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| **Item 6** |
| **Report to:** | Police and Crime Panel |
| **Date:**  | 07 February 2025 |
| **Subject:**  | Precept Proposal 2025/26 |
| **Report of:** | Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire |
| **Author:** | Damon Lawrenson – Interim Director, Finance and Commercial Services |

1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**
	1. This paper sets out for the Panel:

Section 2 - The legal requirements for notification of the precept proposal.

Section 3 - The provisional police grant settlement for 2025/26.

Section 4 - The medium-term position.

Section 5 - The draft budget for 2025/26.

Section 6 - The funding strategy.

Section 7 - Precept options considered by the Mayor.

Section 8 - The decision by the Mayor.

Section 13 - The Mayor’s recommendation to the Panel.

1. **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR NOTIFICATION OF THE PRECEPT**

**PROPOSAL**

* 1. The Mayor is required under Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and associated regulations to notify the Police and Crime Panel of the proposed precept for 2025/26 before1 February 2025.
	2. The Panel must review the proposed precept before 8 February 2025 and make a report to the Mayor.
	3. The Mayor must have regard to and give the Panel a response to their report. The Panel has a right to veto the proposed precept if at least two thirds of the Panel vote in favour of making that decision. Where this right is not exercised the Mayor may issue the precept. If the Mayor’s proposal is vetoed by the Panel, a revised proposal must be notified to the Panel before 15 February 2025.
	4. The Panel must review the revised proposal and make a report to the Mayor by 22 February 2025. The Mayor must respond to the report and issue her precept by 1 March 2025.
	5. Rejection by the Panel of the revised precept does not prevent the Mayor issuing it as her precept for the forthcoming financial year.
	6. The Mayor has a statutory duty to set a balanced budget and calculate the Police Council Tax Requirement for the forthcoming financial year. The budget report including the statutory calculations will be considered by the Mayor once the Panel has reached the end of its scrutiny process.
1. **THE PROVISIONAL POLICE GRANT SETTLEMENT 2025/26**

**Key Points**

3.1 The provisional 2025/26 Police Finance Settlement was announced on 17th December 2024 in a written statement by Dame Diana Johnson, Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire. The settlement was broadly in line with our overall expectations and assumptions that had been built into the Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF).

In advance of the settlement, the Government announced that Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) (and therefore Mayors exercising PCC Functions), would be able to raise their council tax precepts by up to £14 (for Band D) for one year only. This equates to an annual increase for the lowest of 4.3% for (Surrey PCC) and 7.7% for the highest (Northumbria PCC). In West Yorkshire, this would represent 5.6% based on a £14 Band D increase. West Yorkshire remains as the area with the fourth lowest Police Band D level in England and Wales.

The key points to note from the settlement are:

* The Police Main Grant now includes baseline funding for the 2024 Police Pay Award, plus 18% of the Police Uplift Programme Grant, with the remaining 82% still ringfenced. Combined, this is broadly in line with our assumptions built into the MTFF.
* Funding has been provided to offset the impact of increased cost of National Insurance, with employers’ rate rising to 15%, and the threshold decreasing from £9,100 to £5,000. There is further clarification required from the Home Office with regard to how the figure was calculated in order for us to assess the impact on our regional and national functions and therefore the overall impact on West Yorkshire Police.
* The additional Uplift Grant for the 143 officers (100 minimum plus 43 above target) is slightly favourable in terms of pay, however it does not include an allocation for the non-pay requirements for uplift.
* The maximum increase on the Band D Council Tax is equivalent to £14.



* Capping criteria was set so that all Police and Crime Commissioners and Mayors with PCC Function responsibilities are able to increase the Band D equivalent charge by up to £14 a year without triggering a local referendum, and this has been assumed in the overall Government headline figure for Policing. West Yorkshire is the 4th lowest Police Council Tax in England and Wales.

3.2 **Core Funding**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|   | **2025/26** | **2024/25** |
| **(£m)** | **(£m)** |
| Police Core Grant | 404.1 | 389.6 |
| Uplift Grant | 14.9 | 18.1 |
| Additional uplift (143) | 7.5 | 4.8 |
| NI Grant | 10.3 | n/a |
| Total Formula Funding | **436.8** | **412.5** |
| Pensions Grant | 15 | 16.8 |
| CT Freeze Grant | 16.7 | 16.7 |
| **Total Central Funding** | **468.5** | **446.0** |

**\*** A new £100m Neighbourhood Policing Grant has been introduced for 2025-26, with £4.3m allocated to WYP. This is not included in the MTFF due to the expectations and possible restrictions of the grant not yet being published.

