

Norfolk Matters

The Newsletter of Norfolk County Council • Budget Issue



Our budget **your views**

Every day of the year, Norfolk County Council provides many of the services that you tell us you value, for example...

We provide fire and rescue services. We keep key roads gritted to save lives. We provide round the clock care and support for vulnerable adults and children. We help many children find 'forever families' – adoptive parents who can give them the loving, brighter futures that we all want for our own children. We support schools and public and community transport services.

And the list is even longer, because we provide libraries, support the arts and, with our partners, fund and run the Museums and Archive services. We repair and maintain roads and footpaths, and build new ones. We deal with the waste that you put out for collection by your district council or take to disposal sites. We also help to create and sustain jobs by supporting projects such as a new outer harbour for Great Yarmouth, the centre of engineering excellence in south Norfolk and the Nar Ouse Regeneration Area in King's Lynn.

This year, the actual cost to us of delivering these essential local public services will rise by far more than the increase in government grant of 3.8% and we rely on this grant for more than a third of our income. This means that even the £9m cash savings that we plan to make by working more efficiently won't be enough to meet our budget shortfall.

So we want to hear from you about three options for council tax increases that can make up the difference. You will see that each option involves making some cutbacks. To avoid this we would have to raise council tax by about 12% and this is simply not on.

Your views will help councillors decide. We will also take into account the views of the agencies, businesses and other partners that we work with, and the impact that these options have on areas of service where we particularly need to improve.

So please can I ask you to read this newsletter carefully and respond to the questions asked.

Thank you

Alison King
Leader of the Council

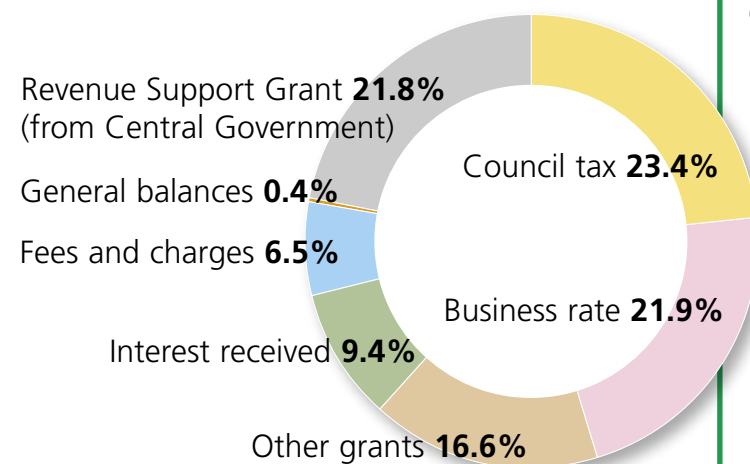


Consultation Special...

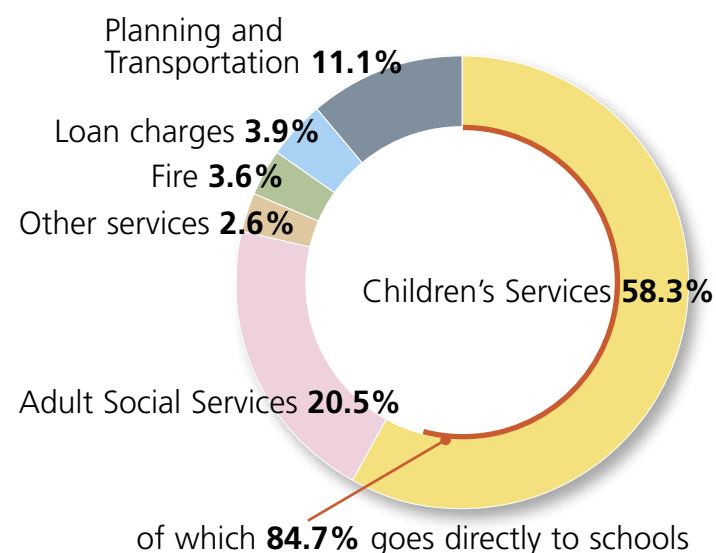
We need your views on next year's council tax levels and the choices which will keep increases limited to 3, 4 or 5%. Read how each option will affect local services and give us your opinion.



