



**West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority**

**Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire**

Report to: Police and Crime Panel

Date: 02 February 2024

Subject: Precept Proposal 2024/25

Report of: Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire

Author: Angela Taylor – Director, Finance and Commercial Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1. 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 2024/25.

Section 4 - The medium term position.

Section 5 - The draft budget for 2024/25.

Section 6 - The funding strategy.

Section 7 - Precept options considered by the Mayor.

Section 8 - The decision by the Mayor

Section 9 - Equality, diversity and inclusion implications

Section 10 - Financial implications

Section 11 - Legal implications

Section 12 - External consultation

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

2. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR NOTIFICATION OF THE PRECEPT PROPOSAL

2.1 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 2024/25 before 1 February 2024.

- 2.2 The Panel must review the proposed precept before 8 February 2024 and make a report to the Mayor.
- 2.3 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 2024.
- 2.4 The Panel must review the revised proposal and make a report to the Mayor by 22 February 2024. The Mayor must respond to the report and issue her precept by 1 March 2024.
- 2.5 Rejection by the Panel of the revised precept does not prevent the Mayor issuing it as her precept for the forthcoming financial year.
- 2.6 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.

3. THE PROVISIONAL POLICE GRANT SETTLEMENT 2024/25

Key Points

- 3.1 The provisional 2024/25 Police Finance Settlement was announced on 14th December 2023 in a written statement by Chris Philp, Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire. The settlement was largely as expected.

As part of the settlement, the Government announced that Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) (and therefore Mayors in exercising PCC Functions), would be able to raise their council tax precepts by up to £13 (for Band D) for one year only. This equates to an annual increase for the lowest as 3.9% (North Welsh PCC) and for the highest 7.7% (Northumbria PCC). In West Yorkshire, this would represent 5.5% based on a £13 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:

- Baselined in-year funding for the 2023-24 Police Pay Award, £7.8m for West Yorkshire Police
- Additional funding to mitigate the impact of the increased cost of Police Pensions, with employers’ rate increasing from 31% to 36.2%. This additional funding is £10.6m for West Yorkshire Police (WYP), against an increased

employers’ cost of £11.7m, giving a net impact to WYP of adding a £1m pressure each year

- One-off Pension Grant to support the administration of the McCloud Remedy, £1.1m to West Yorkshire Police
- Uplift Grant to maintain 20,000 officers, £6.4m to West Yorkshire Police
- Further funding for some force areas who have agreed to recruit additional officers above their original uplift target, £4.8m for West Yorkshire Police if the additional 100 officers are maintained
- Increase in Band D Council Tax maximum increase from £10 to £13
- A reduction in reallocations (topsllices from the total Home Office Policing budget) for national programmes and services that are set out in the table below:

Top Slice	2023-24 £'m	2024-25 £'m	Change £'m
Special Grant	50.0	34.0	-16.0
PFI	71.6	71.2	-0.4
Arm's Length Bodies	74.7	65.7	-9.0
Police Technology Programmes	526.4	500.9	-25.6
National Policing Capabilities	69.3	49.8	-19.5
Forensics	20.6	13.0	-7.6
Crime Reduction Capabilities	18.4	0	-18.4
Fraud	18.1	18.1	0.0
Regional and Organised Crime Units	39.5	31.6	-7.9
Serious Violence	45.6	45.6	0.0
Drugs / County Lines	30.0	30.0	0.0
NPCC Programmes	9.5	7.7	-1.8
Capital Reallocations	104.9	128.7	23.8
Cyber Crime*	14.1	13.1	-1.0
Tackling Exploitation and Abuse	21.3	17.6	-3.7
Police Productivity and Innovation		11.0	11.0
Total Reallocations and adjustments	1,114.0	1,038.1	-76.0

- 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 £13 a year without triggering a local referendum and this has been assumed in the overall Government headline figure for Policing. West Yorkshire continues to be the 4th lowest Police Council Tax in England and Wales, assuming everyone increases band D by £13.

3.2 Core Funding

	2024/25 (£m)	2023/24 (£m)
Police Core Grant	389.6	367.7
Uplift Grant	18.1	11.7
Total Formula Funding	412.5	379.4
Pensions Grant	16.8	5.1
CT Freeze Grant	16.7	16.7
Total Central Funding	446.0	401.2

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 2024/25 is £16.7m, which is in line in cash terms with the 2023/24 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 2024/25 budget includes the Community Safety Fund (CSF), the grant for which was £5.292m in 2013/14 (base line). 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 at the end of January 2024. The Community Safety Partnership Forum is also considering whether some of this investment should support future public consultation responses.

Other Grants

3.5 Counter Terrorism Specific Grant

Allocations to Counter Terrorism Units will be announced further into the year by 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.

4. MEDIUM TERM POSITION

The Financial Context

4.1 The Medium-Term Financial Forecast (MTFF) presented today shows a balanced position for 2024/25 following the use of £7.344m of revenue reserves and using the £13 precept flexibility. The position for future years, if the significant saving plans in place are met, is:

- 2025/26 £18.251m shortfall
- 2026/27 £26.010m shortfall
- 2027/28 £42.563m shortfall

Within these figures it has been assumed that the future years Band D Council Tax increase is £5. By comparison, if we had assumed £10 in line with the 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) three year agreement of £10 for each of those years (which subsequently was changed to £10 then £15 then £13), the future forecast deficits would change to

- 2025/26 £14.797m shortfall
- 2026/27 £19.031m shortfall
- 2027/28 £31.990m shortfall

Within the MTFF it has also been assumed that core Home Office grant would be flat cash. If we assumed a 1% increase each year from 2025/26 in addition to the above £10 Band D Council Tax increase, the forecast shortfalls would further reduce to:

- 2025/26 £10.901m shortfall
- 2026/27 £15.096m shortfall
- 2027/28 £28.016m shortfall

Largest Risk Areas for Assumptions:

- Inflation assumptions, especially in utility costs have had a detailed review for 2024/25 due to the significant inflationary pressures within the economy over the last two 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 2.5% Officer and Staff Pay award has been built in for 2024/25. This has been reduced from 3% in response to the Policing Minister's December briefing where he stated that anything above 2.5% he would look to have funded by the Treasury. The pay award for the subsequent two years is assumed at 2% but it should be noted that this remains a difficult to forecast area and there may be future cost pressure. Every 1% increase on pay increases our cost pressures by around £4.82m.

- While we have more certainty over the level of Home Office funding to forces in totality than we have had in recent years, assumptions relating to levels of government grant funding from 2024/25 onwards at a local level are less certain due to the Government’s plan to review the funding formula. The timing of this is still uncertain and, considering that there is likely to be a transition plan to smooth any significant shifts in funding, it is assumed that it would be at least 2025/26 before a real impact is felt.
- Precept – the MTFF as modelled assumes a £13 increase on the Band D for the coming year, and £5 increase for the subsequent years after. Each year it is assumed that the tax base increases by 1%.

Operational Context and Workforce Planning

4.2 The 2024/25 budget is based upon the following numbers of established posts at 31 March 2025:

	Officers	Police Staff	PCSOs	Total:
Budgeted FTEs March 2025 per Jan 2024 MTFF	6,044	4,134	575	10,753
National or Regional Commitments including, NECTU, Regional Crime NPAS, Regional Scientific Support, VIPER, PNLD, NPAS and national firearms.	442	1,075	0	1,517
WY Core Availability	5,602	3,059	575	9,236

However, the current inflationary pressures on the budget mean that it is not possible at this stage to plan to achieve the establishment figures as set out above. The savings required to balance the 2024/25 budget require the achievement of a 6% staff vacancy factor, higher than the usual 4%.

West Yorkshire Police have appointed 198 new student officers this financial year to date and there are plans to appoint a further 160 before the end of March 2024. In addition, West Yorkshire Police have appointed 32 transferees since 1 April 2023 with a further 26 anticipated by 31st March 2024. This takes the total number of new police officers appointed in 2023/24 to 416, a net increase of zero after consideration of leavers. The Force has maintained the early recruitment from 2022/23 as the Home Office gave further funding in year to remain at 100 officers above the Police Uplift of 852.

West Yorkshire Police has appointed 46 new PCSOs this financial year to date

and plans to appoint a further 44 before the end of March 2024, which will result in an expected net increase of 3 PCSO's once all retirees and leavers are taken into account. This takes the PCSO strength to 522 FTEs by 31 March 2024, in line with the 2023/24 10% vacancy factor. Recruitment will increase in 2024/25 to reduce the vacancy factor from 10% to 4%. The Mayoral pledge of recruiting 750 more frontline police officers and staff over her term is also on track to be achieved.

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 6 (FMS6) outlines a number of positive achievements of West Yorkshire Police over the last 12 months:

- Total crime has stabilised over the last 12 months, within the context of the Force being graded as 'Outstanding' by HMICFRS for crime recording.
- Most areas of 'neighbourhood crime' remain below the December 2019 baseline. Residential burglary has reduced by 35%, business and community burglary by 25%, theft from the person by 18% and robbery by 10%.
- Knife crime has remained stable over the last 12 months and is 9.8% below the December 2019 baseline and whilst robbery has increased, numbers are 11% below the December 2019 baseline.
- Firearms discharges have been on a long-term reducing trend and whilst there has been a slight increase over the last 12 months, numbers are 45.6% below December 2019 baseline and the Force has lower levels than other Metropolitan forces.
- Outcomes rates have improved and the number of offences finalised with a charge/summons have also increased across a wide range of crime types. Victim based crime has increased by 1%, but offences brought to justice have increased by 12% and charges have increased by 15%, positioning the Force generally higher than the Most Similar Group (MSG) in most areas.
- Victim satisfaction is stable, with improvements made in the service delivery area 'Keeping informed of Progress'.
- There has been long term prioritisation of domestic abuse, sexual offences and child sexual exploitation and abuse, which are nationally prioritised VAWG (violence against women and girls) threats. Significant investment into safeguarding over the last few years has improved capacity and has reduced workload from 31 crimes per officer (pre-Safeguarding Review) to 16.7 crimes per officer.
- Hate incidents have reduced by 12% over the last 12 months, with all

strands seeing a reduction. A further reduction is projected over the next four years, however a number of factors including international conflict and migration could lead to an increase in community tensions and hate crime.

- 999 performance is amongst the best nationally, ranking fifth over the last 12 months.
- Capacity has improved around patrol and the Contact function, which has also led to an improved position around neighbourhood policing, with investment planned through the police uplift programme (PUP) and realignment of some resources as a result of Priority Based Budgeting (PBB).
- The Force has launched its Police Race Action Plan focussing on four pillars; Protect, Respect, Involve and Represent and has a good understanding of race inequality across a range of policing functions.
- The Force is in a strong position in meeting the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) national threats, including Violence Against Women and Girls which was added to the SPR in February 2023. West Yorkshire is identified as an ‘exemplar Force’ for VAWG and an ‘adopter Force’ for Op Soteria.
- The Force has met its Police Uplift Programme target and has recruited additional officers in support of the national programme.
- Despite the financial challenges over the last 12 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 currently going through Priority Based Budgeting and has to date identified 116 Productivity Savings to ensure the Force is more efficient and effective and can realign resources into priority areas identified through the Policing Strategy and Force Management Statement.
- Activity and resources are focussed on frontline functions, areas of risk and priorities from a Force and local perspective as evidenced by Police Objective Analysis data and the Unit Costs of Policing pilot project.
- The Force can evidence innovation, continuous improvement and efficiency and productivity across all sections of the FMS/PEEL Assessment Framework.

Whilst FMS6 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 13 years, continued financial pressures over the next few years and increasing complexity of policing demand outlined in the table below:

Area	Commentary
Financial Pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial pressures facing Local Authorities across West Yorkshire are a threat to partnership working, which is particularly important around prevention given that many of the levers to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour are delivered by partners. • Critical functions such ASB Teams, youth diversion and Early Action Hubs, that

	<p>are not mandatory requirements are potentially at risk as Local Authorities make difficult decisions about the services and functions, they will prioritise given the budgets available and savings required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners are also critical in delivering services/functions to safeguard children and adults (an estimated one third of budgets are spent on Social Care) as well as preventing reoffending.
<p>Socio Economic Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a large Metropolitan area, West Yorkshire has some significant socio-economic challenges, which can be risk factors for crime, harm and demand and may worsen as a result of the cost of living crisis. 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 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.
<p>Calls for Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Force continues to have one of the highest levels of demand per 1000 population nationally, with calls for service at the highest ever level and projected to further increase over the next four years. The Force has the third highest rate of 999 calls per 1000 population, which are also at the highest ever level and are projected to further increase over the next four years. The five year trend shows a change in call profile with 999 and online contacts accounting for an increasing proportion of all calls and 101 (though still huge volume) accounting for a lower proportion of calls compared to 2018. Whilst performance around 999 remains strong, 101 performance around queue times and abandonment rates has deteriorated, which risks repeat demand in the system, reduced customer satisfaction (as satisfaction with ease of contact is strongly correlated with call answer time) and an unintended consequence of increasing 999 demand. Capacity has however improved over the last 12 months with the recruitment of Contact Staff almost at the aspirational 120% for both call takers and dispatchers.
<p>Public Confidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both the Crime Survey England and Wales (CSEW) and YouGov survey shows that nationally public confidence is on a downward trend. Public confidence has further reduced in West Yorkshire with 47% of respondents to the CSEW having confidence in local policing. This puts the Force mid-table in terms of its Most Similar Group (MSG), but below the national average (51%). Dealing with local concerns is a key factor impacting on confidence and for West Yorkshire Police this is 46%, putting the Force third highest in the MSG but just below the national average (47%). The Force has slightly higher levels of ‘perceptions of fairness’ and ‘being relied upon’ than the national average, which are important factors for both trust and confidence. There are a range of factors that impact on public confidence including police visibility (the Force is committed to investing more in neighbourhood policing), tackling the issues that matter to communities (analysis shows activity is high in

	<p>addressing ASB, drugs and burglary), procedural justice (the Force has strong community engagement and local scrutiny groups in place) improving outcomes (both charges and offences brought to justice have improved this year) and addressing high profile criminal and misconduct cases (the Force has an action plan in place to address the HMICFRS report on ‘Vetting, Misconduct and Misogyny’ and is an Exemplar Force for VAWG). In addition, the Police Race Action Plan aims to improve the confidence of the Black community (however, currently confidence in local policing of Black/minority ethnic groups is 59% compared to 72.9% for White groups).</p>
<p>Crime</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After reaching its highest level in FMS5, total crime has stabilised over the last 12 months, although is 5.5% above the December 2019 baseline. • Whilst the increase since 2019 compares favourably to the MSG (11.2% increase), it is higher than the national average (4.7%). The Force continues to have the second highest rate for total crime in the country. • In comparison to the December 2019 baseline, crime continues to increase in those areas that have been particularly impacted by changes to crime recording such as stalking and harassment (35% increase), sexual offences (19% increase), public order (19% increase) and violence without injury (14% increase). Increases in possession of weapons and trafficking of drugs, reflect a strong and proactive focus of the Force. • Over the last 12 months all types of neighbourhood crime have increased and are projected to continue to increase, although key priority areas (burglary, robbery, theft from vehicle and theft from person), remain significantly below the December 2019 baseline. • Theft of vehicle is a risk area as this has increased over the last 12 months and is 25.7% higher than the December 2019 baseline. The Force has a higher rate per 1,000 population than the MSG. • Shoplifting is another risk area which has increased over the last 12 months and is 12.6% above the December 2019 baseline.
<p>Investigations, Criminal Justice and Custody</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the last PEEL Inspection the Force was graded as ‘Adequate’ for Investigations and over the last five years there has been a strong focus on improving investigative capacity and capability. However in line with the national position, there remains a detective gap, which is not expected to be closed until Summer 2025. The volume of demand, complexity of file build and inexperience means there is an ongoing need to improve standards of investigations. • There are 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 and redaction burdens, prison capacity, timeliness of investigations and victim attrition. • Arrests have increased over the last 12 months and are at their highest level. In addition, the trend of total throughput in custody has been increasing over the last five years and is also at the highest level. The strong focus on investigations and outcomes is projected to lead to an increase in both primary arrests and overall custody throughput. • Demand on criminal justice will remain high with the introduction of the Two Tier Framework for Out of Court Disposals, adoption of Op Soteria and the Victims and Prisoners Bill. The focus of the Home Office Productivity Review on Criminal Justice may help to address some of the barriers associated with DG6, charging and redaction.
<p>Online/Digital</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of cases submitted to Digital Forensics Unit (DFU) over the past

<p>Investigative Demand</p>	<p>three years has remained broadly static, at around 4,500. Whereas in 2021 a significant proportion of those were dealt with by district phone downloaders, they are now all investigated by DFU.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online crime is increasing with the continued growth and use of digital devices coupled with the opportunities this provides for criminality. 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, CCTV, vehicle forensics and cloud data. • Nationally a strong focus on Digital Forensics through the ‘Future of Digital Forensics Programme’ could lead to new requirements for policing and the Forensic Regulator Codes continue to add new requirements for policing.
<p>Domestic Abuse</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite a 3.7% reduction over the last 12 months, domestic abuse remains one of the most significant demand pressures/risks facing the Force. • At 31 incidents per 1,000 population, domestic abuse is significantly higher in West Yorkshire than the national average (19 per 1,000 population). • Whilst the projection chart indicates a reduction in domestic abuse over the next four years, professional judgement suggests a stable trend, given the projected increase in controlling and coercive behaviour, roll out of DA matters to transform the response to domestic abuse, strong focus of VAWG on domestic abuse and the cost of living crisis, which may be used to increase control as well as being a justification to reduce access to finances.
<p>Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both rape and sexual offences have remained stable over the last 12 months although compared to the December 2019 baseline, rape is 4% higher and sexual offences is 17.5% higher. For both rape and sexual offences, the Force has a higher crime rate than the MSG average. • Over the next four years rape is projected to increase and sexual offences is projected to reduce. • West Yorkshire Police is now an ‘Adopter Force’ for Op Soteria. 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.
<p>CSEA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall CSEA has increased by 7.9% over the last 12 months and a further increase is projected over the next four years. The increase is fuelled by a continued increase in possession and sharing of indecent images of children. New threats around artificial intelligence, self-generated indecent imagery and the Metaverse indicate that this will remain an ongoing/evolving threat. • CSE has been on a long-term reducing trend with numbers 25.4% below the December 2019 baseline. A key change from previous FMS’ is that more CSE offences are now classed as recent than non-recent. • Non-recent investigations continue and involve multiple victims and suspects. As victims often disclose when they are approached as a potential witness or when suspects are convicted, numbers of non-recent CSE may increase.
<p>Child Neglect/ Protection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child neglect remains on an increasing trend with a 73% increase in offences over the last 12 months and numbers significantly higher than December 2019. A strong focus on child protection and the impact of Public Protection Notices (PPN) are key factors influencing this and further increases are projected. • 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. Financial pressures on

	<p>Local Authorities are a risk to the provision of services that may prevent children going into care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a result of the McAllister Report, Multi Agency Child Protection Co-Located Teams, will be introduced which may strengthen partnership working but also lead to increased demand on police and partners.
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health demand has historically been difficult to fully identify as many incidents will involve some mental health related issues. For example, 40% of all calls for service relate to public safety and welfare and Unit Cost of Policing data in 2021 showed that dealing with concerns for safety was the sixth highest activity of the Force. Despite the introduction of policies in 2019/20 which are similar to Right Care Right Person (RCRP), mental health remains a key demand pressure. Analysis indicates that 25% of concern for safety calls purely relate to mental health, Section 136 waiting times are on average 1.5 hours and mental health is an underpinning factor of many vulnerability issues (there are links with substance misuse, self-harm and suicide as well as missing persons and exploitation of vulnerable adults). The national implementation of RCRP may not have a significant impact on demand in West Yorkshire as many benefits were realised in 2019/20 with the introduction of the Hospital Absconder Policy and Welfare Checks Policy. In addition, Covid and more recently the cost of living crisis are expected to increase mental ill-health which may increase demand on partners and potentially the Force.
Missing Persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the last five years there has been a significant reduction and then stabilising of missing persons demand, with the number of incidents 36.9% below the December 2019 baseline. Whilst numbers have reduced risk levels have increased with 94.5% graded as high or medium risk. Reductions have been achieved through strong partnership working and the implementation of policies in 2019/20 similar to RCRP. 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. Given the significant reductions made, a 3% increase is projected over the next four years.
Adult Safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demand for adult safeguarding has increased significantly with the introduction of PPN coupled with dedicated adult safeguarding arrangements, which are bringing more focus on this area and will identify previously hidden demand. Further increases are projected over the next four years.
Registered Sex Offenders (RSO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the last five years the number of RSOs has increased with the overwhelming majority (72%) managed in the community and medium or low risk (72%). Numbers are projected to increase over the next four years given projected increases in sexual offences, CSEA (including non-recent investigations involving multiple suspects) and the expected continuing increase in online offending.
Serious and Organised Crime (SOC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 are a number of trends which are likely to drive an increase in organised crime, including the exploitation of international conflict, instability and poverty, the cost of living crisis, advances in technology (including new opportunities such as the Metaverse) and profit with SOC identified as the biggest national security threat.
<p>Modern Slavery Human Trafficking (MSHT)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been a continued increase in the number of MSHT offences with numbers at the highest ever level. • 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. • MSHT is projected to increase with international conflict, instability and poverty being key drivers of both Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) and MSHT.
<p>Fraud and Cyber Dependent Crime</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst fraud crime recorded on Force systems has reduced over the last 12 months, Action Fraud disseminations, Protect disseminations and Banking Protocol calls for service have all significantly increased over the last year. • The National Strategic Assessment indicates that ‘most of the adult UK population has been targeted by fraud’ and it is predicted that the threat associated with fraud will continue to increase. • 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 the commoditisation of tools and services reducing the capability threshold to commit offences and technological advancements such as Artificial Intelligence, Deepfake and the Metaverse creating opportunities for a broad range of cyber-crime offences as well as potentially undermining investigations.
<p>Homicide and Serious Violence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Force recorded 27 homicides over the last 12 months which is one more than FMS5, but below the peak of 35 in the 12 months to December 2018. • Homicide is projected to be stable although key risks are increasing street gangs, violence and machete offences, with a large proportion of homicides being knife-enabled. • There is a strong Government focus on homicide, in particular ‘serious youth violence against males up to 25.’ This is the highest cluster for West Yorkshire and links to serious violence associated with the night-time economy. • Serious Violence has increased over the last 12 months and is at the highest level. There are strong links to gangs, drugs and knife crime and there has been an increase in the number of children involved in serious violence (including homicide). The Serious Violence Duty is a key enabler along with the Violence Reduction Partnership to ensuring a preventative and partnership approach to serious violence.
<p>National threats (SPR)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The threat level for terrorism remains at substantial and the number of investigations has increased, splitting almost equally between Extreme Islamist and Extreme Right Wing investigations. Online radicalisation and self-initiated terrorism through bladed or blunt force weaponry remain key threats. • Public Order threats are consistent with previous years, although the last 12 months have been impacted by a post Covid surge in events, the war in Ukraine,

	<p>Israel/Hamas conflict, cultural nationalism protests at ‘Asylum’ hotels and ‘Just Stop Oil’ protests at sporting events. The General Election in 2024 and continued international conflict are likely to impact on public order over the next 12 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Resilience Forum continues to identify cyber-attacks and adverse weather/climate change as long-term civil emergency threats. However, new common issues include financial resilience, the cost of living crisis and industrial action. • Cyber incidents remain a key issue with the main threat to West Yorkshire Police being through the Force’s supply chain/trusted third parties. The scale and diversity of information on police digital platforms makes policing a high value target.
<p>Killed or Seriously Injured Collisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisional ‘CRaSH’ data provided by Leeds City Council shows that the number of casualties in the last 12 months are 4.1% higher than the annual average between 2017 and 2019. • The number of casualties killed and seriously injured are significantly (23.8%) higher than the annual average. However, fatal collisions remain lower, with 50 people killed in road traffic collisions in the 12 months to August 2023, which is one less than 2022 and 9.1% lower than the average for 2017-2019.
<p>Workforce Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given large recruitment over the last three years, there are high levels of inexperience with 27% of officers student officers (and 40.5% of patrol officers student officers). In total 43.5% of officers have less than five years’ experience. • Now the PUP has been completed the focus is on retention which provides a challenge for the Force particularly within the context of financial pressures. Maintaining officer numbers whilst making financial savings may lead to reverse civilianisation. • The competitive labour market presents a challenge around both attracting the skills needed in policing and retaining them. • Whilst workforce representation is improving (particularly as a result of the PUP), the representation of black officers remains particularly low. • The new non degree entry route will be implemented during 2024. • Whilst sickness has reduced over the last 12 months, it remains above pre-pandemic levels and mental ill-health accounts for the largest proportion of sickness.

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.

5. DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25

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

- £13 on the band D Council Tax increase in 2024/25, and £5 thereafter (in line with the current national position)

- 2024/25 Pay award reduced from 3% to 2.5% based on the Policing Ministers statement that he will be looking for the Treasury to fund increased above 2.5% in 2024/25, Pay awards dropping to 2% each year thereafter
 - Police Staff Vacancy Factor 6% 2024/25, 4% thereafter
 - PCSO Vacancy Factor 4% throughout the MTFF
 - Contact staff Vacancy Factor 0% throughout the MTFF
 - Gas reducing by 54% in 2024/25, and then 2% increase thereafter
 - Electricity reducing by 39% in 2024/25, and then 2% increase from 2026/27 onwards
 - General inflation applied to most other areas of expenditure between 2% to 6% per annum, with some contract specific inflation being higher. However this will continue to be a focus of review throughout the budget setting process as the position remains uncertain and volatile.
- 5.2 The current economic climate is challenging. West Yorkshire Police has seen the Home Office grant reduce in real terms since 2010/11 by 17%. Against this background it has only been possible to balance budgets each year through precept rises, use of reserves and a continued focus on delivering services efficiently and effectively. Despite these challenges West Yorkshire Police has succeeded in performing well, with a grading of Outstanding for strategic planning, organisational management, and value for money under the HMICFRS PEEL assessment framework.
- 5.3 Inflationary increases that have arisen over the last two years particularly on energy and salaries leave West Yorkshire facing unavoidable cost pressures. The current draft budget presents cost pressures of £29.77m for 2024/25 to stand still despite a reduction in energy costs for 2024/25. There are a further £31.57m of required budget increases as set out in the movement statement at appendix D.
- 5.4 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 2024/25 budget. Below is a summary of how West Yorkshire have planned to close the gap by driving efficiency and productivity across the organisation.
- Improvements in areas including commercial and procurement practices, and in corporate functions. In 2024/25 there will be an increasing number of processes that are undertaken through Digital Process Automation (DPA) after several successful implementations in the last year.
 - Plans to use the earmarked reserves to balance 2024/25. These are reserves that have been built up prudently by reducing discretionary spend and through staffing vacancies in previous years during a period of a particularly buoyant employment market where it has been difficult to recruit Police Staff.
 - Plans for managing expected pressures on budgets next year – a higher

vacancy rate across staffing (not Police Officers) within 2024/25 of 6% (a reduction of the vacancy factor from 2023/24 which was 8%) in order to create a short term saving while West Yorkshire Police continues to undertake and implement the savings from the corporate Priority Based Budget programme.

5.5 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 £13 for 2024/25. The Mayor intends to use the precept flexibility to increase the Band D equivalent charge by £13 (5.5%) to invest in and sustain key front line policing services. Within West Yorkshire, around 81% of Council Taxpayers are in bands A, B and C which in reality will mean a less than 22 pence per week increase for most Council Taxpayers.

Our Budget Survey shows that 71% of respondents across West Yorkshire would support a police council tax increase of £13. The detailed results of the survey are shown at **Appendix A**.

The survey commenced on the 21st of December 2023 and closed on the 17th of January 2024.

6. 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 2.6% of the net revenue budget.
- 6.3 The Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police intends to continue to implement Priority Based Budgeting (PBB) to help transform the organisation and 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.

7. 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 £13 increase to be the only viable option.

- 7.2. The West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan 2021-24 was published in March 2022. It outlines an ambitious strategy for that period on the aims, aspirations and objectives for policing, crime, community safety, and criminal justice for the communities of West Yorkshire. The creation of a new Police and Crime Plan for 2024-28 is a key piece of work planned to take place during the coming year.
- 7.3 In support of the 2021-24 Police and Crime Plan extensive work was undertaken to provide a solid evidence base, with over 2,430 survey responses, over 950 people spoken to in face-to-face engagement, and over 40 partnership responses. A full programme of engagement is planned to shape the production of the new Police and Crime Plan.
- 7.4 The Police and Crime plan clearly articulates the priorities for policing, crime and community safety based on our consultation and engagement work and needs assessment.