3.3 **Localised Council Tax Support and Legacy Council Tax Freeze Grant**

Payment of localised council tax support and legacy council tax freeze grant is funded through the Home Office. West Yorkshire’s allocation for 2025/26 is £16.7m, which is in line in cash terms with the 2024/25 allocation. At this stage we do not know if the legacy council tax freeze grant will be built into the core grant in future years, which adds uncertainty.

3.4 **Community Safety Fund**

The 2025/26 budget includes the Community Safety Fund (CSF). The Mayor intends to continue to ring-fence and passport the CSF to local government partners for an additional year in demonstration of a commitment to joint problem solving and early intervention and prevention. This decision will be formalized in early 2025.

**Other Grants**

3.5 **Counter Terrorism Specific Grant**

Allocations to Counter Terrorism Units will be announced further into the year by the Government but will not be made public. Funding will be increased overall nationally.

3.6 **Capital Grant**

No capital grants have been provided since 2022/23.

1. **MEDIUM TERM POSITION**

**The Financial Context**

4.1 The Medium-Term Financial Forecast (MTFF) presented today shows a balanced position for 2025/26 following the use of £9.6m of revenue reserves and using the £14 precept flexibility. The position for future years, if the significant saving plans in place are met, is:

* 2026/27 £12.656m shortfall
* 2027/28 £14.703m shortfall
* 2028/29 £15.002m shortfall

Within these figures it has been assumed that the future years Band D Council Tax increase is £10.

Also includes an assumption regarding the Home Office grant, which is that it will remain at the latest budgeted value in 2025-26 with no inflationary increase applied.

**Largest Risk Areas for Assumptions:**

* Inflation assumptions, especially in utility costs have had a detailed review again for 2025/26 due to the significant inflationary pressures within the economy over the last few years. There has been significant fluctuation in those forecasts over the last 12 months due to the instability within global economies at this current time. There is also risk of market conditions not returning to ‘normal’ and elevated inflation rates staying at these levels for longer than assumed.
* An assumed 2.0% Officer and Staff Pay award has been built in for the 2025 pay award (which takes effect in September 2025). It is uncertain at what level the pay rise will be and at what level the Home Office would fund the additionality. In line with many other areas, we have factored in a pressure of 2%. Every 1% increase on pay increases our cost pressures by around £5m.

**Operational Context and Workforce Planning**

4.2 The 2025/26 budget is based upon the following numbers of established posts on 31 March 2026:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Officers | Police Staff | PCSOs | Total: |
| Budgeted FTEs March 2026 per Jan 2025 MTFF | 6,087 | 4,128 | 413 | 10,614 |
| National or Regional Commitments including,NECTU, Regional CrimeNPAS, Regional Scientific Support, VIPER, PNLD, NPAS and national firearms. | 459 | 1,091 | 0 | 1,550 |
| WY Core Availability | **5,628** | **3,037** | **413** | **9,064** |

West Yorkshire Police have appointed 244 new student officers this financial year to date and there are plans to appoint a further 132 before the end of March 2025. In addition, West Yorkshire Police have appointed 41 transferees since 1 April 2024 with a further 20 anticipated by 31 March 2025. This takes the total number of police officers appointed in 2024/25 to 437. West Yorkshire Police has maintained the early recruitment of 100 from 2022/23 as the Home Office gave further funding in the budget settlement and will have recruited a further 43 to take the force 143 above the Police Uplift of 852.

West Yorkshire Police has appointed 52 new PCSOs this financial year to date. However, as there are no plans to recruit any more PCSOs in 2024/25, there is expected to be a net decrease of 47 PCSOs once all retirees and leavers are taken into account. This takes the PCSO strength to 489 FTEs by 31 March 2025.

The Medium-Term Financial Forecast has been prepared alongside current workforce planning. Workforce planning includes predicting police officer leavers of each rank, PCSO and police staff leavers, workforce modernisation plans and recruitment plans, including probationers and transferees. The national uplift programme is also factored in. Other variables that may impact on the recruitment strategy continue to be monitored i.e., career breaks, and secondee returns.

4.3 Early work on West Yorkshire Police’s Force Management Statement 7 (FMS7) outlines a number of positive achievements of West Yorkshire Police over the last 12 months:

