



## Precept Consultation

On behalf of Lancashire  
Police and Crime Commissioner's Office



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## 1.0 Headline Findings

### Precept Findings

The majority (81%) of respondents indicated a willingness to pay an increase in the level of policing precept, with 28% saying they were prepared to accept an increase of 2% and more than half (53%) saying they would be willing to pay an additional 5%.

The main driver in supporting an increase in the level of precept was the view that policing services needed to be either maintained or improved in the future, however, around a quarter (23%) of respondents said their response was determined by what they could afford due to their personal circumstances.

## 2.0 Introduction

### Background

Over recent years, policing in Lancashire has faced significant financial challenges as government funding has reduced and indications are that this is likely to continue in coming years. As a result of the government's austerity measures significant savings have already been made however, additional savings / funding is still needed.

In November 2014, Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioner's Office commissioned SMSR Ltd, an independent research company, to undertake a consultation with residents from across the Lancashire area to gauge public opinion towards an increase in precept. The consultation was also used to measure residents' understanding of the role of the PCC and their priorities in regards to policing services.

### Report Structure

Included in the report is a set of top-line findings which provide quick reference to all the questions asked throughout the survey. In addition, all questions have been analysed by geographic and demographic group and any significant differences in opinion are commented on throughout the report.

It should be noted that when the results are discussed within the report, often percentages will be rounded up or down to the nearest one per cent. Therefore occasionally figures may add up to 101% or 99%.

## Acknowledgements

SMSR would like to thank the 1,405 Lancashire residents who took part in this consultation.

### 3.0 Sample / Methodology

A questionnaire was designed by SMSR in conjunction with officers from Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, a copy of which can be found in the appendices.

All surveys were undertaken using an interview-led methodology over the telephone. The fieldwork was conducted between Friday 21<sup>st</sup> November and Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2014 with a representative sample of 1,405 residents from across the Lancashire area.

Interviews were conducted using quota sampling to ensure the sample was representative. Quotas for age and gender were set using the 2011 census figures and the sample included representation from each of the policing districts. The geographic and demographic breakdown of respondents was as follows:

Gender	Number	% of sample
Male	690	49.1
Female	715	50.9

Age	Number	% of sample
16 to 24	152	10.8
25 to 34	187	13.3
35 to 44	245	17.4
45 to 54	262	18.6
55 to 64	232	16.5
65 to 74	272	19.4
75 and over	54	3.8
Prefer not to say	1	0.1

Victim of crime?	Number	% of sample
Yes	178	12.7
No	1220	86.8
Prefer not to say	7	0.5

District	Number	% of sample
Blackburn	102	7.3
Blackpool	100	7.1
Burnley	101	7.2
Chorley	99	7.0
Fylde	99	7.0
Hyndburn	101	7.2
Lancaster	101	7.2
Pendle	100	7.1
Preston	101	7.2
Ribble Valley	100	7.1
Rosendale	101	7.2
South Ribble	101	7.2
West Lancs	100	7.1
Wyre	99	7.0

BCU	Number	% of sample
Western	199	14.2
Northern	200	14.2
Southern	300	21.4
Central	101	7.2
Eastern	303	21.6
Pennine	302	21.5

