

## OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

**LEAD CHIEF OFFICER:** Chief Finance Officer

**TITLE:** Findings from the 'have your say on policing budget' public survey

**DATE:** January 2022

**TIMING:** Annual

**PURPOSE:** To report the findings of the survey to help inform the Commissioner's decision when setting the precept level for 2022/23

<b>1.</b>	<b><u>RECOMMENDATION</u></b> 1.1 The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) executive team considers and notes the findings within this report and utilises them to inform the setting of the 2022/23 precept level.
<b>2.</b>	<b><u>INTRODUCTION &amp; BACKGROUND</u></b> 2.1 The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent has to engage with ratepayers on the police budget, which includes the part of the council tax that is allocated to the Commissioner known as the precept. It is the responsibility of every Commissioner to set the level of the precept for their area annually.  2.2 The OPCC launched this year's precept survey on Monday 18 October 2021. It closed on Sunday 9 January 2022 having run for a total of 12 weeks. For comparison, previous surveys ran for nine weeks, 13 weeks, and nine weeks. In prior years, it ran for approximately four weeks.  2.3 This year the office returned to a dual approach for engagement, with a series of face-to-face engagement events across all council areas being complemented with an online survey. In total, 25 events were planned, with 21 being completed. The final four were cancelled due to the widening spread of Omicron.  2.4 This approach was part of a wider OPCC drive over the last few years to deliver more efficient, effective and holistic engagement. Engaging with people in the communities that they live and work increased visibility of the office and opportunities for members of the public to have their say. To also helps ensure that the office isn't overly reliant on digital feedback and captures opinions from a wider selection of people.  2.5 Residents of Gwent were asked for their views on a number of policing issues in Gwent, as well as the proposed level of increase for the precept in 2022/23. The key question asked was: " <b>Would you support the principle of increasing the police part of council tax by up to £2 a</b>

**month (based on a band D property) for 2022/23 to maintain policing at current levels?”**

2.6 The main survey was conducted bilingually and asked up to 15 questions (depending on answers). This was three more than last year and excludes demographic questions. Easy read versions were available on request from the OPCC.

2.7 The online survey was proactively and repeatedly publicised via social media, local press and the OPCC website, as well as shared with community groups, partner organisations, the third sector and local authorities. In addition to this, public partners, community groups and third sector organisations shared posts with their audiences via their channels. The survey was the main news item on the OPCC website throughout the 12 weeks meaning it was the first thing visitors would see when visiting the home page.

2.8 To complement this, the OPCC carried out **21 public events** totalling **165 hours of engagement** in communities. The office spoke with more than 1,000 people at these events, with **360 people** completing the survey as a result. The office was supported at a number of these events by Cyffanol and Gwent Police. In total, the office gave out more than 1,200 crime prevention items and advice to residents during these sessions.

2.9 Overall, **1,697 people** completed the survey, with 1,337 completing it online.

**3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

3.1. It was agreed, prior to the launch of the survey that a representative sample size of 600 would be used. This provided a confidence level of 95%, including a +/- 4 margin of error. This was in line with targets for previous surveys.

3.2. Historically, the OPCC struggled to achieve a representative sample for precept surveys. However, this year the OPCC almost tripled the representative sample required, despite considerable logistical challenges caused by Covid-19.

3.3. There was an inevitable reduction in the amount of people who engaged with the office at each event, but this allowed for an even greater emphasis on the quality of the engagement. This furthered the approach of the OPCC in recent years to focus on meaningful conversations when carrying out engagement work, while also accurately capturing people's feedback and comments about policing in Gwent.

