



10th November 2022

Chris Elliott, Chief Executive

Warwick District Council  
Riverside House  
Milverton Hill  
Leamington Spa  
CV32 5HZ

Dear Chris Elliott,

**Subject: Formal Consultation re: Warwick District Council Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.**

Thank you for your recent communication, dated the 27 October, regarding your proposals for changes to Warwick District Council's Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS). As a major preceptor, the PCC appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposal which includes an increase in the maximum reduction under the scheme from 85% to 100% for eligible working age claimants, in response to the current cost of living crisis.

Whilst the PCC is very mindful of the current economic situation, the impact on Warwickshire residents, and the intentions of the council to address these, he also has a number of concerns and is therefore **not supportive** of the proposed changes to the LCTRS. His reasons are outlined below:

1. The pressure on police finances is growing, and Warwickshire, like most forces nationally, face increasing and unprecedented levels of demand in addition to significant cost pressures arising mainly from pay and non-pay inflation. This is also coupled with an uncertain economic outlook and an increasing likelihood of a return to reductions in public spending. The council's proposal creates an additional pressure of £0.126m for the police budget, which would rise to well in excess of £0.500m if all other district and borough councils were to take a similar approach. It is also noted that the impact of the proposed changes could also increase further given the challenging economic conditions, if this results in more working age residents becoming eligible for support. The costs of this are estimated to be a further £26k for each additional 1,000 increase in the caseload. Our current medium term financial plan already indicates that £3m of savings are required, following over £4.8m of savings delivered in April 2021. The proposed changes to the LCTRS would increase this savings requirement and could impact on the effectiveness

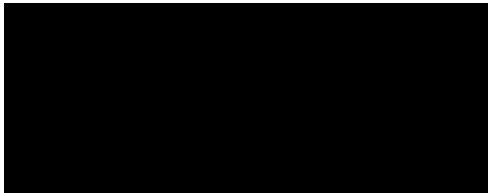
of future policing services. The Commissioner is committed to supporting those most vulnerable in our community, by delivering on the five priorities outlined in his Police and Crime Plan. These include, fighting crime and reducing reoffending; delivering visible and effective policing; keeping people safe and reducing harm; strengthening communities and delivering better justice for all. The policing challenge will grow during the current cost of living crisis and clearly these priorities can be best met through adequate funding of our force, which the proposed changes will hamper.

2. The Commissioner is responsible for ensuring the funding and delivery of effective policing services across Warwickshire, varying support levels and inconsistent LCTS schemes between boroughs and districts is unhelpful and effectively means that similar households in varying locations of the county contribute differing amounts to a 'county wide' policing service. The proposed changes will further increase this disparity and increase the inequity across Warwickshire for funding local police services.
3. 999 and 101 calls into the control centre have increased to the highest levels ever recorded by Warwickshire Police over recent months as have demands on local policing and other teams. The force has recently emerged from the former alliance with West Mercia, establishing services in Warwickshire, investing in its infrastructure and is continuing to build an efficient and effective force, actions to reduce the precept funding available during such a time is very concerning and will require remedial and possibly unpalatable actions.
4. The consultation documentation does not provide any clarity over whether the proposal is a temporary change to meet the current cost of living crisis or whether this is being considered as a more permanent change. A permanent change will require a permanent solution and the ongoing annual pressure to policing budgets would be significant in the medium term. The Commissioner is supportive of collaborative working with partners and notes that these proposals would represent a significant collective pressure on all major preceptor budgets of almost £1m per annum. This will hinder our collective ability to provide services and support all our communities, which was so important throughout the pandemic and is likely to be the case again as we navigate the current cost of living crisis.
5. The 85% maximum reduction in the current scheme requires that properties in band D and below would pay a minimum annual precept charge of between £26.27 and £39.41, rising to an annual charge of £78.81 for any eligible person living in a band H property, (excluding single person discount) for funding the entirety of Warwickshire police and all its associated services. These charges would be removed under the proposal. It is likely however, that the cost-of-living crisis will affect the majority of Warwickshire residents adversely in some way, not just those meeting the eligibility criteria of the LCTRS, as some impacts may be largely hidden, for example, for those with illiquid assets or those with high mortgages and outgoings. Creating an ongoing financial pressure on policing as a result of this proposal, will reduce the options available to the Commissioner to contain increases in council tax for all residents if and when the economic situation allows. The Police and Crime Panel vetoed the Commissioners initial precept proposal for 2022/23. A reduction in funding of £126k is equivalent to £0.58p on the band D police precept and may impact on the options for increase in 2023/24.

6. The Commissioner and his office are aware of a wide range of support already targeted at those most at risk, through established national benefits, various energy support schemes recently introduced by Government, in addition to additional payments to vulnerable groups to help them deal with the cost-of-living crisis. These are in addition to a number of enhanced schemes offered locally by Warwickshire County Council. The Commissioner provides approximately £0.500m of annual funding through his grants scheme to support local projects and community safety partnerships to deliver initiatives to meet his Police and Crime Plan objectives, and support residents particularly those that are most vulnerable to divert them away from crime. The 2023/24 scheme is due to be launched soon, and significant pressure and interest is anticipated as a result of the cost-of-living challenges. As part of the evaluation process, work is undertaken to ensure a degree of equity in allocations of funding to provide coverage across the county. However, the LCTRS proposals, if approved, may have a bearing on future allocations and the totality of funding available for such initiatives in Warwick district.

**The reasons outlined above demonstrate why the Commissioner cannot and does not support the proposals in the consultation documentation for the Warwick District Council LCTRS.** He believes that the current financial, operational and demand-led pressures, in addition to the national economic uncertainty means that this is a significant change which does nothing to allay the challenges being faced in policing, and the ability locally to deliver services. The Commissioner wishes that this letter is shared with all council members, to ensure that they are aware of his position and reasoning, for not supporting the proposal.

Yours sincerely



**Polly Reed**  
Chief Executive

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