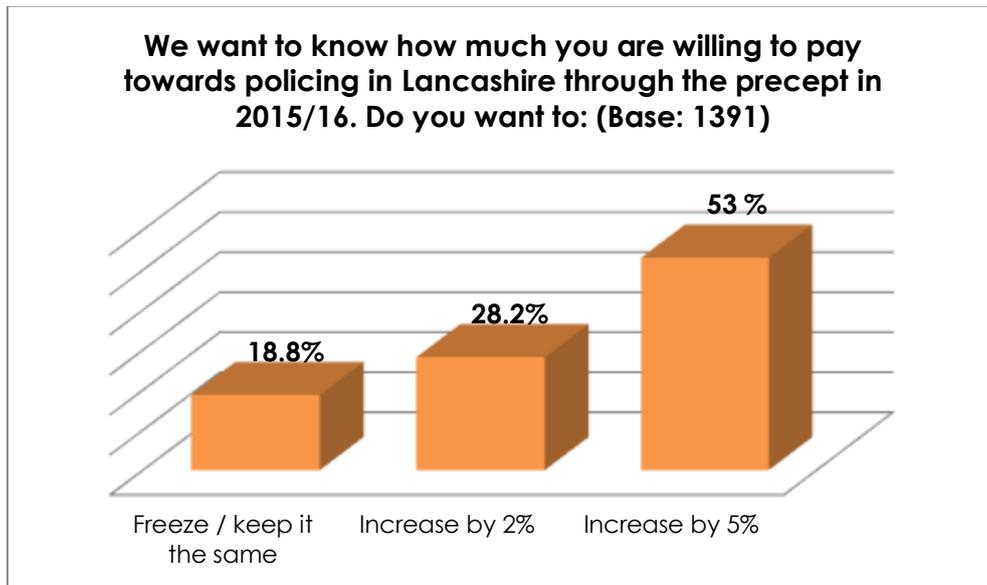
## 4.0 Precept Findings

### 4.1 Changes to the Level of Precept

Lancashire Police could generate some of the funding which is needed to protect frontline services by increasing the amount of precept which household's pay as part of their council tax. Respondents were given three options with regards to the level of precept, and the impact each would have upon policing was explained:

Amount of precept in 2015 / 16	Impact on policing budget
Keep it the same	A government grant may be received to cover £600,000 however, the PCC will still need to find £19m in savings
Increase by 2%	This will generate £1.2m towards policing in 2015/16. This is equivalent to 26 police officers or 45 PCSOs
Increase by 5%	This will generate £3.1m towards policing in 2015/16. This is equivalent to 68 police officers or 115 PCSOs

Respondents were then asked to state the level of council tax they would be willing to pay towards policing in 2015/16.



The majority of respondents indicated a willingness to pay an increase in the level of policing precept, with 28% saying they were prepared to accept an increase of 2% and more than half (53%) saying they would be prepared pay an increase of 5% in order to reduce the impact of the cuts to Government grants.

Less than a fifth (19%) of respondents reported an unwillingness to pay any additional amount of precept in order to reduce the impact of cuts. Older respondents were more likely than younger respondents to say they would be willing to pay an increased amount of precept, with 84% of respondents aged 45

and over expressing willingness compared with 77% of respondents aged 44 and under. The difference across age groups was particularly significant when considering those who would be prepared to accept the highest increase, with less than half (45%) of respondents aged 16 to 24 saying they would be prepared to pay an additional 5% compared with almost three-fifths (57%) of respondents aged 65 and over.

<b>We want to know how much you are willing to pay towards policing in Lancashire through the precept in 2015 / 16. Do you want to:</b>			
<b>BCU</b>	<b>Freeze / keep it the same (%)</b>	<b>Increase by 2% (%)</b>	<b>Increase by 5% (%)</b>
<b>Overall</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>53.1</b>
Western	10.9	29.5	<b>59.6</b>
Northern	17.7	<b>33.8</b>	48.5
Southern	<b>21.1</b>	28.5	50.3
Central	16.2	<b>31.3</b>	52.5
Eastern	16.6	23.3	<b>60.1</b>
Pennine	<b>25.2</b>	27.2	47.7

Expressing a preference for the level of precept to remain unchanged was highest among respondents living within the Southern (21%) and Pennine (25%) BCU's, whereas only 11% of respondents within the Western BCU reported that they were unwilling to pay an increased level.

Respondents living in the Western (60%) and Eastern (60%) BCU's most frequently said they would be prepared to accept an increase of 5% in the level of policing precept; fewer respondents living in the Northern (49%) or Pennine (48%) BCU's said they would be willing to pay an increase of this level.