- 3.4. Although the overwhelming factor in the reduced footfall was Covid-19, an element of survey fatigue was a factor for some, as many people said they'd completed the Police and Crime Plan survey in the summer.
- 3.5. The survey was promoted in eight releases to the press, which were also highlighted on social media. The story appeared nine times in print and online on news outlets. This totalled a reach of 233,487 and an advertising value equivalent of £5,603.38. There were 18 Facebook and eight Instagram posts, 24 Twitter posts, and it was emailed to residents via Gwent Now. The survey featured prominently in the OPCC weekly ebulletin to residents seven times. In total, the survey promoted across the OPCC and Gwent Police's social media channels reached 37,665 people on Facebook and 102,146 on Twitter.
- 3.6. All Gwent councils were provided with bespoke social media content to share on their channels. Key social media influencers were contacted and tagged into social media content to enhance our reach, while content was also posted on several online local groups.
- 3.7. In addition to general promotion of the survey, a concerted effort was made to ensure the voices of people with protected characteristics were heard. Communications were cascaded to partners working with elderly residents (Age Connect Cymru) and LGBT residents (Umbrella Cymru). Communications were shared with local registered social landlords and organisations working with Gypsy Travellers. Information was also shared, and participants encouraged to voice their views, at the weekly community conference calls with representatives from a wide range of organisations that work with people with protected characteristics.
- 3.8. All town, community and county councillors were sent information on the survey with an offer for the OPCC to attend any forthcoming meetings and discuss the survey virtually, as well asking them to share details in their role as community leaders. This approach has been part of a wider drive by the OPCC establish and grow effective working relationships with partners and stakeholders, complemented by the bespoke content for their channels.
- 3.9. Multi-dialect communications were used to promote the survey. Posts were translated into Bengali, Punjabi Indian, Polish and Urdu, and shared with council community cohesion officers. A link to the Welsh language version of the survey was proactively promoted through the Welsh Language networks in Gwent. This meant communications went out in six languages in total. Stamped addressed envelopes with paper copies of the survey were also provided to partners to distribute.

3.10. Equality information was also collected and, of the people who chose to complete the equalities questions (98% of respondents), the majority of people stated their ethnicity as White British. However, 114 people (6.84%) stated another ethnicity, which is higher than the Gwent population percentage for Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents. Furthermore, in total, 16% of all respondents stated that they considered themselves to have a disability.

3.11. Residents who responded live in the following areas:

- Blaenau Gwent 13.74%
- Caerphilly 22.35%
- Monmouthshire 21.85%
- Newport 20.44%
- Torfaen 21.62%

3.12. The response rate was consistent across Gwent, with the exception being Blaenau Gwent which was lower despite having five face-to-face engagement sessions in the borough. Historically, the office has a lower response rate from Blaenau Gwent for all surveys. Unlike Gwent's other counties, Blaenau Gwent does not have a specific local newspaper which may have an impact on information spreading in the community. Blaenau Gwent is also a diverse area where engagement with official digital channels may be lower than other areas. As a result, this year the OPCC worked more closely with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and local funded partners, Cymru Creations and Ffin Dance, to ensure information was shared digitally. Areas of high footfall, such as Abertillery and Ebbw Vale markets, were targeted. All of Blaenau Gwent's elected community and county councillors were contacted and asked to share information, as well as all MPs and Senedd members.

3.13. As stated above, a total of 1,697 responses were received by the closing date. Due to the high level of response, the survey achieved a 99% confidence level that the answers received would be within +/- 4% margin of error on the actual results.

3.14. When collated, the total responses were:

- **750 (45%)** of respondents **supported** the principle of up to a £2 per month increase;
- **649 (39%)** of respondents **did not support** the principle of up to a £2 per month increase; and
- **265 (16%)** of respondents were **unsure**.