* Total contacts (including 999 and 101) are on a reducing trend and performance around 999 remains strong, with performance around 101 improving (answer times and abandonment rate). Response times for emergency and priority incidents continue to improve as does satisfaction with speed of arrival.
* The Force has rolled out Remote Resolution Teams for District appointments and Rapid Video Response for non-emergency domestic abuse incidents.
* Total crime continues on a reducing trend within the context of the Force being graded again in 2024 as ‘Outstanding’ by HMICFRS for crime recording. A small reduction in total crime is projected over the next four years.
* Most areas of ‘neighbourhood crime’ remain below the December 2019 baseline. Residential burglary has reduced by 37.9%, business and community burglary by 23.6%, theft from vehicle by 39.1% and robbery by 13.7%. Whilst residential burglary is projected to increase over the next four years, numbers are projected to remain below the December 2019 baseline.
* Whilst knife crime and personal robbery are stable, knife crime is 12.2% below the December 2019 baseline and personal robbery is 13.7% below the baseline. Small increases are projected over the four years but, again, numbers are projected to remain below the December 2019 baseline.
* There is a slow but improving trend for victim satisfaction. Satisfaction has improved across most crime types surveyed with particular improvements around anti-social behaviour and violence against the person. Domestic Abuse victims continue to have one of the highest rates of satisfaction across the crime types surveyed and there has been further improvement over the last 12 months.
* There has been long term prioritisation of domestic abuse, sexual offences and child sexual exploitation and abuse, which are nationally prioritised Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) threats. The Force has invested significantly in Safeguarding over the last few years and Value for Money Profiles show West Yorkshire Police is third highest nationally (and highest in the Most Similar Group (MSG)) for allocation of FTE (per 1,000 population) to Public Protection and highest in the MSG.
* After being at an all-time high in FMS6, Killed and Seriously Injured Road traffic collisions have reduced over the last 12 months. The number of fatal collisions is lower than the December 2019 baseline.
* Despite the financial challenges over the last 14 years, the Force has invested in areas of risk such as safeguarding, digital forensics, serious and organised crime and criminal justice, whilst also making required financial savings. The Force is now implementing Priority Based Budgeting (PBB) to close the financial gap in the medium and long-term and to ensure resources are aligned to the priority areas identified through the Policing Strategy and Force Management Statement.

Whilst FMS7 evidences some real successes for the Force, there remains some significant challenges set within the context of substantial reductions in the police budget over the last 14 years, continued financial pressures over the next few years and increasing complexity of policing demand which cuts across the full range of policing functions. Some key challenges from the emerging FMS7 are outlined in the table below:

