

# Precept Consultation Results 2022

## Background

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act states that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) must make arrangements for obtaining the views of the people in that police area, and the relevant ratepayers' representatives, on their proposals for expenditure in that financial year.

Cleveland OPCC undertook a public consultation exercise from September 2021 to January 2022, focusing on a number of themes in relation to police funding:

- Whether people would be willing to pay more towards their police precept
- How much additional funding people would be prepared to pay
- Reasons behind people's opinions about funding levels
- Where people felt any additional funding should be focused

The consultation included an online survey, which was open from 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021 to 6<sup>th</sup> January 2022, and which was promoted through a number of channels including:

- OPCC social media
- Promotion with elected members across the whole Cleveland area
- Strategic and local Independent Advisory Groups
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Police and Crime Panel
- Engagement with partner organisations

OPCC staff also attended a number of community events across the whole Cleveland area, engaging through paper based versions of the survey and also with counters where members of the public could place a counter to indicate what, if any, level of increased precept they would be willing to support. Roadshows took place at the following locations:

- Bark in the Park – Stewarts Park
- Festival of Thrift – Kirkleatham Museum
- Diwali event – Middlesbrough Town Hall
- Parkway shopping centre
- Tesco, Ingleby Barwick
- Castlegate shopping centre
- Middleton Grange shopping centre

Whilst every effort was made to distribute attendance at events across the Cleveland area the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that the number of organised community events was limited, with no appropriate organised community events in the Hartlepool area. The government advice to work from home where possible also meant that the last shopping centre consultation that was due to take place in South Bank had to be cancelled. It should also be noted that public appetite to engage in a face to face consultation was noticeably lower after 30<sup>th</sup> November when mandatory mask wearing in indoor environments was reinstated – this impacted the roadshows in Middleton Grange, Castlegate and Ingleby Barwick. The ongoing pandemic has also meant an over reliance by local agencies on online survey methodology, leading to a level of consultation fatigue. Despite significant promotion of the survey the response levels were disappointingly low.

## Demographics

In total 448 people completed the survey, and 795 people took part in the counter consultation, meaning that a total of 1243 people gave their views in the consultation. This means that the results can be considered to have a margin of error of +/- 3% and a 95% confidence level.

Responses were comparable across 3 of the 4 local policing areas with considerably less respondents from the Hartlepool area, as follows:

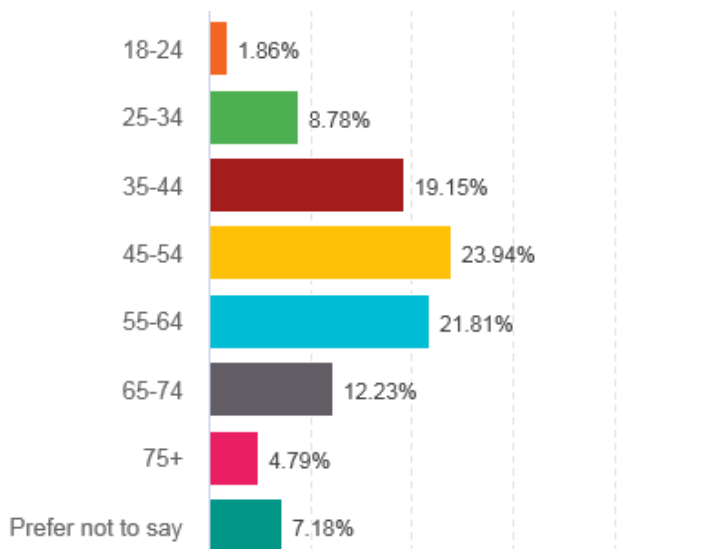
- Redcar and Cleveland responses – 29.3%
- Middlesbrough responses – 25.7%
- Stockton responses – 24.3%
- Hartlepool responses – 8.8%
- Unspecified<sup>1</sup> responses – 11.8%

The only demographic information collected from the counter consultation was Local Policing Area. The online/paper survey collected additional demographics around gender, disability, age and race.

Of those who completed the survey 48.9% identified as male and 46% identified as female. One participant identified as non-binary, one selected the other category and the remaining participants chose not to say.

