



Council Tax Precept Consultation Results 2024/25 Budget

1) Consultation Results – Resident’s Survey Results

Our survey consultation on the Mayor’s proposal for the Police Council Tax Precept ran between the 21st of December 2023 and 17th of January 2024.

Residents were invited to respond to the proposal of a 5.55% increase, corresponding to 25 pence per week extra for a Band D property.

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 was also circulated to our network of partners across West Yorkshire to help reach a wider audience.

Two press releases were issued; the first to launch the survey and a second to mark one week left to participate. These releases were featured in the Yorkshire Evening Post, Bradford T&A, Keighley News, and the Ilkley Gazette. The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime also promoted the consultation during her appearance on the ‘Message the Mayor’ feature on BBC Radio Leeds on 14th December.

As in previous years, we engaged with residents through an online survey, which was accompanied by a postal survey which reached out to 7,000 randomly selected West Yorkshire households.

This year we extended our engagement through a significant programme of focus events across districts, which often aimed to reach out to communities who have been under-represented in the survey’s results in the past.

Residents were asked:

- Whether they supported the Mayor’s proposal to increase the Council Tax police precept to seek the funding required to help West Yorkshire Police keep our neighbourhoods and communities safe; and,
- Whether they were willing to pay the associated increase to their Council Tax to help protect frontline policing across West Yorkshire.

By the close of the survey, 2,063 residents had responded to the consultation; a 21% increase on 2023’s consultation total.

Headline results:

- **71% of respondents supported the Mayor in seeking the funding required to help West Yorkshire Police keep our neighbourhoods and communities safe.**
- **71% of respondents supported the proposal to increase the precept in 2024/25; a two percentage point increase on last year’s result.**

- 71% of residents of Band A-C homes said they would support the Mayor's proposal to increase the precept, with 72% of those at Band D-H homes supporting. 51% of the survey's respondents lived in Band A-C households, with Band D households the most frequent (21% of the total).

Results tables:

Note: Respondents were free to decline to answer any question in our survey, and so the total number of respondents quoted will differ from question to question.

	Yes	No	Respondents
Q1. Do you support the proposal to increase the Council Tax police precept to seek the funding required to help West Yorkshire Police keep our neighbourhoods and communities safe?	71%	29%	2,052

Q2. Are you willing to pay the associated increase to your council tax (e.g. 17p - 22p per week for Band A, B or C properties) to help protect frontline policing across West Yorkshire?	71%	29%	2,063
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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>	100%	2,052	71%

30 responses were received from people who do not pay Council Tax. Of these people, 26 (87%) said they agreed with the Mayor's proposal to 'seek the funding required to help West Yorkshire Police keep neighbourhoods and communities safe'.

Q: Respondents' status*	No.	%
West Yorkshire resident	2,101	99%
Business owner in West Yorkshire	85	4%
Working in West Yorkshire	335	16%
<i>Total</i>	2,104	100%

Note: respondents could select more than one option.

Respondents' District	% of all respondents	No. of respondents	% supporting precept increase
Bradford	18%	380	65%
Calderdale	8%	165	64%
Kirklees	13%	257	72%
Leeds	48%	983	73%
Wakefield	13%	273	72%
West Yorkshire	100%	2,058	71%

Q: Respondents' Ethnicity	% of all respondents	No. of respondents	% supporting precept increase
Black and minority ethnic groups	6%	120	42%
Preferred to keep ethnicity private	7%	144	42%
White	87%	1762	75%
<i>Total</i>	100%	2,026	71%

Survey Methodologies

Postal respondents accounted for 23% of our total replies; there was no significant difference in the level of support between online or postal respondents (71% v. 70% respectively).

2) Consultation Results – Focus Groups and Community Meeting Feedback

This below summarises the focus group and meeting feedback gathered as part of the 2024/2025 precept consultation. The findings are based on 17 groups/meetings held across West Yorkshire with representation across all five districts during a two-month period of December 2023 – January 2024. The groups and meetings explored people's policing priorities to support the context of their thoughts and feelings in relation to the Council Tax precept. Our objectives included:

- Gathering feedback from a more diverse groups of residents, including under 35s.
- To understand if those we speak to support an increase in the Council Tax to support the Police Precept and if they were willing to pay an increase.
- Discuss priorities and any gaps within the current Police and Crime Plan.
- Obtain feedback on policing services, which will inform our work.

Methodology

To support attendance at the groups all five Community Safety Partnerships were contacted with an ask to facilitate engagement with groups which were currently meeting, or to put the team in touch with diverse groups across the district. The team also contacted recipients of the Mayor's Safer Communities Funding. Opportunities were also advertised via the Community Alert system and across Neighbourhood Watch Groups and social media channels. The five umbrella Voluntary, Community or Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations who in turn support local groups and organisations who work with residents across West Yorkshire were also approached. Qualitative data analysis revealed four overarching themes which are set out further below.

Focus groups were up to a maximum of 12 people, aged 18 or above and who were council tax payers.

The precept questions were:

Q1. Would you support an increase in your council tax to fund the police precept for 2024/25?

Q2. Would you be willing to pay an increase in principle? – this question was amended after the spending review to ‘Would you be willing to pay an increase – up to £13 extra per year (Band D), 25p per week?’ (Full bandings were included at this stage).

Focus and Reach

There were multiple opportunities to attend focus groups in each district plus online sessions to support those who could not travel or found it difficult to travel. Over the course of 17 groups, we met with 130 participants as of 23 January 2024. In addition, two groups remain outstanding but will be completed by the end of January 2024.

Participants were encouraged but not required to complete monitoring data in order to take part in a session, and so demographic information is incomplete. However, of the 130 people who have attended a session to date, 13% stated that they had a disability or health condition. Over a quarter said they were from a Black, or Minority Ethnic background, and 30% said they were White. In terms of language, two groups were run with translators. 44% of those we spoke to were under 49, with 14% being under 29. Almost one in twenty shared that they identified as Gay/Lesbian or Bisexual. Finally, of the 130 participants, 13% stated they were Muslim, and 16% were Christian. To reiterate, these figures are likely to be unrepresentative of key groups, as not all participants completed monitoring data.

Main themes and insights

Headline results are themed below:

Theme 1 – Conditional Support for the Increase.

Across many focus groups, participants demonstrated a good understanding of the pressures on modern policing and stated that they agreed with an increase in the council tax precept to support West Yorkshire Police but added that their support was conditional on:

- a) **Drug dealing** – Many of those we spoke to said they would like the police to focus on open drug dealing and tackle issues related to drugs such as drug dealers, serious violence, criminal exploitation/grooming of children and vulnerable people.
- b) **Neighbourhood policing and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)** – Again, participants wanted to see money raised through the precept spent on increasing frontline/visible policing across neighbourhoods. They also wanted to see these officers and PCSOs focus on tackling ASB. There was, however, recognition that partners should do more, and this was referenced in relation to Council Tax paid to local authorities.
- c) **Personal Experiences** - Some participants who offered conditional support did so based on very personal experiences, such as being a victim of crime, or were related to someone/close to someone who had been a victim of crime.

Theme 2 – Unconditional Support

Some participants offered their unconditional support, this was based on their knowledge and understanding of the challenges faced by the police and was based on their positive personal experiences and knowledge about crime in West Yorkshire. Some people even suggested they would want to pay more if they could.

Theme 3 - Not Supportive

Across many focus groups, participants said they could not support an increase based on:

- a) **Apathy** – Many people felt that the increase would not make a difference, West Yorkshire was a challenging area to police and there was a real need for more money from Central Government, they felt the police were vastly underfunded so the impact through the precept would be minimal, this was particularly highlighted in all the discussions around police officer visibility and confidence in policing.
- b) **Personal Experiences and Impact** - Participants felt the increase would not make a difference to them or their families. This was based on either who they were (which included their race/ethnicity), and their lived experience through being a victim of crime or previous involvement with the police. Participants also commented they would not see the police in their area, and this was said by both those who commented they lived in high crime areas and those who said they lived in low crime areas.

Theme 4 – Willing to pay an increase versus the ability to pay.

Most of the participants who could afford to pay were supportive and stated they would pay an increase. Unsurprisingly those with negative experiences who were unsupportive of the increase were also unwilling to pay it. We also spoke to lots of participants who were unable to pay due to financial pressures and participants spoke openly about the pressures of the current cost of living crisis and its impact on certain groups of people which included both the young and elderly.

Conclusions

Having an opportunity to talk to people from across West Yorkshire about the council tax precept has provided a wealth of feedback across policing, crime and community safety issues, and the priorities within the current Police and Crime Plan. Participants have told us about what is important to them and explained why it is important. For some the discussion was very personal, for others it was based on the knowledge and information they had. Overall, most people wanted more engagement and a better understanding of what the police could do with the resources they had, they said this would help future discussions on the precept. As stated, many participants recognised the challenges and acknowledged the importance of appropriate funding from Central Government.

On balance there was an equal split between those who would support an increase based on conditional support and those who would not support the increase.