**We want to know how much you are willing to pay towards policing in Lancashire through the precept in 2015 / 16. Do you want to:**

District	Freeze / keep it the same (%)	Increase by 2% (%)	Increase by 5% (%)
<b>Overall</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>53.1</b>
Blackburn	18.6	21.6	<b>59.8</b>
Blackpool	12.2	29.6	58.2
Burnley	<b>27.7</b>	23.8	48.5
Chorley	22.7	<b>36.1</b>	41.2
Fylde	9.5	29.5	<b>61.1</b>
Hyndburn	15.0	28.0	57.0
Lancaster	14.0	<b>38.0</b>	48.0
Pendle	<b>26.0</b>	25.0	49.0
Preston	16.2	31.3	52.5
Ribble Valley	16.2	20.2	<b>63.6</b>
Rosendale	21.8	32.7	45.5
South Ribble	<b>25.7</b>	23.8	50.5
West Lancs	15.0	26.0	<b>59.0</b>
Wyre	21.4	29.6	49.0

Only a tenth of respondents living in Fylde said they would not be prepared to pay an increased level of precept, with around three-fifths (61%) of respondents in this district saying they would be willing to pay an additional 5% towards policing. Expressing a willingness to accept an increase of 5% was also high among those living in Ribble Valley (64%) and Blackburn (60%).

In contrast, respondents living in Burnley (28%), Pendle (26%) and South Ribble (26%) most frequently said they would not be prepared to pay an increased level of council tax precept.

Opinion was most divided among respondents living in Chorley; although around a quarter (23%) of respondents within this BCU felt precept should be frozen, a further 36% said they would be prepared to pay an additional 2% and 41% were willing to pay an extra 5%.

## 4.2 Reasons for Precept Level

### 4.2.1 Overall

Respondents were asked to give reasons for the amount they had specified that they would be willing to pay; the most frequently given reasons are shown in the table below.

<b>Please can you explain what factors have contributed to your answer? (Base: 1405)</b>		
<b>Reason</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Policing needs to be maintained / improved by funding	617	43.9
This is the amount I can afford	321	22.8
This is the fairest option in terms of inflation and support for the police	142	10.1
Should look into other ways of gaining funding / saving money	104	7.4
This is not a lot to pay for the services received	103	7.3
I pay enough council tax already	99	7.0
I would choose this opinion providing the extra funds are spent on policing	82	5.8

More than two-fifths (44%) of respondents said their chosen amount was due to policing needing to be either maintained or improved by funding; a further tenth said that they had selected what they believed to be the fairest option in terms of inflation and providing support for the police.

A significant minority of respondents had considered their personal circumstances when choosing what they would be willing to pay, with 23% saying they had selected the amount which they could afford and 7% saying that they paid enough council tax at present.

### 4.2.2 Reason by Response

The three most frequently given reasons for the selected amount of council tax were as follows:

Please can you explain what factors have contributed to your answer?			
Reason	Freeze / keep it the same (%)	Increase by 2% (%)	Increase by 5% (%)
Policing needs to be maintained / improved by funding	-	18.4	<b>73.4</b>
This is the amount I can afford	25.3	<b>40.1</b>	13.1
This is the fairest option in terms of inflation and support for the police	-	<b>30.9</b>	2.8
Should look into other ways of gaining funding / saving money	23.0	7.9	1.4
This is not a lot to pay for the services received	-	0.3	13.8
I pay enough council tax already	<b>28.0</b>	5.4	0.4
I would choose this opinion providing the extra funds are spent on policing	-	5.6	8.1

### 4.2.3 Reason by District

The reason for selecting the level of council tax precept was similar across all policing divisions; some examples of specific comments made by respondents within each district are shown below.

#### Blackburn

*"It would be good to see a few more officers around because they'd be able to deal with more crimes. It [5%] is affordable as well."*

*"It is not going to affect me personally, an extra £7.85 isn't much. I'd much rather give more; if they need the money, they need the money. As long as it's being spent right and as long as people can see where it's going and what it's used for its fine; people don't like to see wastage."*

*"Crime would reduce. People are trying to work to budgets and option 2 is in line with things like inflation. If we pay option 3 than other services might ask for this and then it would not be affordable."*

*"I think option 3 is not a lot of money and we do get value for money as long as it is on front line policing."*

*"I think of my family and the security the police give the community and the feeling of safety. This [5%] is not a lot of money over the year because I would be happy to pay £1 extra a month if it would help."*

