

**To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel**  
**Subject: Draft refreshed 'Making Kent Safer' plan and 2023/24 precept proposal**  
**Date: 1 February 2023**

**Introduction:**

1. The [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#) (PRSRA 2011) sets the requirement for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to issue a police and crime plan that covers their term of Office.
2. A police and crime plan must include the following information:
  - the police and crime objectives to be delivered;
  - the policing that the Chief Constable should provide;
  - the financial and other resources to be provided to the Chief Constable to exercise their functions;
  - the means by which the Chief Constable will be held to account for the provision of policing; and
  - the crime and disorder reduction grants that will be made and any conditions associated with them.
3. Whilst every plan will be localised in nature, they all share a common aim in communicating a PCC's vision and objectives.
4. PCCs are required to keep the plan under review and at any time, may issue or vary a police and crime plan; in doing so, they must have regard to the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) issued by the Secretary of State.
5. Before issuing or varying a police and crime plan, PCCs must:
  - prepare a draft of the plan or variation;
  - consult the Chief Constable in preparing the draft plan or variation;
  - send the draft plan or variation to the Police and Crime Panel;
  - have regard to any report or recommendations made by the Panel in relation to the draft plan or variation;
  - give the panel a response to any such report or recommendations; and
  - publish any such response.
6. In exercising their discrete functions, PCCs and Chief Constables must have regard to the issued police and crime plan.
7. However, the police and crime plan also impacts upon a wide variety of stakeholders and has a number of intended audiences including the public, victims of crime and witnesses, police officers and staff, the Secretary of State, Police and Crime Panels, community safety partners, criminal justice agencies and the private and voluntary sector.
8. The PRSRA 2011 also requires PCCs to notify the Police and Crime Panel of the precept which is proposed to be issued for the financial year.
9. The Police and Crime Panel must review the proposed precept and make a report to the PCC, which may include recommendations, including as to the precept that should be issued for the financial year.
10. This report fulfils the requirements set out in paragraphs 5 and 8.

**Refreshing the 'Making Kent Safer' plan:**

11. On 1 April 2022, the PCC published his police and crime plan, titled 'Making Kent Safer – April 2022 to March 2025'.

12. In accordance with the PRSRA 2011, the PCC is committed to consulting with victims and the wider community and to keeping the plan under review, particularly in light of changes to the SPR and/or recommendations made by the Police and Crime Panel. More formally, the PCC has determined that the plan will be refreshed annually.
13. Attached as Appendix A is the 2023 refreshed version of 'Making Kent Safer' in text only format. Once the text has been finalised, photographs and graphics will be added. It will be presented in a similar format to the current plan.
14. As a refresh, the plan has been updated where appropriate but not fundamentally altered; it reflects the PCC's ambitions, with the priorities designed to drive the work of Kent Police, partners and the Office of the PCC (OPCC) until March 2025, as well as setting the strategic direction for policing and community safety in the county.
15. In approaching each refresh, the PCC is committed to positively encouraging feedback from individuals, communities and partner agencies. With circa 1.9 million people living in diverse urban, rural and coastal communities across Kent and Medway, the PCC commenced his formal consultation in the summer of 2022.
16. The PCC launched his Annual Policing Survey in July 2022 and it remained open for five months, to November 2023. A total of 2,964 responses were received.
17. A report outlining the survey methodology, and the full results is attached as Appendix B (and can also be viewed online [here](#)).
18. Below is an overview of some of the key questions and a precis of the results (previous year's figures are also included where comparative data are available):

Q3. Do you agree with the priorities I have set for Kent Police?

	<i>% strongly agree or agree</i>
<i>Prevent crime and antisocial behaviour</i>	92.7%
<i>Tackle violence against women and girls</i>	85.7%
<i>Protect people from exploitation and abuse</i>	86.1%
<i>Combat organised crime and county lines</i>	90.2%
<i>Be visible and responsive to the needs of communities</i>	90.4%
<i>Prevent road danger and support Vision Zero</i>	74.2%
<i>Protect young people and provide opportunities</i>	77.2%

Q4. How safe do you feel where you live? (1 = very unsafe / 10 = very safe)

- *Respondents across Kent and Medway felt 7.2/10 safe where they live [2021 = 7.0 / 2020 = 7.0 / 2019 = 6.4 / 2018 = 6.5]*

Q5. Have you been a victim of crime in Kent in the last year?

