

# Budget 2025/26 Consultation Results

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<b>Disclosure under Freedom of Information Act?</b>	Yes

## Consultation Overview

This report summarises the findings and feedback gathered through the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) budget consultation for 2025/26.

The 2025/26 budget was developed to deliver the priorities set out in the Warwickshire Police and Crime Plan 2025/26, for which an extensive public consultation was undertaken in autumn 2024 to gain feedback on the proposed policing priorities. A [full report on this consultation](#) was published in January 2024 on the OPCC website.

This follow-up consultation focused on options for the Police Precept, aiming to understand public and stakeholder sentiment.

### Executive Summary

The budget consultation ran from 20 December 2024 to 27 January 2025, utilising multiple channels to engage the public and stakeholders, including:

- An online survey with 1,159 responses.
- Direct engagement with town and parish councils, business leaders, local authorities, Members of Parliament, and police workforce representatives.

The consultation highlighted the significant challenges in balancing service delivery across Warwickshire diverse communities while maintaining public confidence in policing.

Key findings include:

- 59% of respondents supported a precept increase at the maximum permitted level.
- A rural-urban divide was evident, with rural respondents expressing dissatisfaction with visible policing compared to urban respondents.
- Stakeholders emphasised the importance of tangible improvements in policing and service delivery as a condition for accepting a precept increase.

### Survey Results

#### Online survey

The survey received a total of 1,159 responses over 38 days. Of these, 1,124 were from Warwickshire residents. A total of 177 worked within policing, with a further 69 preferring not to say.

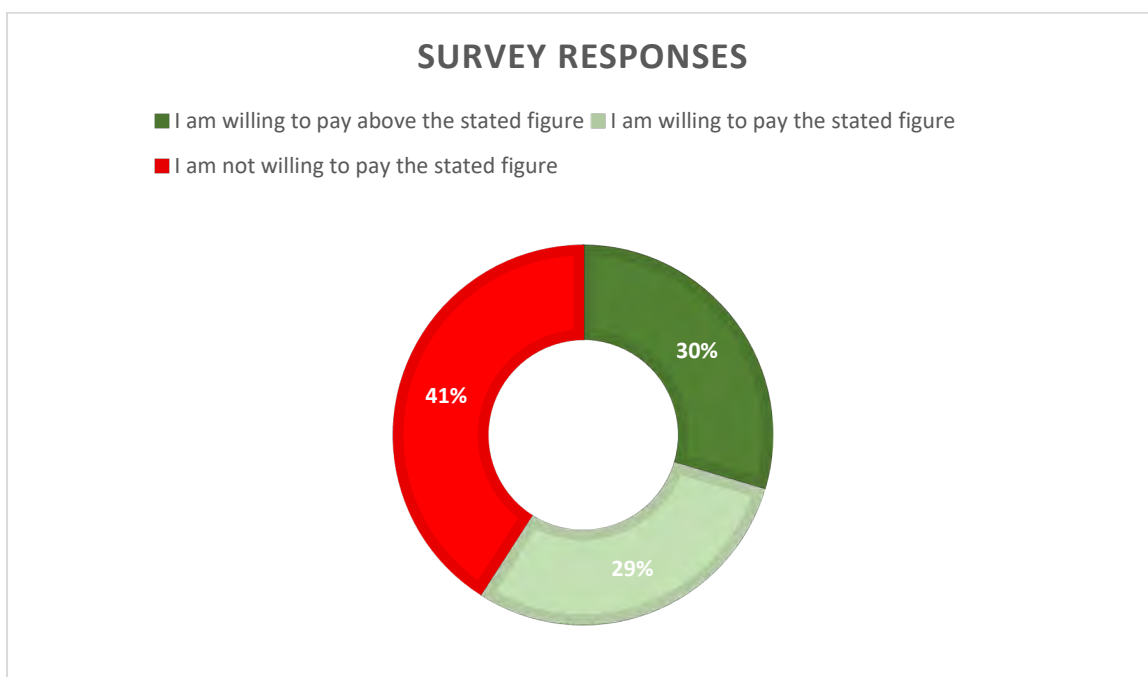
The survey asked for respondents to state which Council Tax band their household fell under, then presented options for the precept with increases tailored to give a corresponding increase level: i.e. Band A recipients were told an annual increase of

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£9.33 represented the proposed increase, whereas in Band D it was £14 per year. Those who did not know what their Council Tax banding was were shown the details for Band D, which is the average rate.

The headline result was that, across all Warwickshire respondents, a total of 59% supported an increase in the precept at the maximum rate permitted. 41% of respondents were not willing to pay an increase, accepting that this would mean a reduction in policing services.

Of those supporting an increase, half were in favour of an increase *above* permitted levels.



