

Precept Consultation Results 2023/2024

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 for six weeks from November 2022 to mid December 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

The consultation included an online survey, which was open from 2nd November 2022 to 12th December 2022, and which was promoted through a number of channels including:

- OPCC social media
- Strategic Independent Advisory Group
- Voluntary Development Agencies
- Engagement with partner organisations, including:
 - Youth services
 - Groups working with ethnically diverse communities
 - Organisations for disabled people/people with learning difficulties

OPCC staff also held a number of face to face engagement stalls in community locations using a counter based methodology where members of the public could place a counter to indicate what, if any, level of increased precept they would be willing to support. Stalls took place at the following locations:

- Hartlepool – Tesco's
- Hartlepool – Asda
- Cleveland Centre
- Parkway Centre
- Eston Christmas Market
- Eston – Tesco's
- Guisborough – Morrisons
- Tesco's – Trunk Road
- Billingham – Tesco's
- Stockton – Tesco's
- Ingleby Barwick Tesco's
- Eaglescliffe – Tesco's

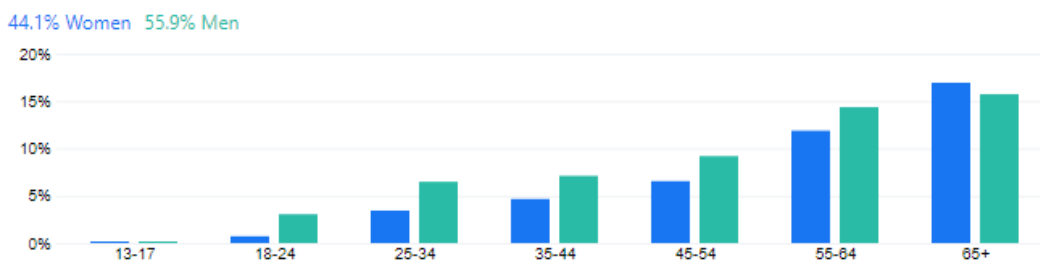
Whilst every effort was made to distribute attendance at events across the Cleveland area this was impacted by the availability of suitable community locations and the willingness of retail and shopping centre management to facilitate consultation stalls.

Social media advertising

The OPCC Communications Team were given a brief to increase the number of survey responses from the Hartlepool area, which traditionally has a lower response rate to the precept consultation. It was decided that paid advertisement on Facebook, Messenger and Instagram would be used to target people living in the Hartlepool area and direct them to complete the survey.

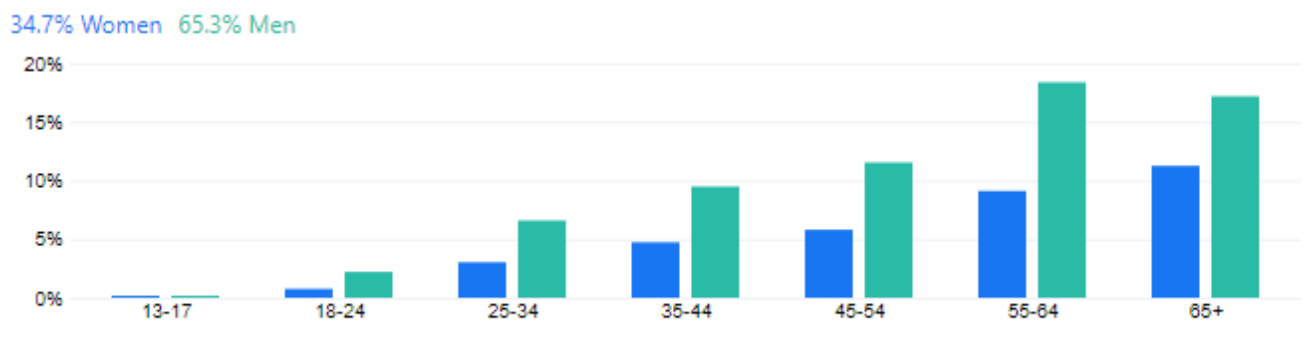
The campaign was given a daily budget of £6.00 and was set to run from 2nd November to 12th December 2022. The audience for the campaign was people aged 18-65+, living within the geographical area of Hartlepool.

Audience of Hartlepool post:



Midway through this campaign, a review was undertaken on the number of responses. It was clear that the number of responses from Hartlepool were disproportionately high, in comparison with the other boroughs of Cleveland. As a result, it was agreed that the campaign would be widened to cover the entire Cleveland area. The graphics used in the post were tweaked slightly, but the text of the post remained the same.