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| **Area**  | **Commentary** |
| **Financial pressures**  | * The Medium-Term Financial Forecast outlines the financial pressures and required savings facing the Force.
* Whilst PBB is the Force’s medium to long term response to meeting the savings gap, Value for Money profiles show that West Yorkshire Police has less spend per FTE than any other force in the country, making further savings more challenging.
* Whilst the Force has the second highest crime rate in the country it is only 15th highest in terms of funding per head of the population. There is a significant gap between share of police funding in West Yorkshire and share of need.
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| **Socio Economic Challenges**  | * As a large Metropolitan County, West Yorkshire has some significant socio-economic challenges, which can be risk factors for crime, harm and demand, which may worsen as a result of economic pressures. This may lead to an increase in demand in areas which already experience a disproportionate amount of crime.
* Around one third of West Yorkshire’s population live in neighbourhoods that are in the 20% most deprived nationally, with up to 18% living in the top 10%. Both unemployment and the proportion of jobs paying below the Real Living Wage are above the national average.
* The County has a high poverty rate and in the three bigger Districts over a third of children are growing up in poverty.
* West Yorkshire has higher rates of children in care and higher rates of children on child protection plans, lower life expectancy and higher rates of suicide than the national average.
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| **Calls for Service** | * Demand remains high, as the Force has higher than average incidents per 1,000 population and has the third highest rate of 999 calls per 1,000 population.
* Whilst 999 calls have reduced over the last 12 months, they account for a growing proportion of all calls for service (34% compared to 28% in 2018).
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| **Public Confidence** | * Whilst public confidence has seen a marginal improvement over the last 12 months, levels are still below the MSG and national average.
* Positively, the Force has seen improvement around the police being reliable and respectful, where Force performance is better than both the MSG and national average.
* Dealing with local concerns is a key factor impacting on confidence and for West Yorkshire Police this is 45.5%, which is below the MSG and national average (48.3%).
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| **Hate Crime** | * Following a reduction over the last two years, hate incidents are now stable. There has been an increase in faith hate incidents over the last 12 months, likely linked to the ongoing Middle East conflict.
* FMS projections indicate a 10.5% increase in hate crime over the next four years, with international factors and events, likely to continue to impact on hate crime.
* Hate crime satisfaction is deteriorating and is one of the lowest levels of all crime/incident types surveyed.
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| **Crime** | * The Force continues to have the second highest crime rate in the MSG and country although this is within the context of being graded as ‘Outstanding’ for crime recording (West Yorkshire Police is one of five forces nationally and the only Force in the MSG to be graded as ‘Outstanding’ in the latest PEEL inspections so far).
* After reaching its highest level in FMS5, total crime has reduced over the last 12 months and is in line with the December 2019 baseline. However, some crime types continue to increase as a result of crime recording changes including offences such as stalking and harassment and public order. Other offence type reporting increases include violence without injury and sexual offences. Increases in possession of weapons and trafficking of drugs, reflect a strong and proactive focus of the Force on these areas.
* Over the last 12 months all types of neighbourhood crime (other than theft of vehicles) have increased and are projected to continue to increase. However, key priority areas (burglary, robbery, theft from vehicle), remain significantly below the December 2019 baseline.
* Shoplifting continues to increase and is now 21.3% higher than the December 2019 baseline and at the highest level. The increasing national focus on this crime is potentially leading to an increase in what is likely to have previously been under-reported. There remain links to vulnerabilities such as drugs and alcohol.
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| **Outcomes**  | * The Force continues to have Offences Brought to Justice (OBTJ) rates that are below the MSG and national average.
* Significant focus is now being given to increasing the number of positive outcomes, with particular focus on improving outcomes for domestic abuse victims.
* Investigation times are improving but these are also above the MSG and national average.
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| **Investigations, Criminal Justice and custody**  | * The Force has been graded as ‘Requires Improvement’ in the latest HMICFRS Inspection for Investigations and, in line with a large proportion of forces, has Areas for Improvement (AFIs) around outcomes, supervisory oversight of investigations and compliance with the Victims Code of Practice (VCOPs).
* In line with the national position, the Force has a detective gap which is not expected to close until January 2027. This is influenced by the time it takes to complete the PCEP DC course and a lack of candidates opting for this ‘swim lane’ through the PEQF route.
* Lack of capacity, inexperience and workloads are key issues impacting on investigative functions.
* Criminal Justice demand remains high and volume, complexity of file build and inexperience means there is an ongoing need to improve standards of investigations.
* There remain a number of criminal justice pressures facing the Force which are also national issues. These include delays and backlogs in the criminal justice system, delays in obtaining charging advice, increased workload in respect of case files, redaction burdens, prison capacity, timeliness of investigations and victim attrition.
* Custody throughput continues to increase. The strong focus on outstanding suspects, investigations and outcomes is projected to lead to an increase in primary arrests, overall custody throughput, investigative demand and criminal justice demand.
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| **Online/digital investigative demand**  | * ‘Online is the new frontline’ given the opportunities technology provides criminality, which cuts across the full range of crime and demand - serious and organised crime, sexual offending, terrorism, violence against women and girls (VAWG), and child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA). It is assessed that around 90% of crimes have a digital element.
* This increases demand for a range of policing functions including Digital Forensics Unit (DFU), Communications Data Investigation Unit (CDIU) and Online Child Abuse Investigation Teams (OCAIT). Technological advances are also creating opportunities for policing, meaning increasing and complex digital investigative demand for policing. Demand is predicted to increase, with particular growth around Artificial Intelligence, facial recognition, CCTV, vehicle forensics and cloud data.
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| **Domestic Abuse**  | * Whilst incidents continue to reduce, domestic abuse remains one of the most significant demand pressures/risks facing for the Force and West Yorkshire has the fourth highest rate of incidents per 1,000 population nationally.
* There are links between domestic abuse and other VAWG offences. Over 90% of stalking and harassment incidents are domestic related and West Yorkshire has the second highest rate nationally for domestic-related stalking and harassment incidents per 1,000 population. A large proportion of so called honour based abuse relates to domestic abuse and harassment offences and the Force has the third highest rate of so called honour based violence incidents per 1,000 population.
* There are links between domestic abuse and violence. A third of homicides are domestic related.
* Despite significant investment over the last few years, demand on Domestic Abuse Teams remains high and inexperience and turnover of staff are key issues.
* Demand around domestic abuse will remain high and more complex. Offences of coercive and controlling behaviour are predicted to increase.
* The strong and continued focus on domestic abuse both locally and nationally particularly through the Government’s Safer Streets Mission is likely to lead to an increase in reporting but also bringing more offences to justice in the longer term.
* Investigative demand around domestic abuse and VAWG offences will remain high as the Force seeks to improve outcomes for victims. An area of risk is the lack of perpetrator programmes beyond standard risk, when there is a strong focus nationally on pursue and management of perpetrators.
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| **Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO)** | * Both rape and sexual offences have increased over the last 12 months and are projected to increase over the next four years.
* The strong focus nationally and locally around VAWG and, in particular, rape and sexual offences, may have led to increased reporting and demand.
* Op Soteria implementation has placed significant demand in terms of new training and implementation of the National Operating Model. The emphasis on suspect-focused investigations and delivering justice for victims, may increase the confidence of victims to report (leading to an increase in offences), but longer term should bring more offenders to justice and reduce offences.
* Indecent exposure is under reported and the focus within the Angiolini Report on this is likely to encourage increased reporting of non-contact sexual offences. Longer term, however, earlier intervention may then lead to a reduction in both contact and non-contact sexual offences in the future.