- *17.9% of respondents indicated 'Yes' [2021 = 16.8% / 2020 = 15.9% / 2019 = 19.7% / 2018 = 23.3%]*

Q9. If you reported the crime, how satisfied were you with Kent Police?

<i>Very satisfied or satisfied</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied</i>
21.6%	29.0%	49.4%

Q14. Would you be prepared to pay more council tax to support policing in Kent?

- *52.4% of respondents indicated 'Yes' and 47.6% 'No'*

Q15. If so, by how much (per year)?

<i>£5</i>	<i>£10</i>	<i>£15</i>
19.3%	30.9%	49.8%

Q16. Which of the following issues do you feel are the most important?

- Respondents could select up to six issues from a pre-defined list; the top five were:
1. Serious violence, including gangs / weapon offences
  2. Sexual offences, including rape
  3. Antisocial behaviour
  4. Child sexual exploitation
  5. Burglary / robbery

19. Whilst not mandatory, to monitor how representative the sample was of Kent and Medway's population, respondents were also asked to provide demographic information and indicate whether they worked for, or volunteered with Kent Police.

20. In addition to the survey, other factors considered by the PCC include:

- The [Strategic Policing Requirement](#) which sets out the national threats and the national policing capabilities required to counter them.
- Public conversations around women and girls safety and the Government's [Tackling violence against women and girls strategy](#).
- The Government's '[Beating crime plan](#)'.
- The [Policing Vision 2025](#) which sets out the future for policing.
- Feedback and observations from the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel.
- Emerging local threats and risks.
- The priorities of local criminal justice bodies (as Chair of the Kent Criminal Justice Board).
- The priorities and views of community safety partners, as well as wider stakeholders.

21. Inevitably, the refresh has also taken into account feedback received throughout the year from engagements undertaken by the PCC as well as the thousands of pieces of correspondence received by the OPCC.

22. The Chief Constable has also been fully consulted, and of course the PCC's own ambitions and objectives, as well as overall vision for policing and community safety in the county remain at its core.

23. Further to any recommendations made by the Panel, the refreshed plan will be published on 1 April 2023.

24. The PCC would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who completed the survey and provided feedback on policing and crime across the county.

#### **Changes to the 'Making Kent Safer' plan:**

25. It is important to note that based on the survey results:

- there was strong support for the current plan priorities;
- the top five issues respondents felt were most important were consistent with last year and already included in the plan.

26. In light of this and reflecting the significant amount of work that went into developing the current plan, no substantive changes have been made. However, the following two areas have been updated:

- Under 'National expectations', the section titled 'Legislation' to ensure it is current and up-to date.
- The section titled 'Resources and Medium Finance Plan' has been extensively re-written to take account of the latest financial information.

27. In accordance with the PRSRA 2011, the PCC will keep the plan under constant review, particularly in light of changes to the SPR or recommendations made by the Police and Crime Panel.

#### **Policing precept proposal for 2023/24:**

28. On 12 December 2022, the Rt Hon Chris Philp MP, Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire wrote to the National Police Chiefs Council and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners to confirm an increase in the precept from £10 to £15. The Minister said:

*"I recognise the pressures faced by policing and have listened to those PCCs that requested a greater degree of flexibility when setting budgets. Therefore, I can confirm that the referendum limit for PCCs in England for 2023-24 will be £15 for a typical Band D property and equivalent, raising up to an additional £349 million from precept income (on top of increases to core grant) using the*

latest forecasts, should all PCCs utilise the full flexibility. This is an additional £5 precept flexibility over and above the announcement made at Spending Review 2021.

*“However, we are also clear that precept rises should not be in place of sound financial management and we expect PCCs to exhaust all other options to reprioritise budgets, seek efficiencies and to maximise productivity of their existing resources before looking to local taxpayers for additional funding. PCCs should consider the pressures on their budgets, including the potential for a 2023-24 pay award above 2% next year, for which they should budget appropriately.*

*“To that end, I will require PCCs to set out to me in the New Year how you will deliver efficiencies and productivity improvements in 2023-24.”*

29. Subsequently, on 14 December 2022, the Minister provided a written statement on the Provisional Police Grant Report to the House of Commons. As the second year of the three-year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR21) announced in autumn 2021, the Minister said:

