

**Gwent Police
and Crime Panel**

**Panel Heddlu
a Throseddu Gwent**

REPORT ON THE GWENT POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S PROPOSED PRECEPT FOR 2025/26

Background

This report is made in accordance with the Gwent Police and Crime Panel's statutory duty contained in Paragraph 3(2), Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

Review of Proposed Precept

The Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner notified the Panel on 31st January 2025 of her proposed Police and Crime Budget and Precept for 2025/26

The Panel considered a detailed report outlining the proposed precept for 2025/26 at their meeting held on 31st January 2025. A copy of the report is available on the Panel's website www.Gwentpcp.org.uk

The following Members of the Panel were present:

Mrs Gillian Howells (Chair)
Councillor Marina Chacon-Dawson
Councillor Lynda Clarkson
Councillor Gareth Davies
Councillor Christine Forehead
Councillor Nick Horler
Councillor Gavin Horton
Councillor Farzina Hussain
Councillor Deb Jenkins
Councillor Tony Kear
Councillor Colin Mann (Vice Chair)
Ms Katy Stevenson
Councillor Jacqueline Thomas

The Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) outlined a budget requirement of £183,840,524 for 2025/26. The PCC therefore recommended a 7.95% increase in the 2025/26 precept to provide general expenses of £86,492,507. The remaining budget requirement will be met from planned efficiency savings during 2025/26 of £360k and further planned efficiency savings of £1.340m (totalling £1.700m) detailed in Appendix 7b of the report. A further proposed underwriting of the remaining deficit with Reserves and

Committed Funds of £1.679m to balance the 2025/26 budget was also outlined at Appendix 8.

Members heard from the PCC that the proposed Council Tax Precept annual increase of 7.95% equated to an extra £27.79 for a Band D property. The rationale for the proposal was then outlined to Members. Combating violence against women and girls, preventative work with perpetrators, and funding partner initiatives were highlighted by the PCC.

The Chief Finance Officer provided further detail on the PCC's Budget Requirement and Council Tax Precept proposal for 2025/26. Economic factors were outlined such as a real-term reduction in cash for Gwent Police of 19.2% between 2010/11 and 2025/26, no funding for pay awards, and a growth in 'ring-fenced' specific grant funding. Members heard how the Home Office Grant for Gwent Police had increased by £5.953M, but that this increase was ringfenced for initiatives such as the Police Uplift recruitment programme.

When questions were invited by the Chair one Member asked about the possibility of the Police charging for certain services. The Chief Finance Officer advised that a charge could be made for a limited number of services. In response to a further question assurances were given that cutting staff numbers was not predicted as a cost efficiency measure. Clarification was also provided on a prior year cost pressure relating to PCSO vacancies.

A Member sought clarification on shortfalls associated with the pension and National Insurance Contribution grants. This was provided by the Chief Finance Officer. The rise in Welsh Government funding to 350 PCSOs was also highlighted.

One Member requested more information from the PCC and the Chief Constable on their requests for additional funding. The Chief Constable outlined the benefits of his new Operating Model. The need for resilience when dealing with critical incidents was one of the key recommendations for all Police Forces following the Manchester Arena attack in 2017. Members were advised that the model of restructuring around Chief Inspectors in Gwent with an added emphasis on response helped to alleviate some of the risks identified in these recommendations. The strategic importance of creating the five new posts was emphasised by the Chief Constable. In response to the question on the £1M investment requirement the PCC advised that a static precept would have a negative impact in terms of the OPCC's ability to support commissioned services and interventions. It was also stressed that delivering objectives of the Police, Crime and Justice Plan, identified following public engagement, would require an additional level of investment. Members were also advised that any current uncertainties would be resolved through planned robust scrutiny arrangements in the future.

In relation to the £1M investment requirement identified the Chair enquired about measuring the effectiveness of the OPCC's commissioning investment. The PCC highlighted the increased level of demand in areas such as violence against women and girls and gave examples of other projects that needed to

be extended. The PCC recognised that an element of trust from Panel Members was required at this initial stage, but that evidence would be provided through the reformed scrutiny arrangements set out in her Police, Crime and Justice Plan. Detailed cost/benefit analysis would be provided as part of this future overview. The Chief Finance Officer gave Members details of the multi-agency approach to commissioning and illustrated that typically one third of funding for a particular service would be made by the OPCC, one third from either the UK or Welsh Government, and one third from partners. It was suggested that this model allowed commissioning to be viewed as an investment because of the match-funding element. The Chair received clarification from officers that the whole £1M would not be for commissioned services. On the Capital Programme the Chair enquired about the Newport and Cwmbran refurbishment work and sought assurances about how realistic the figures were and the implications for the suspended Estates Strategy. The Chief Finance Officer provided detail on the feasibility work and outlined how the refurbishment would eventually be ratified as part of the Estates Strategy.

A Member observed that the proposal placed an additional burden on Council Tax payers during a cost-of-living crisis and at a time when many households depended on foodbanks. Members heard how the proposed increase was in line with other public sector organisations and would fund priorities highlighted at public engagement sessions prior to drafting the Police, Crime and Justice Plan.

One Member enquired how the impact of increasing the Precept from 6.82% to 7.95% would be assessed. The PCC highlighted the importance of having detailed cost/benefit analysis.

A Member sought assurances that a detailed report on the £1M investment requirement would be brought to future Panel and Finance and Estates subgroup meetings. The PCC and Chief Finance Officer provided assurances on this matter.

Recommendation

Following a full debate about the proposed Precept, and in noting there were 10 for, 3 against and 0 abstentions, the Gwent Police and Crime Panel considered the proposed precept of 7.95% to be acceptable.

However, a significant concern for the Panel was the £1M set aside as a budget provision for the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner to implement her Police, Crime and Justice Plan. The Panel recognised uncertainty and ambiguity in some of the areas of spend and were extremely disappointed that having raised these concerns at a meeting of the Finance and Estates subgroup, clarifying information had not been forthcoming. The Panel recognised that investment in commissioning support services is necessary and requested that a plan of action be provided in the near future which would clearly demonstrate the expenditure and activity utilising these funds.

The Panel fully supported the £550k outlined under Expenditure Assumptions to implement the Chief Constable's new Operating Model.

Recommended to the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner:

Date 31st January 2025