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| **CSEA and Child Protection** | * Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) has been on an increasing trend and offences are 13.3% higher than the December 2019 baseline. Whilst indecent images of children have stabilised over the last 12 months, offences are 41.2% higher than the December 2019 baseline and account for a third of all child sexual abuse.
* Technology continues to be an increasing threat around online CSEA offending, particularly the growth of self-generated indecent imagery, financially motivated sexual exploitation, artificial intelligence, encryption and the Metaverse (virtual reality platforms).
* Non-recent CSEA investigations are on a stable trend, however investigations involve multiple victims and suspects and are therefore complex and lengthy. As victims often disclose when they are approached as a potential witness or when suspects are convicted, numbers of non-recent CSEA may increase.
* There is a strong national and local focus on child protection. West Yorkshire has higher rates of children in care than the national average and there are parts of the County where over a third of children are growing up in poverty, which may increase risk around child neglect.
* The Force is currently preparing for an HMICFRS inspection around child protection which is anticipated in 2025.
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| **Mental Health** | * Mental health demand has historically been difficult to fully identify as many incidents will involve some mental health related issues. In FMS6 we identified that 40% of all calls for service related to public safety and welfare incidents, creating significant potential demand for the Force.
* As anticipated, the introduction of Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) is starting to impact on inappropriate attendance at mental health incidents. However, given socio-economic challenges as well as pressures on partner agencies, there is the risk that mental health demand will increase with potential demand shunts to policing if partners cannot or fail to respond.
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| **Missing Persons** | * Over the last five years there has been a significant reduction and then stabilising of missing persons demand, with the number of incidents 41.7% below the December 2019 baseline. Reductions have been achieved through strong partnership working and the implementation of policies in 2019/20 similar to RCRP and more latterly the levels of intervention model which has encouraged a more significant response from non-police organisations, prior to involving the police.
* Whilst numbers have reduced, demand is still high, and risk levels have increased with 96% of children and 92% of adults graded as high or medium risk.
* Around two thirds of missing people are children, and a large proportion are children in care. There are also links with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). For adults who go missing there is a strong link with mental health.
* An increasing elderly population, with more people looked after at home, may increase both adults who go missing and adults at risk.
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| **Registered Sex Offenders (RSO)** | * The number of RSOs continues to increase at a higher rate than the national average and numbers are now 15.4% above the December 2019 baseline.
* The overwhelming majority of RSOs (72%) are managed in the community and are medium or low risk (70%).
* Numbers are projected to increase over the next four years given projected increases in sexual offences, CSEA and the expected continuing increase in online offending.
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| **Serious and Organised Crime (SOC)** | * Serious and organised crime (SOC) presents a significant threat in West Yorkshire, and it is predicted that most types will increase.
* The highest scoring wards for serious and organised crime severity are also those with higher levels of deprivation.
* The National Strategic Assessment outlines that whilst overall crime has reduced, the scale and harm of SOC has increased making up a higher proportion of all offending. Key factors include the societal shift to online and growth of online offending, the growth of the drugs threat and the international nature of the threat.
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| **Drugs and Firearms**  | * Drugs are the primary SOC threat and there are strong links to violent crime, gangs and exploitation of vulnerable people.
* Whilst the number of OCGs involved in the manufacture and supply of firearms is low, there is a wider link between criminal use of firearms, drugs and serious violence.
* There has been a slight increase in firearms discharges over the last 12 months and an increase in injury offences. However, the Force still has a lower rate of gun crime than other Metropolitan forces.
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| **Modern Slavery Human Trafficking (MSHT)** | * There has been a slight reduction in MSHT offences over the last 12 months, however the longer-term trend is upwards and is 22% higher than the December 2019 baseline.
* The profile has not changed; criminal exploitation remains the most common exploitation type and consists principally of forced labour for the purposes of cannabis cultivation and forced gang related activity linked to county lines, evidencing the strong link to drugs.
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| **Fraud and Cyber dependent crime** | * The NSA outlines that fraud remains the most prevalent crime against individuals although this continues to be under reported, with fraud identified as a chronic risk.
* There has been a trebling of Action Fraud disseminations to the Force over the last six years and Protect disseminations have increased by 16% compared to FMS6.
* In line with previous FMS’s it is predicted that the threat associated with fraud will increase, both in terms of volume and range, however due to limitations in reporting and recording this may not be reflected in Force data. Focus on a national level will increase given the likely inclusion of fraud in the new PEEL Assessment Framework (2025/27).
* Both the NSA and Regional Strategic Assessment (RSA) outline that the cyber threat is increasing. Nationally, regionally and within West Yorkshire ransomware is the biggest threat due to potential significant financial losses, data theft, disruption of service and reputational harm.
* Cyber-dependent crime, cyber-related blackmail offences and Protect notifications are on a long-term upward trend and criminal use of technology is a cross-cutting SOC threat.
* The cyber threat is projected to evolve and increase with commoditisation of tools and services reducing the capability threshold to commit offences. Technological advancements such as Artificial Intelligence, Deepfake and the Metaverse create opportunities for a broad range of cyber-crime.
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| **Most Serious Violence and Knife Crime** | * Most serious violence is on a stable trend; however, offences are 11.2% above the December 2019 baseline and a small increasing trend is projected over the next four years.
* Around a quarter of offences are committed with a bladed/pointed object showing the connections with knife crime. There are also strong connections with gangs more generally.
* Whilst knife crime is stable and offences are 12.2% below the December 2019 baseline, there has been a 9% increase in knife enabled robbery. The Force is part of the Knife Enabled Robbery Taskforce alongside another six Metropolitan forces.
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| **National threats (SPR)** | * The threat level for terrorism remains at Substantial and the number of investigations also remains stable.
* Public Order demand has increased over the last 12 months, linked to the ongoing issues associated with the Middle East as well as providing mutual aid support during the violent disorders in the summer of 2024.
* Armed Policing demand has increased linked to the increase in firearms discharges and planned and spontaneous operations.
* The Local Resilience Forum continues to identify cyber-attacks, severe weather and terrorism as long-term civil emergency threats.
* Cyber security attacks are predicted to evolve and increase. The scale and diversity of information on digital platforms makes policing a high value target.
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| **Workforce Challenges and Enabling functions**  | * Given significant recruitment over the last four years, there are high levels of inexperience with 21.2% of officer’s student officers and 31.8% of patrol officers student officers (however this is an improvement on FMS6 where the numbers were 27% and 40.5% respectively).
* There remains strong focus from the new Government on maintaining officer numbers and protecting neighbourhood policing. This provides challenges for the Force within the context of financial pressures. Maintaining officer numbers whist making financial savings may lead to reverse civilianisation in order to make the required savings (grey roles).
* The competitive labour market presents a challenge around both attracting the skills needed in policing and retaining them.
* The Force has been graded as Requires Improvement for the Workforce with AFIs around workloads, PDR and wellbeing (high risk roles).
* Whilst workforce representation is improving (particularly as a result of the PUP), the representation of black officers remains particularly low.
* There has been an increase in sickness over the last 12 months with mental health still accounting for the largest proportion of sickness.
* Professional Standards demand is increasing around reactive investigations, complaints, misconduct hearings, conduct cases and hearings, due to the strong focus of the Force in this area and in particular around VAWG.
* Digital demand is increasing with a national and local focus on using technology to reduce demand, be more efficient and productive and prevent/detect/investigate crime. A large proportion of PBB savings are dependent on digital solutions.
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4.4 The longer-term position needs to ensure that the West Yorkshire Police operating model remains fit for purpose for the future, so that the Force has the capacity and capability to deal with the growing and complex operational challenges highlighted above.

