



Philip Secombe
Police and Crime
Commissioner
for Warwickshire



MONTHLY UPDATE

The latest news from the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner

December 2017 Extra

This is an extra December newsletter from me to give you an important update on police funding in Warwickshire, in light of the Government's announcement earlier this week on the amount it will be providing centrally to fund forces.

With this clarity on the funding being made available to us, I am in a position to put forward proposals for Warwickshire Police's budget in 2018/19 and seek your views, before making a final decision early next year.

I'm encouraging everyone in Warwickshire to take part in the survey, details of which you can find below, alongside additional information on council tax and what each option may mean for you. I'd encourage you to read the documents in the blue panel below before completing the survey.

A little background

Since becoming Police and Crime Commissioner in May 2016, I have become increasingly aware of the challenging situation policing is in. Recorded crime is increasing, while the resources available to investigate and bring offenders to justice and protect communities from harm have become ever scarcer.

While I have been able to maintain overall police officer numbers since taking office, it nevertheless remains the case that we now have 21% fewer officers than we did 10 years ago. As a result, Warwickshire has among the lowest ratios of police officers per head of population in the country and those officers we do have are now dealing with much bigger workloads.

In common with the national picture, recorded crime has increased in Warwickshire—up by 24% in the last year alone. Our increasingly global and technological world means these are also often more complex and time-consuming to investigate, creating additional pressures on the force.

Last year I was able to freeze the police precept—the portion of your council tax that pays for policing—while using funding from reserves to ensure that the Chief Constable had the resources he needed to keep communities safe, ensure that frontline policing remained a

priority and that Safer Neighbourhood Teams formed the bedrock of policing in the county. Of course, financial reserves can only be spent once and this option cannot be sustained in the longer term, though I am proposing to invest a further £3.8 million from reserves to support the force budget in 2018/19.

Costs continue to rise through inflation and there remains increased pressure on operational policing through the rising demand for services. Despite the major transformations happening within our force, which have raised efficiency and been recognised by our external inspectors as 'ambitious and innovative', the simple reality is that the police require more funding just to maintain current service levels. This means I am not in a position to be able to freeze the police precept once again. To do so would leave the force with a significant shortfall in funding and some very unpalatable decisions to make over a reduced level of service to the public.

Over the past 12 months I have been making this position clear to central government, arguing the case that policing needs more funding if it is to continue keeping the public safe and maintaining law and order satisfactorily. I am pleased to report that the ministers have listened to these representations. Alongside additional funding for counter terrorism, national policing priorities and projects to support the transformation of policing, the Government has given Police and Crime Commissioners the flexibility needed to raise extra money through council tax.

We have been given a static settlement for the financial year ahead, with the amount we receive from central government remaining the same as in 2017/18 in real terms. As I have stated previously, however, this will not be sufficient on its own to maintain the levels of service you expect while continuing to modernise the force. I am therefore proposing to increase the police precept for 2018/19, in order to protect frontline policing and ensure that I can deliver a safer and more secure Warwickshire.

Where previously I could raise the police precept by up to a maximum of 2%, the Government has now given me the greater flexibility to set an increase of up to £12 per year on an average Band D property. That added pound a month would equate in Warwickshire to a 6.25% increase over 2017/18 funding levels and could help to raise around £1.7 million. Taking into account the amount we also receive from central government, this would mean a total of £2.9 million is then available to invest in frontline policing services.

Even with this boost to funding, Warwickshire Police will still need to continue making efficiency savings in order to provide a balanced budget, with the amounts raised through the police precept helping to offset losses in staffing that might otherwise occur. I will continue to ensure that public money is used efficiently and responsibly. Equally, I will ensure that the additional money that is raised is used directly to fund police officers, while also leaving a secure and viable financial future for the force.

I remain conscious however, that these remain challenging financial times for many of you and so I want to hear your views before I make a final decision on the level of the precept early in the New Year. I have put forward options for different levels of increase of the police precept, outlining the consequences for each and I am keen to get feedback from a wide spectrum across the county.

The consultation is now live and will run until Friday 19 December.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip Seccombe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and 'S'.

Philip Seccombe TD
Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner