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Mr David Jamieson
West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner
2nd Floor, Aqua House,
20 Lionel Street,
Birmingham
B3 1AQ.

7 February 2015

cc. Jacky Courtney, Chief Executive, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner

Dear David,

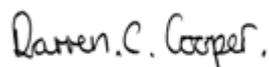
West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Report on the Proposed Precept 2015/16

Thank you for your attendance at the Panel meeting this week. Please find attached the Panel's statutory report on your proposed precept.

I note that the Government grant for West Midlands Police will reduce by £23m next year, equivalent to almost 5%, putting additional pressure on the force.

We, therefore, welcome your agreement to work with the Panel to ensure improved oversight of the budget and staffing profile over the course of the year.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Darren Cooper

Chair West Midlands Police and Crime Panel

**Report of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel
To the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner**

7 February 2015

**WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AND CRIME PANEL REPORT ON THE PROPOSED PRECEPT
2015/2016**

1. Introduction

In accordance with Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 the Panel must review the proposed precept and make a report to the PCC on the proposed Precept.

On 2 February 2015 the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel considered the Commissioner's proposed Precept for 2015/16.

2. Commissioner's Proposed Precept

Subject to confirmation of the final grant figures, the surpluses and deficits on collection funds and assuming referendum rules similar to 2014/15, the Commissioner proposed to increase the Precept for 2015/16 by 1.99%, setting the Band D precept at £106.55, an increase of 4 pence each week.

3. Panel Members Present

Councillors Cooper (Chair), Burley, Douglas Osborn, Jones, Hosell, Mattu, Lucas, Phillips, Tildesley and Tyler
Lionel Walker, Nick Drew (Independent members)

4. Panel Decision

The Panel agreed to support the Precept increase of 1.99% for 2015/16.

Councillors Hosell, Douglas Osborn, Jones, Tyler and Tildesley voted against the proposal.

5. Panel Comments on the PCC's Budget Proposals

i. General

In general there was a lack of clarity about what the public are getting for a 1.99% increase in their contribution towards policing.

ii. Reserves

The Panel considered the level of reserves and some Panel members felt that more reserves could be used, whilst still retaining a prudential amount.

iii. Staffing

The Panel notes that staffing costs amount to over 87% of the total revenue budget. Given the importance of this some Panel members felt that there was inadequate information on staffing provided.

a) Support Staff Funding

The Panel notes the proposed increase on support staff funding from £95.5m to £99.6 m for 2015/16 and notes that there are an additional 83 police support staff proposed for in custody suites. However the direct impact of front desk closures on staffing was less clear and further detail would have been helpful.

b) Police Recruitment

Page 4 of the report refers to the “continued recruitment of 450 police officers.” Whilst the Panel and, no doubt the citizens of the West Midlands welcome this, we understand there to be currently 7,187 police officers and in spite of the recruitment this figure is expected to fall to 7,000 at the end of 2015/16. To repeat what the Panel said last year to your predecessor - if this budget is not allowing you to have additional officers at the end of the period this should be made clearer to the public.

iv. Engagement with Public

The Panel was disappointed with the reporting in the Solihull News. Whilst we accept that the article was based on the Panel’s last meeting there is a need to ensure that messages from yourself and your office to the public and press are clear about where and when the decision on the Precept will be made and role of Panel in this.

You note your disappointment with fewer than 500 members of the public responding to your budget consultation which the Panel would echo. Next year the Panel suggests identifying opportunities with the districts to signpost your consultation alongside their own budget consultations and using their social media channels.

In addition the consultation needs to be meaningful. Whilst the Panel recognises the very tight time scales at this time of year, keeping the consultation open until 9 am on the morning of the Panel meeting allows no time to present a Plan B were the public to suggest alternatives. In practice the survey appeared still to be open whilst the Panel was discussing your proposals.

6. Conclusion

The Panel will publish this report on its website today: www.westmidlandspcp.co.uk

The Panel looks forward to the Commissioner’s consideration of these comments and your response.