Audience of Cleveland-wide post - *noting the difference in gender breakdown compared to the Hartlepool advert.*



Results have been collated across both the original Hartlepool post and the Cleveland-wide post, which ran from 23rd November to 12th December and had the same budget of £6 per day. These results are shown in the table on the following page.

Actual cost	£305.23
Reach (number of people who saw our advert at least once)	34,690
Link clicks (clicks through to the precept survey)	1,034
Post engagement (number of times people interacted with the post)	1,351
Comments	205
Shares	41

In addition to these statistical results, the OPCC Communications Team has collated the comments from the social media adverts which have been analysed together with the online survey responses to better understand community feelings about police funding.

Demographics

In total 737 people completed the survey, and 455 people took part in the counter consultation, meaning that a total of 1,192 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 Middlesbrough area, as follows:

- Redcar and Cleveland responses – 30.5%
- Stockton responses – 29%
- Hartlepool responses – 25%
- Middlesbrough responses – 15.5%

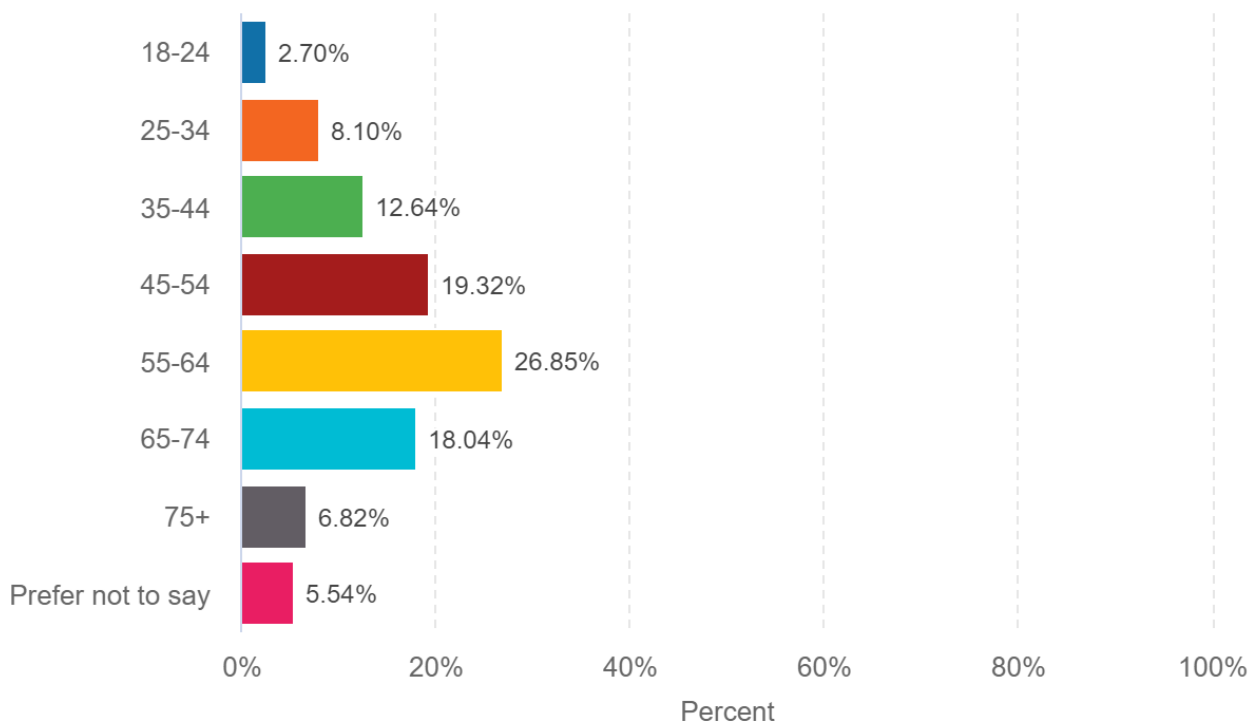
The only demographic information collected from the counter consultation was Local Policing Area. The online/paper survey collected additional demographics around gender, disability, age and race.

Of those who completed the survey 56.7% identified as male and 36.9% identified as female. 1.1% (8 participants) identified as non-binary, with the remaining participants choosing not to say.

21.6% of participants considered themselves to have a disability.

Almost half the participants (46.2%) were aged between 45 and 64. The graph on the following page shows the full spread of ages across the survey.

What age are you?