1. **DRAFT BUDGET 2025/26**

5.1 The updated Medium Term Financial Forecast presented in this report has been based on the following assumptions:

* £14 on the band D Council Tax increase in 2025/26, and £10 thereafter (in line with the current national position)
* 2% pay award for 2025/26 and beyond.
* Insurance inflation increases between 20% at 35%, then 2% thereafter
* General inflation applied to most other areas of expenditure between 2.5% to 6% per annum, with some contract specific inflation being higher.

5.2 While the budget balances in the short term there are significant savings required to achieve this as well as use of reserves. Savings on both pay and non-pay items have been built into the 2025/26 budget. Below is a summary of how West Yorkshire have planned to close the gap by driving efficiency and productivity across the organisation.

* Continued improvements in areas including commercial and procurement practices, and in corporate functions. In 2024/25 the new West Yorkshire Police procurement team was set up following the end of the Regional Procurement Collaboration. This is allowing a more integrated service that can more closely align with our contract management activity across the organisation.
* Plans to use the earmarked reserves to balance 2025/26. These are reserves that have been built up prudently by reducing discretionary spend and through in year identification of cost savings that can then be used within the Revenue Pressures Reserve.
* A review has been undertaken across all West Yorkshire Police functions in a highly structured and thorough manner to identify productivity savings within each function to reduce spend while retaining service delivery. The Police and Crime Panel were briefed on the methodology for this work in November 2024 and it is pleasing to note that progress is in line with expectations.