Where the money came from in 2005-06...



Where the money goes...



Help with your council tax

You may be eligible for one of the following reductions or benefits on your council tax bill. If you think you may be entitled, contact your District Council to find out more.

- **Exemptions** - there are a range of exemptions available in different circumstances such as if your house is unoccupied for 12 months during major structural repair or if only students live there.
- **Disability reductions** - you may be entitled to a reduction if any member of your family, including children, are disabled and a room has been set aside for their needs.
- **Discounts** - council tax is based on two or

Consultation so far...

We asked: The 7,000 members of the Norfolk Citizens' Panel and all readers of Your Norfolk: "is Norfolk County Council still working on priorities that really matter to local people?"

You said: Yes. 65% of Your Norfolk readers and 67% of the Citizens' Panel agreed our 8 main priorities were still the right ones:

- Reducing crime and disorder
- Protecting children from abuse
- Improving education
- Supporting older people to live independent lives
- Reducing deprivation
- Improving road safety
- Reducing waste and improving recycling
- Helping Norfolk businesses, our economy and improving travel, transport and IT.

We have: Reported your views to members of Norfolk County Council where they decided to keep these eight priorities as major issues to consider when budget decisions need to be made.

See the full list at www.mtp.norfolk.gov.uk



If you need 'Norfolk Matters' in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language, please contact the Communications Unit on (01603) 222972 (minicom 223833) and we will do our best to help.

more adults living in each house, so if you live alone you can claim a single person's discount of 25% of your bill. There are also a range of other discounts available.

- **Council tax benefit** - if you are on a low income you may qualify for Council Tax Benefit, which reduces your annual council tax bill.
- **2nd adult rebate** - A second adult rebate normally applies where you have another adult living in your home (not your partner or child under 18) who is on a low income. The second adult must be over 18.

In addition, all households with an adult aged 65+ should have received a £200 extra payment this year for council tax along with their recent winter fuel payment.

Children's Services

Children's Services was launched in February 2005 and combines the former education department and the children and families part of the social services department.

Our responsibilities towards children and young people are vast. They include making sure there is an appropriate school place for every child, home to school transport, providing the youth and community service, supporting schools to improve in areas including information technology, attendance, behaviour and bullying issues.

We are working hard to help children and young people who need extra support. That includes the thousands of children with special educational needs and disabilities, where there are child protection concerns and those children who cannot live with their families and are cared for by the County Council. We also work with hundreds of families who need extra support.

We will continue to focus on our work with children and young people, with £378m for schools and pupil-related activities next year, which is 6.7% more per pupil, and £149m for support we provide to vulnerable families, children in care, children with disabilities and services like adoption and home to school transport.

But, with rising costs and less money available for services next year, we are going to need to make savings. These will be on top of savings already made through careful management, including a 2.5% saving across all budgets, along with specific actions such as recruitment restrictions.

Unavoidable costs

- £3.8m on the cost of looking after vulnerable children in care.
- £1m because of rising fuel and contract costs.
- £0.9m because central government is withdrawing its Safeguarding Children grant.

Examples of how each council tax option would affect services

A 3% increase would see 40 frontline posts go and also a £500,000 cut in what we spend on services to vulnerable children and families through the voluntary sector.

A 4% increase would reduce the number of frontline posts lost to 15 but still mean a £500,000 cut in what we spend on services provided by voluntary organisations.

A 5% increase would mean losing no frontline posts at all, and a lower amount of £209,000 cut from the voluntary sector to protect some services provided to vulnerable families.

What ever the rise, Children's Services plans to save around £2.1m in management and support costs.



