

# Have your say! **Public consultation on draft council budget**



Have your say  
This consultation runs  
from 16 December 2011  
until 31 January 2012.

# Foreword

## Eddie Martin, Leader of Cumbria County Council, explains the challenge facing Cumbria County Council

That hard times are becoming even more difficult is clear for all to see and there is no doubt that councils throughout England face the greatest financial challenges in a generation. That includes Cumbria. It is perhaps ironic that the most significant devolution of power from Whitehall to county hall will be accompanied by the deepest financial cutbacks in local government that anyone can remember. We all want to do 'our own thing', and be as free as possible from Whitehall regulations, but we also need money to be able to make those choices that we think will best help and support our local communities.

On average, about 68 percent of our funding comes directly from central government. Most of the remainder comes from council tax. So, if the government gives us less money our choices are increasingly limited – either increase council tax further or make savings on services.

Given the hard times that many households are going through - with increases in fuel costs, high inflation, soaring travel costs, little or no pay rises and so on - we surely should not make it worse by increasing council tax to unacceptable or unaffordable levels.

Last year we reduced our council budget by £44m. We carefully reviewed all of our services, re-engineered the council and, sadly, had to lose almost 600 employees. Thankfully the vast majority of them were able to take advantage of our voluntary redundancy scheme. Almost 7,000 of you got involved in our budget consultation and made many sensible suggestions and gave us good advice. We listened and we responded as much as we could to your ideas. Fortunately, we were able to protect many 'frontline' services; most of the cuts fell on the 'back offices'. But now, for 2012/13, we again have to find savings. Thankfully because of the decisions we made last year the amount still to find is a comparatively modest £2.8m.

The county council is responsible for over 800 functions; from highways to social services, from trading standards to children's services, from libraries to waste disposal - the list seems endless! We are legally obliged to provide some services; other services are left to our discretion. Few councillors - whatever their political colour - would wish to reduce services and every service is deemed by someone to be 'precious'. And it probably is.

So I am appealing to you to help us, once again, to make those financial decisions which will help us all. How can we minimise the effects of having considerably less money? Please browse through the contents of these pages, email your councillors, ask questions and tell us what you think. I want to make this a genuine 'Cumbria community budget' and one in which we have all had a hand in shaping, and I am grateful for your advice.



Thank you  
**Eddie Martin,**  
**Leader of Cumbria County Council**

# What this consultation is about

We want to hear your views on our draft budget. The draft budget sets out how much we propose to spend across the wide range of services the council provides. The draft budget is about balancing the books for next year, making sure we don't spend more than we receive in income from government funding and the council tax you pay.

The draft budget is made up of two main areas: the revenue budget which covers the running cost for delivering services; and the capital budget which lays out what we will spend on buildings (including schools), highways maintenance, other infrastructure and major equipment. It includes proposals for reducing spending on areas where we think savings could be made and also proposals to increase funding in areas where extra is needed.

This year the council continues to be faced by significant reductions to the funding it receives from central Government, which along with your council tax, pays for the services we provide. Following very large reductions last year, the reduction in 2012/13 is smaller. But we already know that the reductions will increase again in 2013/14 and 2014/15. These reductions are forcing the council to find ways to save money and reduce costs.

Last year (2011/12) in our budget the council agreed changes that would save £44m. Many of those changes have now been made but some are still to be fully implemented and are the subject of further consultation. For the most part we were able to

make these changes without major impacts on frontline services to the public. We did this by doing things differently and more efficiently. As we look to the future and the reductions in funding we know are coming it will become increasingly difficult to avoid major changes to frontline services.

This consultation asks you to consider the proposals for our 2012/13 draft budget and also think about the future and how the council should prioritise its spending to protect the things you think are most important.

This document attempts to summarise all this information, set it in the context of what the council is trying to achieve and highlight the areas that we think will be of most interest to you. It sits alongside the council's complete set of draft budget documents that are available on the council website for those who want greater detail.

We hope that having read this document you will have sufficient information to be able to have your say on what is being proposed.