16.7% of participants considered themselves to have a disability.

Almost two thirds of participants (64.9%) were aged between 35 and 64. The graph below shows the full spread of ages across the survey.



The majority of respondents (88%) identified as White British. There were a very small number of responses from people who identified as Asian, Mixed Heritage or Chinese, but the majority of respondents who did not identify as White British chose not to disclose their race.

<sup>1</sup> Responses to the counter consultation at Bark in the Park were not collated by Local Policing Area so these responses did not specify a Local Policing Area

## Views on Funding

### Would you be willing to pay more towards local policing?

Across the whole consultation, covering both the survey and the counter exercise, 71.3% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay more Council Tax towards the cost of local policing.

However, the results differed dramatically between the face to face counter consultation and the surveys which were predominantly completed online, with a small number completed face to face at the community roadshow events. Only 36.4% of respondents to the survey indicated that they would be willing to pay more towards their local policing, whereas 91% of those who took part in the counter consultation stated that they would be willing to increase police precept levels.

Levels of support for a precept increase differed across the different Local Policing Areas. Across the whole consultation Stockton respondents were the least likely to support an increase (60%) whilst Middlesbrough respondents were the most likely (78%). Positive responses for an increase were 61% in Hartlepool and 72% in Redcar and Cleveland.

### Reasons behind not wanting to pay more

Respondents to the survey who stated that they would not be willing to pay more towards local policing were asked for the reasons behind their answer. By far the most common response was that people did not feel they got an acceptable level of service from the police currently and would therefore not be willing to pay more. Respondents mentioned lack of visible policing, lack of response when incidents were reported and a perception that the police did not focus on the issues that mattered to local residents. Many respondents mentioned that Cleveland had been rated as a 'failing' force and for that reason they could not justify paying more money as they didn't feel that they were currently receiving value for money. Several respondents stated that they lived in lower crime areas so they would not be willing to pay an increased amount as they didn't think that the funding would not go towards policing in their local area.

Another common response was that people felt they already paid enough Council Tax with many stating that the rates locally were amongst the highest in the country. Rising inflation and cost of living coupled with these high rates of tax meant many people felt it was not affordable to pay more. Respondents also felt that more funding should be received from central government and that local taxes should not be relied upon to compensate for the lack of centralised funding.

A significant proportion of people felt that the funding the police currently received should be adequate and that the Force should manage current funding more effectively with smarter working practices, streamlined management and more investment in technology to assist investigations. Concern was raised at the amount of police funding which has been used in recent years to compensate officers who have made claims against the Force. Several respondents also expressed concern at the levels of funding going into staffing the OPCC, with many feeling that efficiencies could be made.

Concerns were raised about the current management of the Force, both in terms of the lack of longevity of Chief Constable tenure and also in relation to the number of

allegations made against the PCC. Some respondents lacked faith in the PCC structure and felt that efficiencies could be made in this area.

#### Reason behind being willing to pay more

Respondents to the survey who stated that they would be willing to pay more towards local policing were asked for the reasons behind their answer. By far the most common response was that people would be prepared to pay additional money towards local policing if this meant an increase in visible police presence in their area. Many respondents stated that having more police would make them feel safer. Concerns were raised around rising crime rates and the perceived inability of the police to deal with the issues effectively with the number of officers currently available to them.

A high proportion of respondents stated that they felt the police was currently inadequately funded by central government so they would be willing to pay more as this was the only option to increase resources.

Concerns were also raised regarding officer safety, with some being willing to pay more to ensure that officers had the support they needed when attending incidents and putting their lives on the line.

#### How much more would you be willing to pay?

Respondents who stated that they would be willing to pay more towards their local policing were asked how much more per month they would be willing to pay with options of £1, £1.50, £2 and £2.50.

Across the whole consultation, covering both the survey and the counter exercise, over three quarters of respondents (76%) chose the highest option of £2.50 extra per month. Again survey respondents were markedly less likely to want to pay more than respondents to the face to face counter consultation – 59% of survey respondents chose the highest option of £2.50 compared to 80% of respondents to the counter consultation.

