**REPORT ON THE ACTING POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR GWENT’S PROPOSED COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT FOR 2024/25**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. This report is made in accordance with the Acting Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent’s (Acting Commissioner) statutory duty contained in Paragraph 5, Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

**BACKGROUND**

1. The Acting Commissioner notified the Gwent Police and Crime Panel (PCP) on the 19th of January 2024 of her Budget Requirement and Council Tax Precept Proposal for 2024/25. The PCP considered this detailed report, annexes and associated appendices in support of the Proposal at their meeting held at Penallta House, Caerphilly Borough County Council on the 26th of January 2024 (PCP meeting).
2. Following a full debate regarding the proposed increase, considering both the impact on the residents and communities of Gwent and the needs for Gwent Police to maintain current levels of service, the PCP unanimously resolved to agree an increase of 7.70% on the Acting Commissioner’s Council Tax Precept for 2024/25. It was within the PCP’s gift however, whilst supporting the Council Tax Precept Proposal increase, to recommend to the Acting Commissioner an alternative increase for her consideration.
3. On the 2nd of February 2024, the Acting Commissioner received the formal report on the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner’s Proposed Precept for 2024/25 from the PCP, unanimously endorsing the proposed Council Tax Precept increase. Although in support of the increase, the report also highlighted that:
4. The Panel wished to thank the Acting Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent, and the Acting Section 151 Officer, for the amended structure of the report this year. The provision of a clear presentation supported by the handout made the process much easier for members. Members appreciated the opportunity for engagement and discussion throughout the process. The information provided was clear and appropriate with detailed responses, the lack of jargon was appreciated.
5. The Panel would however wish to record their concerns regarding the Estates Strategy and note the pause of the Gwent Police Operational Facility (GPOF). The funding gap of £2.8m still has to be closed and it is recognised that savings of £4.4m have already been included in this budget.
6. Members are very uncomfortable with the increase of 7.70% due to the impact upon the residents of Gwent however extensive scrutiny and challenge has been carried out by the Acting Commissioner and her office therefore the Panel have supported the increase.

**CONSIDERATION OF THE GWENT POLICE AND CRIME PANEL’S COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT REPORT**

1. Upon receipt of the PCP’s formal report on the 2nd of February 2024, the Acting Commissioner, Acting S151 Officer, Chief Executive and the OPCC’s Head of Communications and Engagement have each considered that report and discussed its contents.
2. A number of internal meetings have already been held in the normal course of business between the Acting Commissioner, OPCC, the Chief Constable and chief officers where the points raised in the PCP’s report has been considered. At these internal meetings, the Acting Commissioner commended the valued challenge, scrutiny and importantly the support the PCP provided during its meeting of the 26th of January 2024 and in particular the work of the PCP’s Finance and Estate Sub-Group. The Acting Commissioner also conveyed her appreciation regarding the thanks given by the PCP, for the work undertaken by the Acting S151 Officer for engaging the Finance and Estate Sub-Group and PCP in early discussions about the Acting Commissioner’s detailed budget and precept report and also for his detailed and comprehensive answers given at the PCP meeting.
3. The Acting Commissioner fully accepts the concerns raised by the PCP concerning the Estates Strategy, the remaining budget gap, and the impact on local residents of the precept increase. Further discussions have already been held with chief officers within the Force to identify further cost saving and avoidance measures to reduce the £2.8m funding gap and these discussions continue.
4. In relation to the Estates Strategy, the Acting Commissioner remains committed to revising the Strategy in 2024/25. The Acting Commissioner and OPCC will work with the Secretariat to maintain consistent and ongoing dialogue with the PCP’s Finance and Estate Sub-Group and wider PCP, so that future risks and opportunities in relation to the Strategy and its affordability, are considered and acted upon in a timely manner. In particular, further information on the governance and progress of the Joint Firearms Range will be provided to future meetings of the PCP’s Finance and Estates Sub-Group.

**RECOMMENDATION**

1. The submission of this report to the PCP (and its subsequent publication) concludes the scrutiny process for the Council Tax Precept for 2024/25.
2. The Acting Commissioner will therefore issue her Council Tax Precept of £79,159,574 for 2024/25, equivalent to a Council Tax Band D of £349.52, reflecting an increase of 7.70% or £25.00 per annum.
3. The Council Tax Precept of £79,159,574 will be apportioned to each City/County/County Borough Council according to the following table:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Unitary Authorities** | **£** | **Tax Base Band D Equivalent** |
| **Blaenau Gwent Caerphilly****Monmouthshire****Newport****Torfaen** **Total** | **7,317,677****21,423,011****16,939,672****21,435,712****12,043,502****79,159,574** | **20,936.36****61,292.66****48,465.53****61.329.00****34.457.26****226,480.81** |  |

1. The Council Tax Precept shown in the above table generates the following amounts of council tax for the various bands:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Council Tax Band** | **£** |
| **A****B****C****D****E****F****G****H****I** | **233.01****271.85****310.68****349.52****427.19****504.86****582.53****699.04****815.55** |

1. The Acting Commissioner requests that this report is circulated to PCP Members for their immediate consideration.