(c) EDP/James Bass

Norfolk County Council Customer Service Centre phone numbers

- | | |
|--|---|
| ● General enquiries: 0844 800 8020 | ● Consultation helpline: 0844 800 8010 |
| ● Textphone: 0844 800 8011 | ● School transport: 0844 800 8003 |
| ● Fax: 0844 800 8012 | ● Social services: 0844 800 8014 |
| ● Email: information@norfolk.gov.uk | ● Street lighting: 0844 800 8008 |
| ● Education general enquiries: 0844 800 8001 | ● Trading Standards: 0844 800 8013 |
| ● Adult education: 0844 800 8002 | ● Library renewals: 0844 800 8006 |
| | ● Waste management: 0844 800 8004 |

Our phone lines are open Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm.

Planning and Transportation



Together with our private sector partners, May Gurney and Mott McDonald, we are responsible for 6,200 miles of road and 2,500 miles of footways. We dispose of waste collected by district councils and we are the planning authority for minerals.

We support public transport, Norfolk's countryside and heritage, including footpaths, historic buildings, woodlands and wildlife.

➔ Unavoidable costs

- £1.2m extra for waste contracts.
- 8.2% inflation on all transport costs.
- £1.5m for extra construction inflation.
- £600,000 increase in street lighting costs.
- £800,000 to meet new health and safety legislation.

➔ Examples of how each council tax option would affect services

We aim to save £500,000 through efficiencies within our strategic partnership with May Gurney and Mott McDonald.

Whatever option is chosen the highway maintenance budget has not been funded for inflation costs of £1.5m.

With a 3% council tax increase we would cut more than £2.8m from the budget which pays for things like road and pavement repairs, verge cutting, road sign maintenance and replacement. We would also cut subsidies on 30 commercial bus routes - where we pay to keep less popular routes in more rural areas operating.



At 4% we would need to cut £2.65m from this budget (£150,000 less) and still need to end subsidies on 30 commercial bus routes.

At 5% we could reduce the amount needed to be saved from the road maintenance budget to £2.5m, and we would reduce the cut in bus subsidies to 23 bus routes.

Whatever the rise, Planning and Transportation plans to save around £773,000 in management and support costs.

Fire Service

Our fire and rescue service helps make Norfolk a safer place. We respond quickly to more than 11,000 fires and road accidents every year. We are also working increasingly hard to prevent them happening in the first place.

Fire safety remains central to our work and we carry out fire safety checks at hundreds of premises a year, including in people's homes, encouraging everyone to make sure they have working smoke alarms. We also have a growing local and regional responsibility for dealing with major disasters, including acts of terrorism.

➔ Unavoidable costs

- Increased rents for buildings we use.
- Increased cost of leasing and repairing fire appliances.
- Essential IT and broadband costs to make sure all our retained fire stations can communicate well with each other and our control centre.
- Nationally agreed rises in fire fighter and support staff pay and pensions.

➔ Examples of how each council tax option would affect services

A 3% rise in council tax will mean removing four fire engines and 32 retained fire fighter posts from four fire stations around the county with two engines, reducing non critical training, charging for licences, and slowing down the repairs on fire hydrants. We would still be able to deliver a good first response to incidents but in some areas the loss of a second engine and crew will affect our ability to send back-up support.

A 4% rise will mean no fire engines or retained fire fighter posts would be lost and our front line service would not be affected.

A 5% rise would keep fire engines and retained firefighter posts and protect support staff posts and staff training.

Whatever the rise, the Fire Service plans to save around £94,000 in efficiencies and increasing charges.



Adult Social Services

Every year we work with our partners in the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors to care for and support more than 35,000 adults in Norfolk. We work with people who have a wide range of needs – older people, people with disabilities,

people with learning difficulties, people with sensory impairments and people with mental health, drug and alcohol problems.

Providing high quality services to vulnerable adults is a top priority for Norfolk County Council and the demand for our services is growing. We are an ageing population, and Norfolk has a higher than average percentage of people aged 65 and above. Every year another 800 older people need support from us, and as people become more frail with age, the cost of care increases. We need to make sure older people can get services to keep them independent.