The four priorities in the Police and Crime Plan are:

- Supporting victims and witnesses and improving criminal justice outcomes
- Keeping people safe and building resilience
- Safer places and thriving communities
- Responding to multiple and complex needs

The Plan also has three cross cutting themes:

- The safety of women and girls
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Early intervention and prevention

The two mayoral pledges relating to policing and crime, Recruiting 750 more frontline Police Officers and Staff to fight crime, and keeping women and girls safe are at the heart of the Mayor’s policing plan.

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 £13 (25p per week) to provide vital investment into West Yorkshire Police.

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

Q: Respondents' Council Tax Band	% of all respondents	No. of respondents	% Supporting precept increase
----------------------------------	----------------------	--------------------	-------------------------------

A	15%	311	67%
B	16%	326	70%
C	20%	419	74%
D	21%	427	74%
E	10%	195	70%
F	4%	90	77%
G	3%	59	56%
H	1%	18	67%
Don't know / not specified	10%	207	69%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>2,052</i>	<i>71%</i>

Note: Respondents were free to decline to answer any question in the survey, and so the total number of respondents above (2,052) will vary slightly from other data tables included in Appendix A.

7.7 A £13 increase would take the Band D police council tax for 2024/25 to £249.28 a year. Approximately 61% of households in West Yorkshire are in Bands A and B, and would pay £166.19 and £193.88 a year respectively, an increase of approximately 17 pence per week for band A, 19 pence per week for band B and 25 pence per week for band D.

8. 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 70.5% 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 Continuing the recruitment of police officers and specialist staff, protecting the current number of non-partner funded PCSOs to support the frontline as far as possible are priorities for the Mayor. The opportunity to increase the precept by £13 rather than £10 enables the recruitment of further PCSOs and more staff to work in the police contact centre, responding to calls from the public.
- 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 the wider public views and feedback who see policing as a priority with a majority (71%) 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 in order 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 £13 on the Band D, and the MTFE and summary movement statement from 2023/24 to 2024/25 are attached at **Appendices C and D**.
- 8.7 The Mayor notifies the Panel of her intention to increase the police precept by £13 on Band D.
- 8.8 The Mayor's proposal would result in a budget of £583.937m which will be used to deliver the requirements of the Police and Crime Plan to the benefit of the people of West Yorkshire.

9. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION BENEFITS AND IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Equality impact assessment is an integral part of the precept and budget setting process. A full equality impact assessment has taken place.
- 9.2 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.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. As detailed in section 4 and 5 of the report.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. As detailed in section 2 of the report.

12. EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

- 12.1 The public consultation survey on the 2024/25 Council Tax police precept ran between 21 December 2023 and 17 January 2024. Residents were invited to respond to the proposal of a 5.55% increase, corresponding to 25 pence per week for a Band D property.
- 12.2 The consultation was promoted extensively online through the Mayor’s and Deputy Mayor’s X (Twitter) and Facebook accounts, through the Combined Authority’s ‘Your Voice’ consultation platform, and also circulated to our partners to help reach a wider audience. Two press releases were issued, and engagement also took place via an online survey accompanied by a postal survey reaching out to 7,000 randomly selected households in West Yorkshire. This year we also extended our engagement through a significant number of focus events, aimed at reaching out to communities which have been under-represented in the past.
- 12.3 At the close of the survey, 2,063 residents had recorded their views on the precept proposal.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 The Mayor recommends that the Panel agree her proposed Police precept figure of £170.5m which would result in an increase to the police council tax of £11.0m.
- 13.2 This would increase the council tax for band D households from £236.28 to £249.28. However, approximately 61% of households in West Yorkshire are in Bands A and B, which would increase from £157.52 to £166.19 and from £183.77 to £193.88 respectively per year.
- 13.3 The proposed increase in police precept would amount to less than £13 per annum for most households in West Yorkshire, an increase of less than 25 pence per week, to help secure extra investment into front-line policing.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND APPENDICES

- A Council Tax Precept Consultation Results.**
- B Reserves and Balances.**
- C Medium Term Financial Forecast**
- D Movement Statement 2023/24 to 2024/25**

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact Officer:	Angela Taylor – Director, Finance and Commercial Services
E-mail:	Angela.taylor@westyorks-ca.gov.uk

--	--