

### **Panel backs further investment in Sussex Police**

MOST residents will pay no more than an extra of £10 a year for policing in Sussex to ensure the force doesn't 'go backwards'.

Sussex Police and Crime Panel gave its backing to the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposals for the 4.7 per cent increase after agreeing that there were no acceptable alternatives to ensure improvements made in policing were maintained.

Concerns were raised by Panel members about the pressure the additional cost would put on low-income families across Sussex already struggling to make ends meet.

Commissioner Katy Bourne said: "I am under no illusion about how difficult some people in Sussex are going to find the next few years, but 75 per cent of all households will pay no more than 83p per month under this increase."

She told the Panel how important it was for the investment made in previous years to be maintained and shared the results of her Sussex-wide consultation in which the majority of residents said they would support an increase.

Band D households will see their bill for Sussex Police increase from £214.91 a year to £224.91, generating an additional £7.9million. The Panel was told that despite this increase, the force would still need to save £5 million in 2022/23.

Speaking after the meeting, Chairman Cllr Christian Mitchell said: "The Panel was rightly concerned about the impact any increase would have on residents but recognised the importance of ensuring our police force is fully funded to tackle the criminal behaviour that has such a negative effect on our communities.

"While acknowledging the additional financial pressure, members were reassured to hear that even with the increase Sussex residents will still pay the seventh lowest precept in England and Wales."

He added: "I would like to thank the Panel members involved in a Working Group who took a forensic look at the figures and challenged the Commissioner and Sussex Police on the proposals in a series of meetings."

Panel members noted an update on one of the Commissioner's priorities – strengthening local policing, tackling crime and preventing harm, which looked at the improvements made as a result of additional investment in areas including anti-social behaviour, burglary, rural crime and call handling times.

Panel members also questioned the Commissioner on what action is being taken to stamp out sexual misconduct among officers, citing nine cases referred to Sussex Police. Mrs Bourne said one case is one too many but reminded the Panel that a referral does not affirm guilt.

She said robust measures were in place to identify the behaviour and that officers were encouraged to report concerns which would be taken extremely seriously.

Full reports shared with the Sussex Police and Crime Panel can be found at [www.sussexpcp.gov.uk](http://www.sussexpcp.gov.uk)

The next meeting of the Panel will be on Friday, March 25.

Ends