



# DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

<b>REPORT REFERENCE NO.</b>	DSFRA/13/23
<b>MEETING</b>	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	19 DECEMBER 2013
<b>SUBJECT OF REPORT</b>	2014-15 COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT CONSULTATION
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Treasurer to the Authority
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<i>That the proposal as outlined in this report to consult more widely on proposed level of 2014-15 council tax precept by including the public in a telephone survey, in addition to the legislative requirement to consult the business community on the proposed level of Authority expenditure in 2014-15, be endorsed.</i>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	It is a legislative requirement that the Authority consults the business community on the level of council tax precept. In setting the level of council tax for the past two financial years (2012-13 and 2013-14) the members of the public were also consulted. The same approach is proposed for consulting on the 2014-15 level of council tax.
<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>	Survey costs will be met from within existing resources.
<b>EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ASSESSMENT (ERBA)</b>	No potentially negative impact sufficient enough to warrant a full impact assessment has been identified in the content of this report.
<b>APPENDICES</b>	Nil.
<b>LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>	The Local Government Finance Act 1992.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 It is a legislative requirement that the Authority sets a level of revenue budget and council tax for the forthcoming financial year. There is a need to set the level before 1 March in order that it can inform each of the 15 council tax billing authorities within Devon and Somerset of the level of precept required from the Authority for 2014-15.

1.2 Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act (1992) requires precepting authorities to consult non-domestic ratepayers on its proposals for expenditure. The Authority has previously fulfilled this requirement by the use of telephone surveys.

## **2. CONSULTATION PROPOSAL**

2.1 In setting the revenue budget for the previous two financial years (2012-13 and 2013-14) the consultation was extended to include members of the public. It was deemed appropriate to include the public's views on the option of increasing Council Tax at a time of economic difficulty. The proposal is again to consult both businesses and the public on their views of the proposed levels of council tax precept for 2014-15.

2.2 The methodology for the proposal is to conduct a telephone survey. This methodology is particularly appropriate as it will secure statistically meaningful results when the timescale between conducting the research and reporting the results back to the Authority could otherwise be too short for other types of consultation. The key specifications for the survey are:

- To ask a small group of key questions plus demographic information;
- To collect answers to both "closed" and "open" questions;
- To provide a representative sample of 400 business and 400 members of the public by constituent authority area (Devon County Council; Plymouth City Council; Somerset County Council; and Torbay Council).

2.3 The results of the survey will be reported back to the Authority on 17 February 2014 to inform the considerations in relation to budget setting for 2014-15 and any associated precept level.

**KEVIN WOODWARD**  
**Treasurer**