➔ Unavoidable costs

- £830,000 reduction in Government grants.
- £1.17m because of an increased demand on services due to the growth in the number of older people needing support.
- £1.543m increase in cost for the number of clients needing complex packages of care.
- £2.35m increase in contribution to the Learning Difficulties Services as a result of increased demand.
- £1.493m in nationally agreed pay and pensions, and price increases.

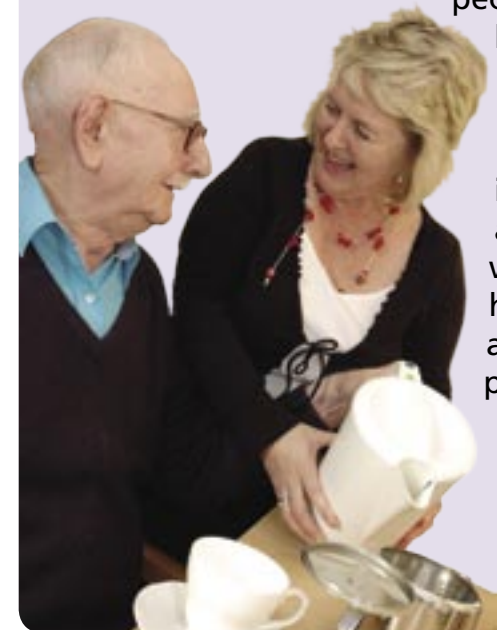
➔ Examples of how each council tax option would affect services

A 3% council tax rise would mean cutting £1.9m from the budget we use to buy care for older people from independent organisations. This would mean cutting the number of residential home placements that we could fund for vulnerable older people by 304 or the number of packages of intensive home care by 456.

A 4% rise would reduce this cut to 136 care home places or 204 intensive home care packages.

A 5% cut would see the same cuts to care home places or intensive home care packages but an extra £1m will go to independent providers of care to maintain existing levels of service.

Whatever the rise, Adult Social Services plans to save around £400,000 in staffing costs due to restructuring.



Cultural Services

Improvements at libraries are bringing more people through the doors than ever before – last year, visitor numbers in libraries were up 500,000.

Our Museums and Archaeology service is looking forward to re-opening three museums undergoing externally-funded refurbishment in Cromer, King's Lynn and Thetford.

Norfolk Record Office collects and preserves records of historical significance for Norfolk. We provide countywide support for the arts.

Unavoidable costs

- £50,000 a year to meet new national targets for libraries.
- A further £8,000 each year will be needed to increase library opening hours to meet new national standards.
- £20,000 a year to replace two mobile libraries.
- Nationally agreed pay and pension contributions for all staff working in libraries, museums, archives and arts.



Examples of how each council tax option would affect services

A 3% council tax rise will mean cutting the amount spent on books in libraries by £60,000 and the amount available to upgrade computers by £33,000. It will also mean cutting funding for curator and education officer posts in Museums by £44,000, affecting the service we provide to schools and others.

The 4% rise will reduce to £32,000 the cut in the amount spent on books (allowing us to meet national standards and therefore attract other sources of funding), and save curator and education posts.

A 5% rise would mean most of the same changes as a 4% one but would see the budget for replacing and upgrading computers cut by only £17,000.

Whatever the rise, Cultural Services plans to save around £270,000 in efficiency, management and support post costs.

Other services

The County Council is responsible for a number of other public services. These include Trading Standards, Coroners, and the Registration Service for the registration of births, deaths, marriages, and civil partnerships.

Our Economic Development team supports business, tourism, and the regeneration of deprived areas. Emergency Planning helps the County Council, businesses and communities prepare for major emergencies.

We give help and advice through communications and customer services. In the last twelve months our Customer Service Centre, dealt with 252,730 telephone calls, and at seven Council Information Centres around the county people can receive face to face help and advice.

There are also essential support services including finance, legal services and democratic services.

Unavoidable costs

- £112,000 for increases in costs of coroners cases and post mortem fees.
- £40,000 increased cost of meeting trading standards legislation.

Examples of how each council tax option will affect services

A 3% rise will cut economic development support for businesses by £30,000, end the County Council's presence at the Royal Norfolk Show and cut staffing in Trading Standards to save £192,000.

