

# **Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner – Budget Proposals and Precept.**

## **Report of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel.**

### **1.0 Introduction**

The Police and Crime Panel (PCP) is required by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 to review and make a report to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on the Commissioner's proposed local police precept by 8 February. The Panel has the option to veto the precept at this stage. The PCC issued his proposed precept by the required deadline of 1 February along with budget proposals. The Panel considered the proposals at its meeting on 7 February and agreed to accept the 0% increase in precept proposed by the PCC. The Panel reached its conclusion after questioning the PCC and with the PCC's assurance on some key points raised by the Panel. The minutes of the Panel's meeting set out the questions put by the Panel and the PCC responses. This report summarises the key points raised by the Panel and that the panel wish the PCC to take into account over the coming year and in preparation for future year's budgets.

### **2.0 Budget Information**

The Panel welcomed the PCC's decision to also share his draft Police and Crime Plan ahead of formal consideration by the Panel in March, as the Plan should be the starting point for the development of the budget and priorities reflected in the budget allocations. The Panel, however, was concerned that the budget as presented gave only a high level summary of budget movements and failed to provide detail on where savings will come from and how the expenditure will be allocated. The Panel would also like an explanation of the estates strategy, including recent changes referred to by the PCC, and would like to see a clearer explanation of reserves.

The Panel considered the presentation of the budget was a barrier for the Panel in forming a judgement about the appropriateness of the budget. The Panel has had to accept the assurance of the PCC that he is confident that the strategic alliance work will continue on course; that the good performance in relation to meeting savings targets will continue and that the retention of a high level of reserves is appropriate at this point (allowing that the budget is based on only a 1 year government settlement and that there is uncertainty about future years funding). The Panel has noted the PCC's commitment to monitoring performance and to ensuring the Chief Constable takes rapid action if there is any deterioration in performance.

The Panel looks forward to having more detail about the underlying basis of the budget and to earlier involvement in the development of the budget in future years. The Panel welcomes the PCC's assurance that budget planning for 2014/15 will start in September and will include an ongoing dialogue with the Panel.

### **3. Budget Priorities**

The Panel noted the three priorities (innovative community safety initiatives, increase in special constables and introduction of community ambassadors) which are to be funded from a new £2m reserve, and the £2.3m reserve to support the retention of PCSOs. The Panel generally supported these initiatives and looked forward to further details, including exactly how the £2m reserve will be allocated. The Panel did, however, note that there are many areas the PCC could have considered and the Panel will be interested to see feedback from public consultation on the draft Police and Crime Plan.

The Panel welcomed being given more detail on the proposed community ambassadors (who will have an allowance of £875 pa plus travel costs) and to learn that the Chief Constable was considering an expansion of powers of PCSOs. The Panel look forward to receiving a briefing on roles and powers of Special Constables and PCSOs at its next meeting.

### **4. Community Safety Budget**

The Panel are concerned that the Community Safety Grant will be adequate, noting the assessment by the Treasurer to the PCC that there could be a £150k shortfall compared to previous equivalent funding to organisations. The Panel has noted the PCC's intention to support organisations in 2013/14 at the level they have had in previous years to allow continuity of service where possible and his commitment to ensuring that funding for Victim and Witness Support continues.

The Panel welcome further information on how allocations will be made and how the PCC will align his priorities with those of partners, particularly those of the Community Safety Partnerships, and Councils within Warwickshire.

### **5. Conclusion**

The Panel accepts the budget proposals as an interim approach but look forward to more detailed information at future meetings in order that the Panel can monitor progress of both the Police Plan and the Budget. The Panel also looks forward to engagement in the budget process for 2014/15 that will start in September.