#### Blackpool

*"I just think 5% is needed, we do not want to see more cuts to the police. If we need it, we have to pay for it and such a small amount I think it is worth paying it."*

*"I think that policing is necessary and if it will provide a bobby on the beat then yes I am prepared to pay more as it makes you feel more safe and secure."*

*"I think the police are needed desperately. They are getting rid of the police left right and centre and we need more of them not less."*

*"It would be nice to have more police officers available but everyone is struggling so the smallest increase would be the best especially with how the economy is as things are tight for everyone including pensioners."*

*"I do not object to paying the police anything they want as they have a hell of a job to do. The police and the fire brigade are a necessity and should be given as much*

*money as they need and the government should cut back on the things that they waste money instead. The presence of the police is a must - it is a deterrent as our area has had a spate of burglaries. I am frightened to go out at night as you get kids on street corners asking you to buy cigs and vodka."*

### **Burnley**

*"At the moment they've got more to do so it's fair to pay more. Whether it comes from council tax or grants it comes out of our pockets. Council tax is probably better than a government grant, they can be quite nebulous."*

*"They are cutting the police that much that the way they are going there won't be police anymore. We don't have bobbies on the beat now, what will it be like in 10 years? 15p is nothing, it's certainly not much to keep a good police force, we don't have it as good now because they've cut back."*

*"Being a pensioner I would choose 2 because pensions don't go up like wages. We can't keep funding the government when they are cutting back. The police do need the money and think they should have a little increase."*

*"I think it's needed. I think everyone can afford that bit extra."*

*"I'd go middle because we need a steady increase rather than a vast increase. If you do it slowly at least you can build the workforce up and get the patrol up rather than all in one go just to reduce it again in a few years' time. I don't want it at 5% then another party gets in and says we need to cut back on the police."*

*"I do not mind paying more if it gives us more security and more police on the streets even though we are all having to watch our pennies. The police and the PCSO's do a fantastic job and we cannot do without them. They have had problems with all the cut backs they have had to face."*

*"I think quite a few people are struggling and I read in the paper the problem is too few people are paying council tax and there is back log. I know this is not the police's problem but it needs sorting."*

## Chorley

*"Well if its 2% that's the average pay increase these days. It's necessary and they do a good job but everybody has to think of themselves in the financial circumstances and not everybody would be able to afford more than a small amount."*

*"It benefits everybody, we all complain when things go wrong so we should be prepared to pay for it. I wouldn't object to paying it [5%]."*

*"Going by how much of a struggle it is to keep the bills paid, a lot of ordinary people will struggle with 5%. I think policing is very important so that's why I would increase it to 2%."*

*"I think it's very important that we have a strong and well populated police service. We could probably afford it but I appreciate not everybody could. I just think if there are any cuts they're planning now, they'll get even worse. I think it affects morale within the police force as well when services are cut."*

*"The more money they get the better: it is only a small amount for us to pay extra but it will be massive to them so I think it is worth it. I don't have a problem with paying more as it's a service that we need."*

*"Freeze it and keep it the same as I have lived her for over 4 years and I have never seen any police; why should I pay anymore if I do not get anything back? Residents have called the police about incidents and they have never responded so why should we pay any extra for a service we don't get."*

*"I think we already pay too much, we are paying more and more and are getting less and less."*

## Fylde

*"We need the police to protect us and keep crime law but I do think public events should pay for their own policing."*

*"The police are the most important service and we need the service to be strong. Cutting the police back is not an option. It's not fair on the police left behind because they have to cover more areas."*

*"I would be willing to pay extra because I think the police are underfunded and cannot deal with crime to the best of their ability. I have never had any dealings with the police but I think we should look after them."*

*"I think we are very good at saying the police should have done something so let's pay more money and improve the service; it's the only way that they'll be able to do their job."*

*"It's like the NHS, a lot of people would be prepared to pay extra. I am willing to pay to make sure the place is policed and I would go for the top amount if I thought the government were doing something to address the situation the country is in."*