A 4% rise will cut economic development support by £7,000, retain the council's presence at the County Show and reduce Trading Standards staffing cuts to £175,000.

A 5% rise will mean no cuts in the economic development support fund.

What ever the rise, there will be a £145,000 saving in management and support costs among other services.

Norfolk County Council faces extra costs of £22million next year that it cannot avoid

The Council's Cabinet is now asking for your views on three options to meet these costs. Each option will require all services to make big savings through working more efficiently, reducing posts and some services to you.

Some savings would need to be made whichever option is chosen including:

- £3.5m - cut in management, support and administration posts across the council.

The main differences in options which will affect services to you...

Option One 3% increase in council tax

Would mean another 55p a week for a band D taxpayer. It would require the Council to find savings of £23.568million

Would mean savings of:

- £2.863m - in the highways maintenance budget.
- £1.9m - loss of 304 care home places or 456 intensive home care packages, for vulnerable people.
- £1.2m - cutting 40 frontline posts in children's services.
- £600,000 - loss of subsidies to 30 bus routes.
- £500,000 - reduce funding for voluntary services supporting families at risk.
- £190,000 - loss of four fire engines and 32 retained fire fighters

Option Two 4% increase in council tax

Would mean another 73p a week for a band D taxpayer. It would require the Council to find savings of £20.8million

Would mean savings of:

- £2.65m - from roads maintenance budget.
- £850,000 - loss of 136 care home places or 204 intensive home care packages.
- £459,000 - cutting 15 frontline children's services staff.
- £600,000 - loss of subsidies to 30 bus routes.
- £500,000 - reduce funding for voluntary services supporting families at risk.
- No fire engines or retained fire fighter posts would be lost.

Option Three 5% increase in council tax

Would mean another 92p a week for a band D taxpayer. It would require the Council to find savings of £19.1million

Would mean savings of:

- £2.5m - from savings of road maintenance budget.
- Same losses outlined as at 3 and 4%, but independent and voluntary sector home and home care providers will have some payment protection.
- No frontline children's services posts would be lost.
- £460,000 - 23 bus routes lose subsidy.
- £209,000 - funding cut to voluntary agencies providing services to families at risk.
- No fire engines or retained fire fighter posts would be lost.

To see the full list go to www.norfolk.gov.uk



Have your say...

Now that you have read the options, please say which option you prefer.
Your views will help councillors to decide which option to accept.

(please tick):

Option one – Council tax increase of 3% ☐

Option two – Council tax increase of 4% ☐

Option three – Council tax increase of 5% ☐

If you have any comments please write them here – you can attach another sheet if you wish to.

Please can you also tell us...

Your age (please tick):

Under 18 ☐ 18 – 29 ☐ 30 – 44 ☐ 45 – 59 ☐ 60+ ☐

Where in Norfolk you live (please tick):

Broadland area ☐ Breckland area ☐ Great Yarmouth area ☐

King's Lynn and West Norfolk ☐ Norwich ☐

North Norfolk ☐ South Norfolk ☐

about you (please tick):

female ☐

male ☐

The closing date for this consultation is 23 January - but any views received after that date will be given to Councillors before the Full Council meeting on February 22.

You can take part...



By using the online response form at www.norfolk.gov.uk
(free internet access is available at all our libraries).



By completing this questionnaire and returning in an envelope addressed to
FREEPOST YOUR NORFOLK – you do not need to use a stamp.

If you are unable to use either of these methods, you can:



Ring our Customer Service Centre on 0844 800 8010
and we will read through the options and take your views.



Visit our Council Information Centres in libraries at Aylsham, Wroxham, Dereham,
Diss, Downham Market, Gorleston, Norfolk & Norwich Millennium Library and in
Fakenham Connect.

What happens next

Thank you for taking the trouble to send in your views. We will report all views that arrive by 23 January 2006 to Cabinet to help inform their meeting on 30 January. Any comments we receive after this will be given to Full Council in time for their meeting on February 22.