

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 14TH FEBRUARY 2018
REPORT OF: CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE
AUTHOR: GRAEME WORRALL

SUBJECT: CONSULTATION ON POTENTIAL INCREASE IN
PRECEPT OF 2.99% FOR 2018-19

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides an update on the consultation on a proposed increase in Cheshire Fire Authority's precept of 2.99% for the financial year 2018-19, ahead of the outcomes of the consultation being reported.

Recommended: That

[1] this update report be noted.

Background

2. As part of the consultation on its draft annual action plan for 2018-19 (IRMP 15), the Authority consulted on a proposed increase in its precept of 1.99%.
3. On the 19th December, the Government announced that local authorities – including fire and rescue authorities – would be afforded some additional flexibility as part of the financial settlement for 2018-19 and 2019-20. This flexibility would see an increase in the threshold set by the Government regarding increases in council tax, above which a precepting authority would be required to hold a public referendum to obtain a mandate for their proposed increase. The referendum limit was raised from 2% to 3%.
4. As this announcement was made at a very late stage in the Authority's regular consultation process and the proposed increase for 2018-19 was explicitly stated as 1.99% in the draft IRMP 15, it was deemed prudent to consult further on a specific proposal to increase the precept by 2.99% to allow the findings to be considered as part of the Authority's budget setting process.

Information

5. The consultation launched on Monday 15th January and will last for four weeks, concluding on Monday 12th February. An online survey was launched for residents and for staff which asked for views on the following question:

“Do you support Cheshire Fire Authority’s proposal to increase its share of council tax in 2018/19 by 2.99%?”

6. The results below provide interim feedback on the consultation as of Friday 2nd February.
7. A total of 894 public responses and 30 staff responses have been received through the consultation to date. 65% of the public and 60% of staff supported the proposed increase. 35% of public respondents and 40% of staff did not support this proposal. These figures are not quite as favourable as those received in the feedback on the proposal to increase the council tax precept by 1.99% in the draft IRMP 15.
8. Demographically, public responses have been split with 359 respondents from Cheshire East, 277 from Cheshire West and Chester, 105 from Halton and 94 from Warrington. 59 respondents did not indicate their location.
9. As per previous consultations, it is possible to apply some statistical analysis as a guidance to assess the robustness of the data. This level of response from the public ensures a margin of error of +/- 3.3% at a confidence interval of 95%.
10. The consultation also asked for any comments relating to this proposal and these will be provided as part of the outcomes report. This report will also include the final results.

Financial Implications

11. This report is financial in nature.

Legal Implications

12. It was appropriate to consult on the proposed increase in precept.

Equality and Diversity Implications

13. None

Environmental Implications

14. None

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE**