



Open Letter on the Police Precept for Council Tax 2021/22

I am writing with a proposal on the level of the police precept for 2021/22 and am keen to hear your opinion. Setting the budget for policing in Hertfordshire is one of my most important responsibilities and I always do it in consultation with the public. This budget seeks to support the strategy I have set to deliver an effective and efficient police force, one that puts prevention first, grows our capacity to fight crime and puts more frontline officers on our streets. The police funding settlement for 2021/2022 represents a second year of unprecedented investment in policing with an increase of £7.4m from the government to fund the police officer uplift programme. As they did last year, the government have suggested that local tax payers should also increase their contribution so that the benefits of this investment can be properly maximised. You have consistently told me that you want to see more frontline police officers and, thanks to previous years' funding investments from the precept, you are already seeing a return on your investment and the benefits of 91 more officers on the streets than we had last year.

Thanks to your support in previous years I was able to begin expanding our force even before the uplift programme began and we have continued to be well ahead of the uplift targets set by the government, bringing benefit to Hertfordshire well ahead of other parts of the country. This year, my precept proposal would enable the recruitment of 167 more officers, resulting in the largest force that Hertfordshire has ever seen. Hertfordshire Constabulary is on track to have 2,267 officers¹ by March 2022. That is 77 more officers than the government target for the year but I believe they will deliver more and faster benefits to our county.

These record officer numbers will allow us to transform our approach to policing and achieve concrete results in terms of cutting crime and reducing victims. I have therefore asked the Chief Constable develop a new 'Prevention First' agenda and we have already started investing in this. Prevention First is a new and transformative model which focuses on preventing issues arising in the first place, working closely with you in our communities and with our partners to identify and tackle the root causes of crime. An increase in the precept would allow us to invest in over 30 new Prevention First officers who will continue to drive down demand, cut crime and create fewer victims.

In line with the rest of the country, Hertfordshire has also seen increases in reported cybercrime, child exploitation and other emerging crime types. It is positive that victims now have the confidence to report the crimes and get the help they require, but it is vital that we have the right investigative capacity and support for victims, and that we safeguard vulnerable people and businesses. Our award-winning Beacon Fraud Hub continues to provide dedicated support to victims

¹ The previous highest total in Hertfordshire Constabulary was 2,202 police officers in 2007.

of fraud, supporting over 4,200 victims last year and being instrumental in recovering £300,000 of lost monies for victims of fraud. In line with the priorities outlined in my Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan: Everybody's Business, I want to expand victim services so that we can continue to help and safeguard victims and support the preventative and protective nature of the service.

I want to use the flexibility granted by the government to raise the council tax precept by £15 per year for the equivalent of a Band D property. This would generate an additional £6.796m in income in 2021/22, enabling us to expand frontline policing and deliver the investments I have outlined. This increase would still leave Hertfordshire with one of the lowest levels of precept in the country.

Your views are important

These are my thoughts, but I want to hear from you. This is your chance to have a say on the amount you pay for policing across Hertfordshire. I need your views and comments to help determine whether this is the right decision for Hertfordshire. Your views and comments are an important part of this process.

If you would like to make comments, please send them to your.views@herts.pcc.pnn.gov.uk or by letter to: The Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, 15 Vaughan Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 4GZ by 15 January 2021.

Yours faithfully,

David Lloyd
Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

2021 Precept Q&A

Frequently Asked Questions on Council Tax Precept

Why are you consulting now?

The government confirmed on December 17th 2020 the grant to be paid to each constabulary. The Commissioner has examined the policing requirements for Hertfordshire alongside the Chief Constable Charlie Hall to set the budget for next year. The PCC has a duty to consult with residents and non-domestic ratepayers on their financial proposals for policing. Following the consultation, the PCC will then discuss what he thinks the amount Hertfordshire residents should pay for policing with the Police and Crime Panel. Details of the budget will be included in the Council Tax bills in April 2021.

How much money comes from central Government funding?

Running Hertfordshire Constabulary next year is budgeted to cost over £217m, around 58 per cent of this coming from central Government funding. This equates to about £127m from the Government, and the remainder, around £90m being raised by the Policing Precept part of your Council Tax bill.

Why is the police element of my Council Tax potentially going up from April 2021?

My budget proposes to fund Hertfordshire's largest ever police force. It will fund extra officers on top of those arriving as part of the Government national uplift programme. In recent years Hertfordshire has not had the cuts in officer numbers seen in other areas of England and Wales.

This year, my precept proposal would enable the recruitment of 167 more officers, resulting in the largest force that Hertfordshire has ever seen. Hertfordshire Constabulary is on track to have 2,267 officers by March 2022. That is 77 more officers than the government target for the year but I believe they will deliver more and faster benefits to our county.

Running a larger police force requires more money in addition to the unavoidable pressures from inflation.

How much will my Council Tax increase?

