

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL**

**REPORT TO THE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

**FOR NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

**6 FEBRUARY 2026**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Review of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's proposed Police precept for 2026/27</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>For Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel: James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager West Northamptonshire Council <a href="mailto:James.edmunds@westnorthants.gov.uk">James.edmunds@westnorthants.gov.uk</a></b>

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**1. Purpose of Report**

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1.1 The report is intended to set out the results of the review by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's proposed Police precept for 2026/27.

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**2. Executive Summary**

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2.1 The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire is required to notify the Police, Fire and Crime Panel of the Police precept that she proposes to issue for the next financial year. The Panel must review the proposed precept and make a report on it. The Commissioner must have regard to this report and respond to any specific conclusions or recommendations from the Panel before issuing the final Police precept.

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**3. Recommendations**

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3.1 It is recommended that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire:

- Has regard to this report by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel arising from its review of the proposed Police precept for 2026/27 in accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 Schedule 5 Paragraph 5(2)(a).
- Gives the Panel a response to this report in accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 Schedule 5 Paragraph 5(2)(b).

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

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4.1 The recommendations are required to complete the Panel's review of the proposed Police precept for 2026/27 produced by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, in accordance with the Panel's statutory responsibilities.

#### **5. Report Background**

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5.1 A Police and Crime Commissioner is a major precepting authority under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. A Police and Crime Commissioner may not issue a precept under Section 40 of the 1992 Act until it has been subject to scrutiny by the relevant Police (Fire) and Crime Panel according to the process specified in Schedule 5 of the 2011 Act.

5.2 Schedule 5 of the 2011 Act, supporting Regulations, and the Rules of Procedure for the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel require:

- a) The Commissioner to notify the Panel of the Commissioner's proposed precept by 1 February of the relevant financial year
- b) The Panel to review the proposed precept
- c) The Panel to resolve to:
  - i) Support the proposed precept without additional qualification or comment; or
  - ii) Support the proposed precept and make additional recommendations on it; or
  - iii) Veto the proposed precept provided that the Panel makes that decision by the required majority, which is that at least two thirds of the persons who are members of the Panel at the time when the decision is made vote for it.
- d) The Panel to make a report to the Commissioner on the proposed precept, setting out the results of its review, by 8 February of the relevant financial year. If the Panel votes to veto the proposed precept the report must state that the Panel has done so and set out its reasons for doing so.

5.3 If the Panel does not veto the proposed precept the Commissioner must:

- a) Have regard to the report made by the Panel
- b) Give the Panel a response to its report and to any recommendations in the report
- c) Publish the response in a manner determined by the Panel.

5.4 The scrutiny process concludes at this point. The Commissioner may then issue the proposed precept as the precept for the next financial year or issue a different precept but only if it would be in accordance with a recommendation made in the Panel's report.

5.5 If the Panel vetoes the proposed precept the Commissioner is required to produce a revised precept, which must be subject to further scrutiny by the Panel.

## 6. Review of the proposed Police Precept

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6.1 The Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel met in public on 4 February 2026 to review the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's proposed Police precept for 2026/27. The report presented by the Commissioner to the Panel is available to view at the following link: [Police Precept 2026/27](#). The meeting was webcast live and the recording is available to view at the following link: [West Northamptonshire Council - YouTube](#).

6.2 The Commissioner introduced the proposal to increase the precept by £15 per year for Band D Council Tax to £335.04. The Commissioner referred to the challenges involved in developing the proposed precept due to the late date when details of the funding settlement were received from the government. She thanked her Finance and Communications teams for their work. It was important that Northamptonshire residents understood the opportunity to comment on the proposed precept and that she was informed about residents' priorities. She highlighted in this regard that responses to public consultation on the proposed precept had increased by 26.7 per cent compared to the previous year. The Commissioner also thanked partners for their contributions during the past year to a range of joint work on community safety, which was not just a matter for the police. The Commissioner went on to outline different aspects of the proposed precept and budget. She emphasised that the proposed precept for 2026/27 reflected the effect of significant disinvestment in policing and fire and rescue during the austerity period. Other police and crime commissioners were currently seeking additional flexibility to increase the police precept above £15, but she was not doing so. When developing budgets she gave particular attention to added social value and maximising the amount of Northamptonshire money that was spent in the county. She felt that there was scope for more joint working by local public sector organisations towards this aim. The Commissioner noted that the number of people willing to volunteer in community safety roles was an indicator of confidence in local services. The Northampton Guardians were a good example of a strong local group, which had recently been recognised by the King's Award for Voluntary Service. The Sunflower Centre was another example of a vital local service that was provided on a multi-agency basis. At the same time, it was seeing a significant increase in its caseload and the challenge of engaging with women from marginalised communities. Her Office would work to address this need.

6.3 The Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer further advised that the proposed increase in the precept represented an additional 29 pence per week at Band D. The provisional police grant funding settlement issued by the government in late December had contained less detail than usual. Further clarification had been provided in January together with some additional funding for neighbourhood policing. Once the overall position had been reviewed and understood it showed that grant funding for Northamptonshire was significantly lower than had been expected from the spending review. The government had announced in December that £15 would be the maximum increase in the precept that could be made without a local referendum. Prior to this it had been widely expected that the limit would be £14. The Commissioner's proposed precept was based on the conclusion that a £15 increase was essential to keep services running. The government also expected that commissioners would use the maximum permitted increase.

6.4 The Panel then reviewed the proposed precept, focussing on different aspects as set out below.

### **Funding requirements**

6.5 The Panel considered the case for the precept proposed by the Commissioner and the balance between the funding required for policing and demands on local taxpayers. A Panel member questioned if the precept was increased by only £14 what impact members of the public would see on services. The Panel was advised that all of the scenarios considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan process involved the need to make savings, with the level depending on the funding position for the specific year. The Chief Constable was responsible for identifying how savings would be made on the budget delegated to him and would be scrutinised on this by the Commissioner. Therefore it was not possible at that point to give a straightforward answer about how a lower precept increase would affect services. However, a higher savings requirement would mean more difficult decisions. The proposed budget tasked the Chief Constable with making savings of £3.5m in 2026/27 on top of those delivered in previous years. If options for making savings from non-operational areas were exhausted then changes to police officer recruitment would need to be considered. The Commissioner emphasised that the decision on the proposed budget had been very difficult and would produce a budget that would only maintain Northamptonshire Police in its current position. There were not sufficient resources to enable the force to pursue opportunities in areas such as the use of AI, which could help to manage demands. Further increasing the savings that the Chief Constable needed to find would have a serious impact on the force's capacity and reduce the level of service it could provide.

6.6 A Panel member noted that savings would still be required even with a £15 increase in the precept and sought confirmation that if these were not achieved it would not be possible to deliver areas of activity identified in the budget. The Panel was advised that the stark reality of the situation was that if savings targets were not met these activities would have to be reviewed. This was an ongoing challenge as resources were never sufficient but it was not effective just to stop work supporting growth and innovation. The use of resources would be prioritised based on the Public Safety Plan. The Commissioner went on to highlight that part of her role was to work on reducing demands on policing, for example by bringing together partners to support community safety. She was seeking to maximise this activity.

6.7 A Panel member commented that the need for fairer funding for Northamptonshire was raised each year when the Panel scrutinised the Commissioner's proposed precept. The government had still not changed the police funding formula and local taxpayers were being left to cover the resulting shortfall in resources. This now seemed to include sustaining in the long term the increased number of officers resulting from the national uplift programme. Concern was raised that many people were already facing financial hardship or crisis and an increase in the precept would add to this. In turn, this would potentially increase demands on other local services. The Commissioner was urged to look at opportunities to work with partners to alleviate pressures on taxpayers and to support individuals dealing with financial difficulties. The Commissioner was also challenged about how members of the public could be given confidence that the increased precept was worth the cost. The Commissioner agreed with the importance of addressing poverty and inequality. She believed that action by the current government in this regard would

produce a tangible benefit in the year ahead. The government had committed to reviewing the national police funding formula next year and she was hopeful this would lead to change. Panel members subsequently gave different views about how the current government was contributing to dealing with poverty.

### **Risks to budget delivery**

- 6.8 A Panel member sought reassurance about the level of confidence that savings built into the budget were in the right areas and were achievable. They emphasised the risk that if savings were not achieved as planned it could lead to a cycle of using diminishing reserves to make up the shortfall.
- 6.9 A Panel member questioned what impact legal costs and civil claims had on the proposed precept. The Panel was advised that the force maintained oversight of ongoing claims and budgeted for them. The Commissioner's Reserves Strategy also included an earmarked reserve of £1.9m for insurance, which could be used to smooth the impact of an extraordinary case without the need to use resources generated by the precept. The size of this earmarked reserve was based on a worst-case scenario. Whilst a civil claim could therefore have an impact on the overall budget a robust approach was taken to identifying and mitigating risks. Legal services would also be strengthened by being brought back in-house from the regional collaboration. A Panel member subsequently expressed concern that a civil case currently in progress could result in significant costs that would have to be met using taxpayers' money. Members of the public had lost faith in policing. In this context, the Panel member felt that there needed to be a change in local leadership for the proposed precept to be supported.

### **Maximising resources**

- 6.10 A Panel member questioned how the aim of maximising the use of local suppliers and generating added social value would be measured and demonstrated. The Commissioner responded that she had tasked her Office with looking at this matter. Social value procurement frameworks were available whilst the force already worked with the BlueLight Commercial organisation, which could produce relevant data. The use of local suppliers could be built into the tendering process. She was determined to keep Northamptonshire money local as far as possible.
- 6.11 A Panel member noted that police officer numbers were static whilst the local population was growing. At the same time it was becoming more difficult to fill posts due to a smaller pool of applicants and greater churn. Reassurance was sought about whether the budget included sufficient provision for training and wellbeing support, to enable officers to engage effectively with local communities and to help to retain them in the force. The Commissioner responded that police officer wellbeing was one of her key priorities. She was pleased with improvements that had been made to the force's occupational health provision since her election. She and the Deputy Commissioner put considerable effort into promoting opportunities in policing when meeting with different community groups. Wellbeing was affected by the level of demand on policing, which could be reduced by crime prevention and community safety activity. She was always willing to engage with local groups about how they might contribute to this.

6.12 A Panel member challenged that the Medium Term Financial Plan included no funding from Section 106 developer contributions. This was difficult to accept given the scale of development in Northamptonshire. The Commissioner commented that the amount of funding received from Section 106 developer contributions was an area of concern for her, which she would pursue through the Police Accountability Board. When the two unitary authorities in the county had been formed a lot of information about the funding available from S106 agreements had been lost. Work had been done since then to build up a new picture, but she needed to understand what position had been reached and what this would mean for policing. Panel members highlighted work being done by both local authorities on this matter and emphasised the importance of using available funding that would otherwise be lost.

### **General**

6.13 The Panel considered other matters relevant to the proposed precept. A Panel member welcomed the increased response to public consultation but highlighted that this could be improved still further. A Panel member questioned whether there may be any further changes in funding that could enable the proposed precept to be revised. The Panel was advised that the grant funding for policing in Northamptonshire for 2026/27 had now been confirmed in all respects. The parameters for the precept were therefore now set.

6.14 Panel members gave further views about the case for the proposed precept during the course of discussion. It was highlighted that local residents needed to be informed of the pressures on resources: the situation would continue to be tough without significant additional government funding. It was felt that taxpayers would find a higher precept more acceptable if they were confident that the increase gave value for money. Elected representatives should be able to justify every additional demand that they created.

## **7. Outcomes of the Review**

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7.1 At the conclusion of discussion the Panel resolved:

**To endorse the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's proposed Police precept for 2026/27.**

## **8. Background Papers**

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Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

The Police and Crime Panels (Precepts and Chief Constable Appointments) Regulations 2012

Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Rules of Procedure