*"We are happy with what we have in our area but for the sake of other areas I'd be happy to put it up by 5%. The more funding for the police the better, and the more police about the better."*

### **Hyndburn**

*"The police are a very must to have and should not be cut back to the bone. The money mentioned is not a lot of money to ask for."*

*"It costs an awful lot to have police but we need them. People should be more responsible because you've got to pay the tax. I don't like to see cuts in the police, it makes me feel unsafe. I'm not sure whether I agree with everything the police spend their money on but I like to think the extra money will be spent on something that's really needed."*

*"I do not think the police should be suffering from government cut backs and I would be willing to help as much as I could."*

*"I think the police are very important and we need the police to stop the crime. We should never put a price on the police service because it's a service we cannot live without."*

*"The more we pay the less the government would want to pay. If we pay more would we actually see more police on the street?"*

*"The amount per week you're talking about is totally insignificant to me, I'm not a wealthy man but it's 15p a week, 60p a month; it's nothing if it was correctly spent. It should be spent on the front line, not on management and offices and carpets and things like that."*

*"I think the police force is desperately needed and desperately short staffed. I think they provide a vital service and I wouldn't like to see any more cuts being made. I would like to contribute a bit more and we are able to but I know other families can't."*

## Lancaster

*"I think to maintain an effective society we need the funding right. It is important we do not reduce the services of police, fire and rescue and ambulance services."*

*"I wouldn't be bothered by the 5% but I think the 2% one would be better as people would be more willing to pay it. You could increase it in further years but you need to make people aware of where the money is going. You need to have someone like the crime commissioner going on TV to let people know what services they are paying for and what the police are doing."*

*"I think the police are using a lot of money provided to them for equipment, cars, radios, etc, etc. I would rather see them on the streets than sat in a control room. On the other hand I think it has become necessary to pay more as the cost of everything is going up. You can't not include the police in the rises, you just have to accept it."*

*"Obviously I would pay more but only towards the items I think we need like more for crime prevention not motor crime and traffic police. I'd like to see improvements in the sector so I know my money was going to a good cause, i.e. organised crime, child abuse, etc - I'd definitely pay more for that."*

*"It doesn't seem like a big hit to your personal pocket but it would make a big difference to the police. Some people struggle to pay council tax so that's why I didn't say 5%. We need to invest in policing to help with crimes."*

*"I understand there are people out there with low incomes. I could pay 5% because I have a good income but not everyone can. The safest option is to keep it the same."*

## Pendle

*"Community life is suffering due to government cuts so we cannot cut the police service anymore."*

*"We do need a police presence. The local station is not manned all of the time so we cannot have any more cuts. I think that criminals should get fined to pay for the police's time."*

*"I understand that some people are not willing to pay more because of government wastage and people are struggling to find extra money. I would be happy to go down the middle though."*

*"We can see that the police have been reduced and are suffering from the cuts so I feel there is a need for more officers. I needed the police and had to wait 3 days before they came and that should be improved."*

*"I think the police keep the law and order and we need the police. I think the government should pay more and the public should pay more as well."*

### **Preston**

*"The police should be in areas of high crime and not trying to catch people speeding. I would not pay any more as the police could be more efficient themselves."*

*"People can't afford it any more. In our district a lot of people are pensioners and we have to think what the working man and woman can afford. If you increase it too much there will be serious burdens down the line."*

*"I would rather have more police; if there are more police visible there is less chance of getting burgled or of criminal damage. It gives you peace of mind."*

*"If they've got more money, the more they can do; I'd be happy to support that. I'd be willing to pay more for a better quality of policing."*

*"I think most people can afford an extra £8 a year, they could probably even spare £10. Giving them money is one thing, it's seeing a result that is the most important - if it's guaranteed that we would see extra police we would get behind that, if it goes towards paying off debts people wouldn't be as keen."*

*"I can't see that 15p a week will hurt anybody. If you can afford the council tax as it is now you can afford an extra 15p a week. You won't miss that from your pocket - it's not even a cup of coffee."*

### **Ribble Valley**

*"It is important to maintain front line policing and we need more police not less so option 3 if it is spent on front line policing."*