The proposed £15-a-year increase is for an average house, which is rated as Band D property. For those in Band A, B and C properties the increase will be lower, and for those in E, F, G and H it will be higher.

The proposed £15-a-year increase is for an average Band D property, the table below shows charges for other property Bands

Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
2020/21 Charge £	132.00	154.00	176.00	198.00	242.00	286.00	330.00	396.00
2021/22 Charge £	142.00	165.67	189.33	213.00	260.33	307.67	355.00	426.00
Increase per year £	10.00	11.67	13.33	15.00	18.33	21.67	25.00	30.00
Increase per month £	0.83	0.97	1.11	1.25	1.53	1.81	2.08	2.50

What have you done to be more efficient over the past years?

The proposed budget has identified over £1.3m in savings which will be implemented. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), has praised Hertfordshire as an efficient and ethical force and acknowledged its greater level of spend on frontline operational policing in its value for money profiles relative to other forces of its size. Collaborating with our neighbouring police forces has enabled us to improve services at lower cost through the sharing of several operational and back office functions. I have been able to keep council tax low and continue to ensure that, as a Hertfordshire resident, you pay one of the lowest council tax contributions for policing in the country.

Do you plan to protect my local police team / station going forward?

The PCC is committed to ensuring that Hertfordshire's ten districts continue to have at least one police station where the local police team are based – and this will be supplemented by smaller satellite stations where required (For a map showing the location of police stations across the county, visit the Hertfordshire Police website). The local police team often hold surgeries and priority setting meetings in the local area. The PCC will continue to ensure that efficient use is made of police buildings and the wider estate.

How can I contact the Police if the front counter at my local police station is closed to the public?

I have kept stations open or moved them to different locations in towns. Some no longer have a front counter service as they were very underused by the public, with the vast majority of people now using the phone or online to make contact. I believe that officer time is best used out on the street, rather than sitting behind a desk. Anyone can still see an officer, they just have to make an appointment beforehand by calling 101. People can contact the police via, web chat, the website, email, the telephone or the police app.

How do you plan to keep vulnerable people safe?

My Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan focuses on putting victims of crime first and finding ways to improve the support they require and their journey through the criminal justice system. Further investment has been made in improving the service that victims receive and the outcomes for victims engaged with the criminal justice system. Our award-winning Beacon Victim Support has been extended to include an enhanced service for victims of cybercrime and fraud.

How are you protecting frontline police officers?

For the fourth year running the police inspectorate, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), praised Hertfordshire as an efficient and ethical force and acknowledged its greater level of spend on frontline operational policing in its value for money profiles relative to other forces of its size. Unlike many police forces that have been cutting back their frontline, Herts has continued to invest heavily in preserving and strengthening local policing. It helps to create a police force that is embedded in, and supported by, a community working together to cut crime, rather than one which is distant and isolated, only engaging when called upon in an emergency. Our Safer Neighbourhood Teams in each of the 10 districts and boroughs in the county form the core of this model and help to meet many of the challenges outlined.

How are the extra officers being used?

These record officer numbers will allow us to transform our approach to policing and achieve concrete results in terms of cutting crime and reducing victims. I have therefore asked the Chief Constable develop a new 'Prevention First' agenda and we have already started investing in this. Prevention First is a new and transformative model which focuses on preventing issues arising in the first place, working closely with you in our communities and with our partners to identify and tackle the root causes of crime. An increase in the precept would allow us to invest in over 30 new Prevention First officers who will continue to drive down demand, cut crime and create fewer victims.

In line with the rest of the country, Hertfordshire has also seen increases in reported cybercrime, child exploitation and other emerging crime types. It is positive that victims now have the confidence to report the crimes and get the help they require, but it is vital that we have the right investigative capacity and support for victims, and that we safeguard vulnerable people and businesses. Our award-winning Beacon Fraud Hub continues to provide dedicated support to victims

Is this additional money to give police officers and staff a pay rise?

The government has announced that police and staff are not due to receive a pay rise in the next financial year and it will be frozen from September 2021. There is an exception for any police staff who earn under £24,000, who will be entitled to a £500 increase.

How many police officers does Hertfordshire have?

My previous two annual budgets have increased officer numbers in the county by 141, alongside the government uplift programme. The proposed £15-a-year average increase would bring another 167 officers by the end of March 2022. This would make the Constabulary the largest ever.

Hertfordshire Police officer numbers for the past 20 years – year ending March

2000: 1,961
2001: 1,992
2002: 1,825
2003: 1,977
2004: 2,177
2005: 2,145
2006: 2,166
2007: 2,202
2008: 2,162
2009: 2,172
2010: 2,130
2011: 2,048
2012: 1,984
2013: 1,953
2014: 1,927
2015: 1,911
2016: 1,929
2017: 1,952

2018: 1,952

2019: 1,959

2020: 2,009

2021: 2,100

2022: 2,267

2023: 2,314 (target with support of Government uplift program)