*“Spending Review 2021 confirmed that PCCs in England will be empowered to raise additional funding through increased precept flexibility of up to £10 per year to 2024-25. However, recognising the financial pressures police forces are facing, we propose to enable PCCs in England in 2023-24 to increase their precept by up to £15 for a typical Band D property... This would equate to an additional £349 million should all PCCs maximise this flexibility.*

*“Using this precept flexibility is a decision that must be taken by each locally elected PCC. Local taxation should not be in place of sound financial management, and therefore I expect PCCs to exhaust all other options to reprioritise their budgets, seek efficiencies and maximise productivity of their existing resources before looking to local taxpayers for additional funding.”*

30. On 7 December, the Minister also sent a letter to Chief Constables and PCCs acknowledging that the current funding formula is outdated and confirming a continued commitment to the Police Funding Formula Review. He advised that he has asked Home Office officials to prepare for a first public consultation in early 2023.

31. As a result of the Minister’s statement to the House of Commons, the PCC is proposing to increase the policing precept by the maximum allowable amount of £15 per year, or 6.57% for an average Band D property (equivalent to £1.25 per month, or 4 pence per day).

32. The proposed increase would be used to:

- Make up a deficit in central government funding to maintain policing services and the record number of police officers in Kent.
- Enable police officers to replace PCSOs in local areas as part of implementation of the Neighbourhood Policing Review. Unfortunately, there will be an associated reduction in the PCSO Headcount.
- Reduce the level of savings required in 2023/24 and limit further reductions in the number of staff.
- Continue the investment at Coldharbour, as well as Maidstone, Sittingbourne, Folkestone, Tonbridge, and Ashford police stations.
- Maintain the police cadet programmes.

33. The decision to propose the maximum precept increase allowed is not one that has been taken lightly; the PCC is acutely aware that Kent residents are facing considerable cost-of-living increases, and this will only add further pressure. However, even with the increase, the PCC is only able to mitigate some, not all, of the cost pressures in the budget.

34. In previous years, whilst highlighting the need to make significant savings, the PCC has been able to identify the additionality to Kent Police that the precept would provide, whether through additional officers, PCSOs or assets and equipment. However, the financial challenges facing Kent Police and the PCC in 2023/24 and beyond mean difficult decisions have had to be made to balance the budget. A shortfall in funding from the Government coupled with significant inflation mean cost pressures for 2023/24 are substantial and savings need to be made.

35. Increasing the precept to the maximum allowed will help mitigate but not remove the need to make savings. Whilst the Chief Constable and the PCC have made every effort to mitigate the impact on frontline policing, even with a £15 increase, £42.2m of savings are required over the medium term - £14.1m in 2023/24. 80% of the budget is expenditure on employees and so it is inevitable that with the level of savings required there will be some impact on staffing levels to balance the budget. Anything less than £15 would require further reductions in staff and service levels.
36. As in previous years, there will be no increase in the cost of running the OPCC, with the budget being maintained at £1.5m.
37. In developing the proposal, the PCC has also considered other factors including:
- 52.4% of respondents to the Annual Policing Survey indicating they were prepared to pay more council tax, with 49.8% willing to pay £15 per year.
  - Delivery of the refreshed 'Making Kent Safer' plan.
  - Professional guidance and advice from the Chief Constable.
  - Kent Police's Force Management Statement (FMS) - a detailed self-assessment of future demand versus capacity.
  - Kent Police's Control Strategy - an annual assessment of long-term key issues.
  - The National Crime Agency's Strategic Assessment - an annual assessment of the threat to the UK from serious and organised crime.
38. By way of context, the Kent PCC remains in the lowest quartile (bottom 10) of precepting PCCs across the country and Kent remains in the lower quartile for Government funding to PCCs.
39. Subject to the Police and Crime Panel's approval, the PCC confirms his intention to increase the policing precept in 2023/24 to £243.15 for an average Band D property. This represents an increase of £15 per year (or 6.57%) on the current precept.
40. Attached as Appendix C is a detailed report dealing with financial matters prepared by the Chief Finance Officer.

**Recommendation:**

41. The Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel is asked to:
- Review the draft refreshed 'Making Kent Safer' plan and produce a report which may include recommendations.
  - Review the proposed precept and produce a report which may include recommendations, including as to the precept that should be issued for the financial year.

**List of Appendices:**

- Appendix A** Draft refreshed police and crime plan 'Making Kent Safer – April 2022 to March 2025'
- Appendix B** Annual Policing Survey report – November 2022
- Appendix C** Chief Finance Officer's Report