The majority of respondents (90.2%) identified as White British. There were a very small number of responses from people who identified as Asian, Black, Mixed Heritage or Other Ethnic Group, but the majority of respondents who did not identify as White British chose not to disclose their race.

Views on Funding

How much more would you be willing to pay towards local policing?

Across the whole consultation, covering both the survey and the counter exercise, 63.5% 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 online surveys. Only 48.6% of respondents to the survey indicated that they would be willing to pay more towards their local policing, whereas 86.9% 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 Hartlepool respondents were the least likely to support an increase (53.7%) whilst Redcar and Cleveland respondents were the most likely (71.1%). Positive responses for an increase were 61.1% in Middlesbrough and 65.2% in Stockton. Reasons for this discrepancy could be the differing methodologies as far more people from Hartlepool took part in the online survey than took part in the face to face consultation.

Respondents were asked how much more they would be willing to pay per year towards their local policing with options of no increase, £10, £18, £24 and £30.

Across the whole consultation, covering both the survey and the counter exercise, nearly a fifth of respondents (19.6%) chose the highest option of £30 extra per year. Again survey respondents were markedly less likely to want to pay more than respondents to the face to face counter consultation – 16.5% of survey respondents chose the highest option of £30 compared to 24.4% of respondents to the counter consultation.

When comparing results between the different Local Policing Areas, Stockton had the highest appetite for higher funding levels, with 24.4% of respondents from Stockton choosing the £30 option. Middlesbrough had the lowest support for higher funding levels with only 14.6% choosing the £30 option. Middlesbrough also had significantly more responses in the lowest level of increased funding (£10) than other areas (26.5%).

The table below shows the full range of answers:

	£0	£10	£18	£24	£30
All	36.5%	18.1%	14.5%	11.3%	19.6%
Survey only	51.4%	13.1%	11.4%	7.6%	16.5%
Counters only	13.1%	26%	19.3%	17.1%	24.4%
Hartlepool	46.3%	14.6%	10.8%	10.1%	18.1%
Middlesbrough	38.9%	26.5%	15.7%	4.3%	14.6%
Redcar & Cleveland	28.9%	15.4%	20.7%	16.2%	18.8%
Stockton	34.8%	19.3%	10.4%	11%	24.4%

Reasons behind funding views

Many of those respondents who stated that they would be willing to pay more towards their local policing gave the caveat that additional funding would need to mean additional visible on the street police presence. The closure of local police stations contributed towards this perception of policing in communities not being visible enough. Respondents from Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland felt particularly strongly that policing in their areas needed more investment.

Many respondents felt that local policing needed to be less reactive and focus on core problem solving activity to 'nip issues in the bud'. It was also felt that the police should be allowed to focus on the core role of policing crime and disorder and that other statutory services, such as mental health, should be more readily available. Drugs, violence and antisocial use of motor vehicles were all mentioned as key areas the police needed to focus on going forwards.

Several respondents expressed frustration at perceived lack of support for the police from the wider criminal justice system with many demanding tougher sentences for perpetrators.

Several respondents felt that police funding from central government should be increased rather than relying on taxpayer funding. It was also acknowledged that the police needed to find efficiencies where possible, as private households do. Some respondents expressed concern at the level of funding needed to maintain the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

In terms of respondents who stated that they would not be willing to pay more for local policing, many cited the lack of service they felt they were currently receiving, with some feeling their areas were 'forgotten'. Respondents from Hartlepool felt particularly strongly that they were not currently receiving a satisfactory level of local policing.

Many respondents felt that Cleveland Police does not represent good value for money for local tax payers so it is unfair to ask for additional contributions and the service should instead look to operate more smartly and achieve economies in house, including by reducing the number of officers in non frontline roles.

Lack of confidence in the police due to poor performance and prominent misconduct cases also contributed to the lack of willingness to increase funding.

A key factor behind some respondent's views was also the current financial pressures being faced by many households and a lack of additional funding to contribute towards policing. Many stated that they felt the amounts they were already paying for Council Tax were too high.

It was felt that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has a key role in lobbying government to increase funding for policing rather than increasing local taxes, although conversely some respondents felt that the PCC role was an unnecessary cost which could be removed.

Comments received on social media broadly reflected the opinions expressed by those who completed the survey, with communities feeling that they were not receiving an acceptable level of policing currently and also expressing lack of confidence in Cleveland Police due to reputational damage from previous issues the Force has faced, both in terms of performance and behaviour of staff.

Conclusion

Across the whole consultation, 63.5% 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 48.6% of respondents to the survey willing to pay more compared to 86.9% of those who took part in the counter consultation.

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