5.3 A review has been undertaken across all West Yorkshire Police local functions in order to assess where it would be possible to reduce service levels, while minimising the impact of that on the delivery of policing within West Yorkshire. This programme will continue to run through to 2027 and will provide the vehicle for mitigating the funding deficit throughout that period and likely beyond. The main reductions that work through the budget in 2025/26 are:

* A reduction to the number of PCSOs in line with organisational attrition. PCSOs are an extremely important part of the West Yorkshire Policing model, however in line with many other forces this is an area where we are having to reduce, in part due to the officer target numbers. Published Home Office stats show that we have a significantly higher number of PSCOs than our MSG Forces. The stats as at the end of March 2024 for our MSG show that Greater Manchester had 354 (reduced in that year from 421) and West Midlands Police had 297 (reduced in that year from 342).
* PCSO Numbers:

The MTFF includes a reduction in the number of PCSO FTEs:



\*492 is the forecast actual strength on 31 March 2025, in line with the latest Strategic Workforce Planning.

* The Digital Forensics Unit will have a budget reduction that takes them closer to their existing establishment. There has been growth in this area for a number of years, however it has been difficult to recruit into this area and it has not therefore reached budgeted establishment. In the 2025/26 budget we have removed the budget for 20 posts.
* The Finance function has been reviewed and had a budget reduction of £306k partly enabled through new processes that are being implemented and partly through the realignment of resources post the upgrade of the Finance System.

**5.4 Referendum Limit**

Capping criteria enables all PCCs, and Mayors that have PCC Function responsibilities, to raise the policing element of local taxation by increasing the Band D equivalent charge by £14 for 2025/26. The Mayor intends to use the precept flexibility to increase the Band D equivalent charge by £14 (5.6%) to sustain key front line policing services and mitigate further reductions where possible. Within West Yorkshire, around 81% of Council Taxpayers are in bands A, B and C, which will mean a less than 24 pence per week increase for most Council Taxpayers.

Our Budget Survey shows that 58% of respondents across West Yorkshire would support a police council tax increase of £14. The detailed results of the survey are shown at **Appendix A**.

The survey commenced on the 5th of December 2024 and closed on the 22nd of January 2024.

1. **FUNDING STRATEGY**

 **Reserves and Balances**

6.1 An analysis of the reserves position is set out at **Appendix B**.

6.2 The focus of the financial strategy is on sustainability and affordability. The General Reserve level is ensured to be in line with the Reserves Strategy of between 2.5% and 3.5% of the net revenue budget. The current level of general balances is around 2.5% of the net revenue budget.

6.3 The Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police intends to continue to implement Priority Based Budgeting to help transform the organisation, achieve the required savings and meet the challenging and changing policing requirements in West Yorkshire.

6.4 The sustainability in the future of policing and community safety is of paramount importance to all of us as we have faced unprecedented demand pressures and inflationary costs in recent years.

1. **PRECEPT OPTIONS CONSIDERED BY THE MAYOR**

7.1 The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor are keen to maximise resources to West Yorkshire Police due to the pressures faced and the needs of the community and therefore consider the £14 increase to be the only viable option.

7.2. The new Police and Crime Plan for 2024-28 was drafted in consultation with West Yorkshire Police and it outlines the ambitious strategy for that period with aims, aspirations and objectives for policing, crime, community safety and the criminal justice system. The Plan will be launched this month (February 2025).

7.3 As with the previous Plan, an extensive piece of work was undertaken to provide a solid evidence base for the Plan, with both an online survey and face to face engagement. The details of this engagement along with the Needs Assessment evidence base will be published when the Plan is launched.

7.4 The draft of the Police and Crime Plan was brought to the Police and Crime Panel in December 2024 for consideration of the priorities and the cross cutting themes and how this will work alongside operational policing in the area to ensure a Safe, Just and Inclusive West Yorkshire.

7.5 **Precept consultation**

The Mayor has recently undertaken a Precept Consultation to gain views from members of the public around policing. The survey results provide a clear indication on the part of the majority of respondents that they support the Mayor in raising the Band D equivalent of the policing element of Council Tax by £14 (27p per week) to provide vital investment into West Yorkshire Police.

7.6 The results are shown at **Appendix A** and summarised by band below:



7.7 A £14 increase would take the Band D police council tax for 2025/26 to £263.28 a year. Approximately 61% of households in West Yorkshire are in Bands A and B, and would pay £175.52 and £204.77 a year respectively, an increase of approximately 18 pence per week for band A, 21 pence per week for Band B and 27 pence per week for Band D.

