

Suffolk Police and Crime Panel Outcomes of Consideration of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Proposed Policing Precept for 2025/26

1. On 31 January 2025 the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel considered the recommendation of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Suffolk regarding the proposed precept level and Council Tax requirement for 2025/26 for policing in Suffolk.
2. The agenda and papers for the meeting are available on the [Suffolk County Council website](#).
3. On 17 December 2024 the Home Office published the [Provisional police grant report 2025 to 2026 for England and Wales](#). This set out the total amount of money going into policing during 2025/26, and how much each individual PCC was likely to receive. For 2025/26 the Home Office also gave PCCs in England the flexibility to increase local funding by setting a maximum £14 precept increase for a typical 'Band D' property.
4. Seven members of the Panel were present at the meeting. The PCC was accompanied by his Acting Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer/Head of Communications and Engagement and Chief Finance Officer. Suffolk Constabulary's Chief Constable (CC) was also present.
5. The Panel reviewed the PCC's detailed precept report and the associated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2025/26 to 2028/29, which included his proposal to increase the precept by **£13.95 (5.1%)** per annum for a 'Band D' property.
6. The PCC's decision papers in this regard are available on the [PCC's website](#), decision references [3-2025](#) and [5-2025](#).
7. The MTFP had been prepared following notification of the provisional 2025/26 settlements from the Home Office and in conjunction with a range of assumptions summarised within the report.
8. The Panel noted that two options had been considered by the PCC in determining the precept. The detail and rationale for each option are set out in the PCC's decision papers referred to above.
9. In summary, Option 1 (an increase of £9.99 [3.60%] per annum) would result in the Constabulary incurring a budget deficit of £1.1m in 2025/26, with cumulative savings of £5.8m required to achieve a balanced budget over the MTFP period. Option 2 (an increase of £13.95 [5.1%] per annum) would result in the Constabulary delivering a balanced budget in 2025/26. However, further savings of £4.6m would need to be identified in the period 2025/26 to 2028/29 to achieve a balanced budget over the MTFP period.

10. In introducing his report, the PCC outlined the rationale behind his decision to recommend an increase of 5.1% (£13.95pa) in the policing element of the Council Tax.
11. Whilst Suffolk was the third safest county in the country, with the best performance for recorded crime levels in England, it remained one of the lowest funded forces. The Government's funding formula took no account of Suffolk's rural geographical area and poor road network or changing patterns of crime. The PCC had a significant role in ensuring the Constabulary was sufficiently resourced, and with the shortfall in Government funding he was left with no choice but to propose an increase in the policing precept.
12. The Constabulary had an extensive ongoing savings programme aimed at taking costs out of the budget, and collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary saved Suffolk around £25m per year; nevertheless, without the proposed 5.1% precept increase further reductions over and above those shown in the report would need to be identified. Whilst the PCC would rather not increase the precept, on balance this was the right decision in order to keep crime levels low, which also had the effect of supporting economic growth and inward investment into Suffolk.
13. The Panel received an update from the PCC's Acting Chief Executive and Head of Communication and Engagement on his [survey](#) to capture the views of Suffolk residents on the proposal for the precept increase. The survey had been open for responses between 9 and 30 January 2025 and asked: "*As a council tax payer in Suffolk, do you agree with my proposal to increase the policing element of the council tax for 2025/26 by 5.1%? [For example this is equivalent to 21p a week for a Band B property and 27p a week for a Band D property]?"*. There had been 465 responses to the survey (down on the previous year's c. 2,000 responses), 59% of which supported the proposal.
14. Members questioned the PCC on his proposals, starting with the assumptions used to inform the proposed precept increase and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Members were concerned that the assumptions used were too conservative, for example in predicting no increase in Government core grant in future years (when in recent years it had increased annually), and a 2% precept increase, when larger increases had been permitted for several years. The PCC felt that Suffolk's prudent financial approach was one of the reasons that it did not have the level of debt that other forces had, and added that greater clarity from Government would enable more accurate forecasting in future.
15. Referring to the savings programme in Appendix C of the PCC's report, members wished to see more detail behind the figures shown, for example whether they reflected efficiency savings or reductions in service. The PCC responded that the majority of the savings were around efficiency; however, it was increasingly difficult to find savings that did not impact on service delivery. Detail around how these savings plans were progressing would be brought to future meetings of the PCC's Accountability and Performance Panel.
16. A member asked about the additional Local Police Grant Fund of £100m, of which Suffolk's share was to be £1.8m. The PCC was as yet unaware of the conditions of this funding, but believed it to be ringfenced for additional police

resources, although it was not yet clear what resources this would cover. Once clarity was received, he and the CC would discuss the best way to allocate this funding.

17. Turning to the relationship between the PCC's proposed budget and his soon to be published refreshed Police and Crime Plan, the Chair made the point that, in her opinion, the new Plan should have been in place at an earlier stage, with the MTFP set to meet the priorities of the Plan. The PCC responded that the Plan had a four-year duration and was a high-level strategic document, with themes spread over a four-year period, many of which would be undertaken in partnership. It was not possible to fit a four-year Plan to the next four years of budget, as until settlements were received each year the PCC did not know how much funding would be available.
18. The Chief Constable was also present at the meeting, and gave the operational context to the PCC's proposals, saying that her role was to maximise the use of available resources within a difficult financial environment.
19. In conclusion, the Panel understood that that the Government's funding settlement assumed full use of the maximum allowable £14 increase in the precept. Members thanked the PCC for his attendance, and Suffolk Constabulary for the continued excellent level of service delivered to the residents of Suffolk against a difficult background of increasing demand on the service, and continued financial pressures.

The Decisions of the Panel

Following consideration of the information provided, the Panel:

- a) supported the PCC's proposal to increase the policing precept by £13.95 (5.1%) per annum in 2025/26 (6 votes in favour and 1 against);
- b) agreed that the Panel Chair would make a formal report on behalf of the Panel on the PCC's precept, by the statutory deadline of 8 February 2025. A copy of the report can be found on the [County Council's website](#); and
- c) made the following recommendations to the PCC:
 - i) That the PCC, at the earliest opportunity, provide additional detail to the Panel around the planned 2025/26 budget savings;
 - ii) That, once further information has been provided by the Government, the PCC provide information to the Panel on how the additional neighbourhood policing grant is to be spent;
 - iii) That the PCC consider providing a clearer link in future budgets between the financial proposals and the Police and Crime Plan, with planned expenditure linked to the priorities in the Plan;
 - iv) That a summary of comments received via the PCC's precept survey be provided to the Panel in due course; and
 - v) That in future years the PCC consider other ways to engage with people in order to elicit a greater number of responses to consultation exercises.

d) The Panel also resolved:

- i) That the Police and Crime Panel undertake research to ascertain the evidence and reasoning behind other Police and Crime Commissioners using different assumptions for the level of council tax rises that will be allowed in future; and
- ii) That the Panel Chair write to the leaders of the Suffolk district, borough and county councils to stress the importance of their nominated members on the Panel attending meetings, or if unable to attend, giving apologies in good time and arranging for a substitute to attend.

A copy of this report will be uploaded onto the County Council's website.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Mansel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Sarah Mansel

Chair of the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel

31 January 2025