3.15. The survey results of the last two years have seen a significant move from yes to no, with unsure remaining static. It is important that the office understand what is causing this. When completing the survey and engaging face-to-face, both for the budget setting survey and more generally,

	<p>residents are given the opportunity to provide extra comments in relation to policing issues. As with previous years, there was a lot of feedback focused on police visibility. This is overwhelming the biggest factor highlighted to the office around people feeling safe in their communities. The amount of visible frontline officers is always the dominant narrative during engagement, with respondents either supporting an increase in the precept because they wouldn't want an reduction in officer numbers or not supporting it as they want more frontline police officers not parity.</p> <p>3.16. However, this year there was significant feedback about the cost of living crisis and people's ability to pay more for services. The household finances for many people are facing the perfect storm due to a variety of reasons and the crunch point is looming in April. The interest rate spike is predicted to peak, the energy price cap will rise by a substantial amount, taxes go up, and the long-term effects of both Brexit and the pandemic are more evident. These issues were all repeatedly brought up during engagement by residents.</p> <p>3.17. It is also important to note that residents overwhelming support the work of Gwent Police, with less than 10 per cent stating that they do not. The budget question saw a no response of 39 per cent of respondents, which emphasises the question of affordability for many people.</p> <p>3.18. The detailed findings from each question can be found in annex A.</p>
4.	<p><b><u>NEXT STEPS</u></b></p> <p>18. The findings within this report, along with feedback received both face-to-face and in the comment boxes, will be used by the Commissioner to inform the 2022/23 precept level.</p> <p>19. Once the precept has been approved, this will be communicated across OPCC channels.</p>
5.	<p><b><u>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</u></b></p> <p>5.1. None.</p>
6.	<p><b><u>PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS</u></b></p> <p>6.1. No personnel considerations for this year's survey; however, there is expected to be a significant amount of face-to-face engagement for future surveys, including weekend working.</p>
7.	<p><b><u>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</u></b></p> <p>7.1. The Commissioner has a duty under Section 14 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act to engage with ratepayers on the budget.</p>
8.	<p><b><u>EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS</u></b></p>

	<p>8.1. This report has been considered against the general duty to promote equality, as stipulated under the Strategic Equality Plan and has been assessed not to discriminate against any particular group. As the survey was open to all it has supported the equality requirements.</p> <p>8.2. Consideration has been given to requirements of the Articles contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998 in preparing this report.</p>
<b>9.</b>	<p><b><u>RISK</u></b></p> <p>9.1. The risk identified in this report is low as the Commissioner is discharging his statutory duties in carrying out this survey.</p>
<b>10.</b>	<p><b><u>PUBLIC INTEREST</u></b></p> <p>10.1. This report will be available to the public on the OPCC website.</p>
<b>11.</b>	<p><b><u>CONTACT OFFICER</u></b></p> <p>11.1. Rhodri Guest – Head of Communications and Engagement  <a href="mailto:rhodri.guest@gwent.police.uk">rhodri.guest@gwent.police.uk</a></p>
<b>12.</b>	<p><b><u>ANNEXES</u></b></p> <p><b>Annex A – Breakdown of survey responses</b></p>

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<b>Consultation:</b>	<b>Tick to confirm (if applicable)</b>
<p><b>Financial</b></p> <p>The Chief Finance Officer has been consulted on this proposal.</p>	
<p><b>OPCC</b></p> <p>The Head of Performance, Planning and Partnerships has reviewed the request and is satisfied that it is correct and consistent with the PCC's plans and priorities.</p>	
<p><b>Legal</b></p> <p>The legal team have been consulted on this proposal.</p>	
<p><b>Equalities</b></p> <p>The Equalities Officer has been consulted on this proposal.</p>	

**Chief Executive:**

I have been consulted about the proposal and can confirm that financial, legal, equalities etc... advice has been taken into account in the preparation of this report.

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate report to be submitted to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent.

**Signature:****Date:****Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent:**

I confirm that I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct.

The above request has my approval.

**Signature:****Date:****Public Access to Information**

Information in this submission is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and other legislation. This submission will be made available on the OPCC website following consideration by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Are you satisfied that the contents and observations made are necessary and suitable for the public domain?	
In producing this submission, has consideration been given to 'public confidence'?	
If you consider that this submission should be exempt from the public domain, please state the reasons.	