1. **DECISION BY THE MAYOR**

8.1 Relevant considerations for the Mayor in making her decision included:

* Police and Crime Plan consultation feedback
* Operational resilience
* Public views obtained from the Budget Survey and focussed engagement.
* The impact on frontline policing
* The significant financial challenges for West Yorkshire Police over the medium term
* The impact on council taxpayers
* Future financial health, including the adequacy and utilisation of reserves and balances.
* The robustness of financial and organisational management processes in place
* Savings made to date and the capacity for future savings.
* The uncertainty of change to the police funding formula review which accounts for around 69.4% of the West Yorkshire budget.

8.2 The Mayor was conscious of the current level of the police council tax, which is the fourth lowest in England and Wales, the current difficult economic climate facing the public, and the longer-term requirement to make significant additional savings in the budget.

8.3 The mid-term financial forecast that was brought to panel in November 2024 made it clear that the financial pressures on West Yorkshire Police mean that some tough decisions have been made. The opportunity to increase the precept by £14 rather than £10 ensures that the deficit going forward will be lessened and gives opportunity for less stringent cuts than would otherwise be necessary.

8.4 This has been a challenge given the current economic climate and ongoing cost of living crisis, and the Mayor is acutely aware of the potential financial impact on individuals within the community, but also takes note of feedback from the wider public, who see policing as a priority with a majority (58%) supporting the level of increase proposed.

8.5 The Mayor feels that, despite personal impacts in communities, maintaining and rebuilding core front line operational resilience is imperative to keep the communities of West Yorkshire safe and feeling safe, and this view is supported by the majority of the survey respondents and other key stakeholders in protecting key police staff jobs.

8.6 The Mayor has therefore decided to support the £14 on the Band D, and the MTFF and summary movement statement from 2024/25 to 2025/26 are attached at **Appendices C and D**.

8.7 The Mayor notifies the Panel of her intention to increase the police precept by £14 on Band D.

8.8 The Mayor’s proposal would result in a budget of £621.414m which will be used to deliver the requirements of the Police and Crime Plan to the benefit of the people of West Yorkshire.

1. **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION BENEFITS AND IMPLICATIONS**
	1. Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are an integral part of the precept and budget setting process. A full EqIA process has informed the development of the new Police and Crime Plan 2024-28.

An EqIA has been undertaken for consultation and engagement approaches initially to inform the Voice of West Yorkshire to write the Plan and to then inform the approaches to the precept consultation and engagement activity.

The EqIA supports our approach to avoid inadvertently disadvantaging anyone, and wherever possible, proactively advance equity/equality, diversity, and inclusion.

* 1. Every effort has been made to make the consultation and engagement work as inclusive as possible within the timeframe provided, reaffirming the Mayor’s commitment to diverse responses and an inclusive process.
1. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**
	1. As detailed in section 4 and 5 of the report.
2. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**
	1. As detailed in section 2 of the report.
3. **EXTERNAL CONSULTATION**

12.1 The public consultation on the 2025/26 Council Tax police precept ran between 5th of December 2024 and 22nd of January 2025. This is a longer consultation period than in previous years, giving residents greater opportunity to have their say Residents were invited to respond to the proposal of an equivalent £14 annual increase on Band D households, corresponding to 27 pence per week

12.2 The precept consultation was promoted with two press releases and via two Community Alerts (subscriber-based messaging system) to both launch the survey and to mark the final opportunity and also the extended deadline. These releases were featured in the Bradford T&A, Keighley News, Yahoo News and online sites ‘Doing Good Leeds’ and ‘Ground News’. The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime also promoted the consultation during broadcast interviews with BBC Radio Leeds and Global News. External newsletters shared by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority contained articles about the precept consultation and internal items were posted across the organisation. In addition, a partner communications toolkit was produced to aid the dissemination of the message

12.3 At the close of the survey, 1,653 residents had recorded their views on the precept proposal.

1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**
	1. The Mayor recommends that the Panel agrees her proposed Police precept increase of £14 which results in precept income budgeted at £182.6m, resulting in an increase to the police council tax of £12.0m compared to the previous year.



* 1. This would increase the council tax for band D households from £249.28 to £263.28. However, approximately 61% of households in West Yorkshire are in Bands A and B, which would increase from £166.19 to £175.52 and from £193.88 to £204.77 respectively per year.
	2. The proposed increase in police precept would amount to less than £14 per annum for most households in West Yorkshire, an increase of less than 27 pence per week, to help secure extra investment into front-line policing.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS AND APPENDICES**

**A Precept Survey Results**

**B Reserves and Balances**

**C Medium Term Financial Forecast**

**D Movement Statement 2024/25 to 2025/26**

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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