*"I think it is time that the council tax went up but all services should get an increase, not just the police. I also think the grant from the government should increase not be cut."*

*"There are still a lot of struggling households. Even though option 3 does not sound a lot, interest rates are going up and other services will be asking for an increase but our money is not going up."*

*"The money is not an issue it's just the fact we never see the police anymore on the streets. People would be happy to pay more if they saw the police."*

*"We cannot pay much more because my pay has been frozen for the last 5 years. It is hard for people to support an increase because the rate of pay is not increasing in line with the cost of living."*

### **Rossendale**

*"I prefer to see more police officers on the street. There are not enough at the moment due to the budget cuts and I don't think it's a service you should make cuts to."*

*"It is obviously needed, there are no police officers and they have had constant cuts. You have to pay for things you need, if you want a good police service you can't be cutting the costs."*

*"I don't think that is an incredibly large increase and the police need better funding and resources. I just think it is needed to cover the spectrum of police activities."*

*"I think people have to be realistic, if they want better services they have to pay more either in the form of council tax or national insurance. Those who can afford to pay more should pay more if they want better services."*

*"I don't think you can put a value on it; I would pay twice that amount, so if the highest is 5% I'd be happy to pay that. We all have to be responsible for each other, if we want safety and good policing you have to pay for it. We do it for other services so why not for the police?"*

*"The force needs more money to do a better job however, I think they need to be more efficient with the money they get."*

### **South Ribble**

*"It doesn't cost me much individually and it's worth paying as we need more police on the beat as it's nice to see them around."*

*"It doesn't sound much when you say it like that but it's not just policing, other services would want more too. Saying that, I would pay 5% as I want services to at least stay the same or improve, I don't want them to deteriorate."*

*"I would pay the increase as long as it was guaranteed to go towards putting more police on the street. I'm a pensioner so I would prefer the smaller increase as I only get 17p a week."*

*"I think 5% is quite reasonable these days with all the costs increasing. £7.85 isn't going to break anyone, people spend that on a pint and a packet of fags; I don't think it would be noticed on the council tax bill."*

*"The government should pay more towards the police service. I would pay more if the government put more towards the service too."*

*"I know some of the local stations are struggling to keep open 24 hours. More pressure is being put on the police and they need all the funding they can get. We need to bridge the gap of the short fall."*

### **West Lancs**

*"I think the police are so underfunded and I would be happy to pay a lot more towards policing in the future. The police need to be supported by all to secure a good service."*

*"The police are very important to look after the community. I think the police need more people on the payroll to deal with the lack of respect for law and order in the area."*

*"I would pay 2% but I do feel the money is not spent wisely and the police could save money in other areas too. The police could make money from other areas like fines for parking."*

*"I would be happy to pay more than you have mentioned if I can see more policing on the streets. I would be happy to pay 50% extra (around £73 a year) if that would put police on the streets again."*

*"I think that is a very low amount to ask for to help the police; it is only the price of a couple of coffees over the year."*

### **Wyre**

*"Government should provide more money to the police; I think the general public have enough to pay out for services and one thing or another but the government have different purses."*

*"If it definitely goes to the police I'd pay 5%; if it puts more officers on the beat and things like that it can only be for the good of us."*

*"If you don't pay, you won't get the police will you? We've got a shortage and the government doesn't seem to care because they are protected whereas the normal people aren't. I think if we want to keep the police force we'll have to pay, it's not a choice."*

*"I think having an efficient police service is important and we pay our taxes for security; I'd rather the money be spent on police people instead of Trident. I do moan about council tax because it's my biggest outgoing and it is a lot of money but it has to go a long way paying for roads, education, social services, fire services, etc."*

*"In an ideal world I'd say increase by 5% but that means something else would lose out. 15p doesn't seem unreasonable, the money has to come from somewhere. It's a necessary service and helps the community so it seems right that the community should contribute."*

*"I think the more police we have, the more the crime rate will go down and the more crimes that will get solved. The increase per week [5%] is neither here nor there for the effect it has."*