Precept option	Result	%age
I am willing to pay above the stated figure	332	29.6
I am willing to pay the stated figure	330	29.4
I am not willing to pay the stated figure	459	41.0

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There was a broad distribution of responses from across the county:

Area	Number of responses
North Warwickshire Borough	112
Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough	163
Rugby Borough	148
Stratford-on-Avon District	352
Warwick District	340
I'm not sure	9

Analysis of the results by area showed that:

- Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick Districts showed the highest participation, with rural areas highlighting dissatisfaction with visible policing.
- Taken alongside the wider feedback received, urban areas displayed greater acceptance of the precept increase compared to rural respondents.
- Band D respondents were the most prevalent, closely followed by Band C. Respondents from Bands B, C, D and G were most resistant to a precept increase, with between 43% and 48% of respondents in these bandings selecting this option.
- In all bands, a majority of respondents were in favour of an increase, and it is notable that in Band A, this represented two thirds of the responses, albeit from a relatively small sample.
- Those who worked within policing were more likely to support an increase in precept than those who did not.

Given the numbers who would be willing to pay above the cap set by the Government, it can be inferred that a majority of respondents felt that increases up to this limit were relatively modest and affordable, albeit there is still a significant minority opposed to any form of increase.

## Community Feedback

### Town and Parish Councils

Two online engagement sessions were held in December 2024 for town and parish councils, with 47 parish representatives registering to attend. The events were widely promoted, including through the Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils.

Key themes which emerged were:

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- **Rural vs Urban Policing:** Rural councillors voiced frustration over the lack of visible policing, particularly with large neighbourhood teams spread across multiple parishes, leaving some areas feeling underserved.
- **Precept Increase:** The proposed £14 Band D annual precept rise prompted mixed views. While some supported it to maintain or improve services, rural councillors questioned whether the additional cost would deliver real benefits.
- **Neighbourhood Policing:** Concerns were raised about funding for neighbourhood policing, the declining presence of PCSOs, high turnover rates, and limited engagement with communities.
- **Visibility and Engagement:** Visibility emerged as a key issue, with rural areas feeling particularly let down.

### In summary:

- Rural councillors were sceptical of precept increases, citing a lack of visible improvements and police presence.
- Urban and semi-urban areas were more supportive of the precept rise but stressed the importance of delivering measurable results on issues like speeding and burglary.

Subsequent representations were received by email from Walton and Wellesbourne Parish Council, Baginton Parish Council and Over Whitacre Parish Council. All expressed their concerns over police presence and visibility in their local areas, with general scepticism that previous precept increases had delivered improvements for their residents.

## Business community feedback

An online engagement session for the business community was held on 19 December 2024, with 16 participants representing business crime organisations, business improvement districts, small business groups, retailers, rural businesses, and individual businesses.

### Key points raised were:

- **Precept Increase:** The proposed £14 Band D precept rise was seen as reasonable if it supported efforts to address business and retail crime, as well as anti-social behaviour in town centres. Attendees emphasised that rural businesses also need attention.
- **Officer Visibility:** Improved officer presence in town centres was welcomed, with hopes for continued funding to maintain this and tackle retail crime.
- **Business Crime Partnership:** A business crime reduction partnership was suggested as a positive step to enhance efforts.

## Local authority feedback

An online session was held for leaders and chief executives of local councils, including district, borough, and county authorities.

Council representatives discussed the financial pressures caused by increased employer contributions for National Insurance, which had not been fully covered by Government funding. It was noted that policing faced similar challenges, though to a lesser degree.

Concerns were raised about the potential negative impact of future Government spending reviews on funding, which should be considered during current budget planning.

Participants agreed that Government funding settlements for both policing and local councils assumed Council Tax would be raised to the maximum allowed. There was a general consensus that this was the only viable option.

No additional feedback was provided on the Commissioner's budget proposals.

## Member of Parliament feedback

An in-person meeting was arranged for Members of Parliament in early January 2025, attended by five of the six Warwickshire MPs. The financial situation was noted by all, though no specific feedback was received in terms of the precept options.

A number of operational matters were raised with the PCC, among which highlighted the need to tackle domestic abuse, hate crime, car theft and online crime. Better street lighting and CCTV provision were also highlighted as important factors for local residents.

## Public feedback

The survey was accompanied by an option to provide additional feedback to the OPCC via email, while social media promotions offered further opportunities for comments. Posts on Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), and Warwickshire Connected reached over 65,000 Warwickshire residents, resulting in more than 500 click-throughs to the survey.

In total, 130 direct comments were received. Feedback primarily focused on:

- Concerns about police visibility and resource allocation.
- Specific local issues, such as road safety and speeding.
- Requests for greater budget transparency.

While only a small number of comments directly addressed the budget-setting process, most of those expressed opposition to increasing the precept. It is worth noting that

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some comments may have been made before clicking through to the survey, meaning contributors may have lacked contextual information when forming their opinions.

Research has also shown that social media comments often exhibit a negative bias, particularly on politically sensitive topics. As such, care should be taken when drawing broad conclusions from social media feedback alone.

### **Police workforce feedback**

A meeting between Police and Crime Commissioner Philip Seccombe and representatives from the Police Federation, Unison and Superintendents Association was held in early January 2025.

Attendees noted that there were pressures in the system, particularly within senior line management and it was hoped that staffing would not need to be reduced. It was also raised that savings targets still had to be achieved, even with a maximum precept rise.

There was a consensus that a maximum precept rise was necessary, although it was noted that there would be a public expectation of tangible improvements, particularly given the history of precept increases at or near the maximum amount in recent years.