When comparing results between the different Local Policing Areas, again Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland had the highest appetite for higher funding levels, with 84% of respondents from Redcar and Cleveland choosing the £2.50 option and 83% of respondents from Middlesbrough. This compared to 67% from Hartlepool and 66% from Stockton, so for all areas the highest rise was the most popular option. Hartlepool had significantly more responses for the lowest possible rise of £1.00 compared to the other areas – 24% compared to 9% for Stockton, 6% for Middlesbrough and only 2% for Redcar and Cleveland.

The table below shows the full range of answers:

	<b>£1.00</b>	<b>£1.50</b>	<b>£2.00</b>	<b>£2.50</b>
<b>All</b>	7%	6%	11%	76%
<b>Survey only</b>	14%	9%	18%	59%
<b>Counters only</b>	5%	5%	10%	80%
<b>Hartlepool</b>	24%	5%	5%	67%
<b>Middlesbrough</b>	6%	4%	6.5%	83%
<b>Redcar &amp; Cleveland</b>	2%	5%	9%	84%
<b>Stockton</b>	9%	7%	18%	66%

#### Where would you like to see additional money spent?

Respondents to the survey were asked where they would like to see any additional funding focused. By far the most popular choice was on local policing (77.6%) followed by public protection (44.8%) and investigations (32.3%). Operational support and control room/front desk were seen as less of a priority, with 17.5% and 13.3% respectively.

The key issues that people felt additional police resources should be used to target were antisocial behaviour and drugs.

#### **Conclusion**

Across the whole consultation, 71.3% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay more Council Tax towards the cost of local policing, however the results differed dramatically between the face to face counter consultation and the surveys, with only 36.4% of respondents to the survey willing to pay more compared to 91% of those who took part in the counter consultation.

Levels of support for a precept increase differed across the different Local Policing Areas. Across the whole consultation Stockton respondents were the least likely to support an increase (60%) whilst Middlesbrough respondents were the most likely (78%). Positive responses for an increase were 61% in Hartlepool and 72% in Redcar and Cleveland.

The key reason behind people not wanting to pay more towards their local policing was feeling that they did not get an acceptable service from the police currently and were therefore not getting value for money – lack of visible policing, lack of response when issues were reported and a perception that their own area would not benefit if resources were increased were all mentioned as key factors.

Many people felt that current Council Tax levels were already high compared to other areas of the country and rising inflation made any further increases unaffordable. It was also felt that local taxes should not be relied upon to make up for a lack of sufficient centralised funding from government.

A significant proportion of people felt that the funding the police currently received should be adequate and that the Force should manage current funding more effectively.

The key reason behind people being willing to pay more was to see an increase in visible police presence in their area. Many respondents stated that having more police would make them feel safer. Concerns were raised around rising crime rates and the perceived inability of the police to deal with the issues effectively with the number of officers currently available to them.

A high proportion of respondents stated that they felt the police was currently inadequately funded by central government so they would be willing to pay more as this was the only option to increase resources.

Respondents who stated that they would be willing to pay more towards their local policing were asked how much more per month they would be willing to pay with options of £1, £1.50, £2 and £2.50. Across the whole consultation over three quarters of respondents (76%) chose the highest option of £2.50 extra per month. Again survey respondents were markedly less likely to want to pay more than respondents to the face to face counter consultation – 59% of survey respondents chose the highest option of £2.50 compared to 80% of respondents to the counter consultation.

When comparing results between the different local policing areas, again Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland had the highest appetite for higher funding levels, with 84% of respondents from Redcar and Cleveland choosing the £2.50 option and 83% of respondents from Middlesbrough. This compared to 67% from Hartlepool and 66% from Stockton, so for all areas the highest rise was the most popular option.

Respondents to the survey were asked where they would like to see any additional funding focused. By far the most popular choice was on local policing (77.6%) followed by public protection (44.8%) and investigations (32.3%). Operational support and control room/front desk were seen as less of a priority, with 17.5% and 13.3% respectively.

The key issues that people felt additional police resources should be used to target were antisocial behaviour and drugs.