important to you? Please select a maximum of eight:

- ☐ Alcohol-fuelled crime
- ☐ Anti-social behaviour
- ☐ Burglary
- ☐ Business crime, inc. shoplifting
- ☐ Child sexual exploitation
- ☐ Dangerous dogs
- ☐ Domestic abuse, inc. coercion and control
- ☐ Drugs offences
- ☐ Fraud and cyber-crime, inc. identity fraud
- ☐ Gang-related crime
- ☐ Hate crime
- ☐ 'Honour-based' violence & Female Genital Mutilation
- ☐ Human trafficking
- ☐ Knife crime
- ☐ Modern day slavery
- ☐ Prostitution
- ☐ Public disorder, inc. at protests or demonstrations
- ☐ Road traffic offences
- ☐ Robbery
- ☐ Rural crime, inc. wildlife crime
- ☐ Sexual offences, inc. rape
- ☐ Stalking and harassment, inc. online harassment
- ☐ Terrorism and radicalisation
- ☐ Vandalism and criminal damage, inc. arson
- ☐ Vehicle theft

### Part three – Council tax precept

Around two-thirds of the Kent Police budget comes from central Government. The remaining third comes from council tax. Currently, an average household in Kent pays £157.15 a year from their council tax towards policing.

Do you think this amount of £157.15 per year is fair?  
☐ Too high ☐ Too low ☐ About right

Would you be willing to pay a little more towards policing if necessary? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What one thing could be done to improve community safety where you live?

### Part four – Working with others

Do you think it is a good idea that the emergency services work more closely together to improve community safety where you live? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you think the emergency services should share buildings, provided that saved money and made them more responsive? ☐ Yes ☐ No

### Part five – About you:

(You do not have to give any details if you don't want to)

Name/Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_ Sexuality: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider yourself disabled? ☐ Yes ☐ No



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# Boosting Kent's frontline – up to 200 more Police Officers and 80 more staff



**A message from the Police and Crime  
Commissioner Matthew Scott:**

Today I am announcing my draft funding proposals for Kent Police for 2018/19.

Over the past year, I have continued touring the county and speaking with local residents, community groups, businesses and charities to seek their views on Policing in Kent and Medway. I have spent time with the Police Officers, staff and volunteers serving on the frontline to hear their experiences too.

There is no doubt that Policing remains under pressure. There are ever-increasing numbers of calls to respond to, many of which are more complex and a growing number of which are not criminal in nature – such as support for vulnerable people in mental health crisis. All of this comes whilst Britain's threat level for international terrorism is severe.

Despite all of this, Kent Police has been among the top-rated Forces in the country in independent inspections for efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy in 2016 and 2017. They have been deemed "Good" or "Outstanding" in every assessment, bar one. Police Officer numbers have risen since I was elected and PCSO numbers have also been protected. Antisocial behaviour is down 11%. There is a new cyber-crime team and the Volunteer Police Cadets programme is back. I'm investing more in services for victims of crime and together we have fixed the firearms licensing backlog.

The Government has listened to the views of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and increased funding for counter terrorism by £50m and will be investing a further £130m in other national Policing schemes. In order to support local Policing, the Home Office has allowed PCCs to increase the council tax precept by £1 a month for an average household, which could raise up to £270m nationally. Together, this represents slightly more than the amount PCCs said we needed next year.

Taking into consideration the views of residents, community groups, businesses, and the operational needs of Policing in Kent, I am pleased to be proposing the biggest recruitment drive for Kent Police for a considerable time.

In laying out my proposal I am empowering the Chief Constable to recruit up to 200 additional Police Officers in the next year. These will go into boosting a number of areas, including rural and roads policing, local communities, fighting cyber-crime and providing greater public protection, and will take the total number of Police Officers in Kent to its highest level since 2012.

In addition to this, I have listened to residents' views about crime reporting, and so there will be a boost in the number of call handlers answering 999 and 101 calls, so that people can get help quicker and more information can be provided to the Police. This will be alongside the new online reporting service, which is available for certain issues for those who wish to use it. There will be over 80 new police staff roles that will cover this, as well as other areas of Policing.

This will be funded in four ways:

- I am asking residents to contribute the equivalent of an additional £1 per month from an average household towards the cost of Policing in Kent. This is not a request I am making lightly but is something I believe is necessary to keep Kent safe.
- I have reviewed Kent Police's proposals for over £9m of cost savings and believe that, as they will have a minimal impact on the frontline, they should be delivered. There should be no excuse for using extra

council tax to prop up inefficient practices and where better value for money can be delivered, it should be. This will help mitigate the pressures of pay and inflation.

- I am cutting the cost of my own office by £200,000 and re-investing this money in the frontline. I already provide extra money from my budget for Kent Police projects, such as the Volunteer Police Cadets.
- I am authorising the use of a further £5m of Kent Police's reserves over three years, should it be required, to support the recruitment drive.

There will also be other opportunities to increase Police Officer numbers and improve services further. The Police Transformation Fund, worth £175m, has been made available by the Government for new projects that reform the way that Forces operate and I will encourage more bids to access some of this money. I will also continue to drive collaboration with police colleagues and other agencies to make best use of property and improve delivery.

This is an ambitious proposal. It will mean that residents get something back for the tax that they pay and value for money in what is spent in their name. It boosts Policing in Kent in urban and rural areas in the fight against antisocial behaviour, organised crime, fraud and cyber-crime, domestic abuse and road traffic offences. Victims will get a better service when they have been subject to heinous acts and more criminals will be brought to justice.

I hope that you will support this vital boost. Please email your thoughts by 27 January. The proposed precept rise will then go to the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel for its approval on 8 February.