## How to respond to this consultation:

- Use the feedback form at the back of this document or complete it online at [cumbria.gov.uk](http://cumbria.gov.uk)
- Reply in writing: **Budget Consultation, Freepost NWW6059A, The Courts, Carlisle, CA3 8NA**
- Join the discussion at [cumbriabudget.ning.com](http://cumbriabudget.ning.com)
- Follow us on **Twitter: @cumbriacc**
- Email [yoursay@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:yoursay@cumbria.gov.uk)

Come along to one of our six public events to hear about the council's proposals first hand:

- **Copeland** - 10 January - Egremont Market Hall
- **Carlisle** - 18 January - Richard Rose Central Academy
- **Eden** - 19 January - Penrith Methodist Church
- **Barrow** - 23 January - The Forum
- **Allerdale** - 24 January - The Wave, Maryport
- **South Lakeland** - 26 January - Kendal Rugby Club

## For those who want more detail:

Follow the links from [cumbria.gov.uk](http://cumbria.gov.uk) to view all the draft budget documents.

# What we are trying to achieve

## What's important for Cumbria

Last year the council agreed its Council Plan for 2011-2014. The plan set out what the council is trying to achieve over that three year period. Despite the impact of funding cuts we remain committed to our plan and it is important not to lose sight of the long-term aspirations we and our partners have for Cumbria and its communities. The council remains clear about what is important for Cumbria in the longer term – which can only be achieved with everyone playing their part and working together.

- **We want Cumbria to be a place with a thriving economy where we challenge poverty in all its forms.**
- **A place where you can live in a high quality and sustainable environment and you can move safely and easily around the county.**
- **More than that, we want Cumbria to be a great place for a child to grow up; a place of opportunity where young people are able to live happy and productive lives; and a place where young people want to live and work.**
- **We want you to enjoy an independent and healthy life and to be safe from harm, with more control over your life and a say in the decisions which affect you.**
- **And we want you to have the best chances in life and to be able to fulfil your potential.**

## The council's role

Everyone has a part to play in creating the future of Cumbria. Individuals and community groups, public and Third Sector organisations, and the business sector will all contribute in different ways.

Over the coming years we believe that the role of Cumbria County Council should be to:

**Create the conditions for Cumbria's communities to thrive by putting people at the heart of everything we do, and work with others to deliver excellent services for those who need us most.**

## The council's priorities

Our overall priorities are:

- **Challenging poverty in all its forms;**
- **Ensuring that the most vulnerable people in our communities receive the support they need; and,**
- **Improving the chances in life of the most disadvantaged in Cumbria**

# What we do

The council is responsible for providing or supporting a large number of services and functions - over 800 in total. Below is a summary of what we currently do.

| Service                                      | What we do now   |
|--|--|
| <b>Adult social care</b>                     | We support vulnerable people and their families to stay healthy and live as independently as possible. We do this by providing advice and information and by paying for care services or directly providing them. We work closely with individuals, family carers, partners in the NHS and the Third Sector to make sure the support that people receive is as personalised as possible.   |
| <b>Children's services</b>                   | We protect the most vulnerable children and provide support to families in most need. We help children to stay safe, make healthy choices, enjoy and achieve at school and make a positive contribution to their communities. We provide fostering, adoption and residential care services, and provide services to support early years' development, youth and adult education, together with sport and recreation.   |
| <b>Schools</b>                               | We work with schools and other partners to ensure every child has a school place; that those with special educational needs are supported; and that standards and the quality of education in Cumbria's schools are high. We also provide a range of finance, legal, governor support and property services to schools as well as catering, cleaning and school crossing patrols.  |
| <b>Registration and coroners' services</b>   | We register births, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths and provide and keep the important records relating to this. We conduct marriages, renewal of vows, civil partnerships, citizenship and civil naming ceremonies. We offer a nationality checking service and support HM Coroners in Cumbria with their sensitive work.  |
| <b>Archives</b>                              | We care for the historical records of Cumbria from the 11th to the 21st century and make them available for research to family and local historians, teachers, students and the public.  |
| <b>Libraries</b>                             | We run a comprehensive library service across the county, through static libraries, mobile libraries and Library Links. We also operate a dedicated library service for schools, a home delivery service and a library service for HMP Haverigg. The library service has about 100,000 active users and Carlisle library is the 20 <sup>th</sup> busiest in England and Wales.   |
| <b>Supporting businesses and the economy</b> | We promote Cumbria as a dynamic and competitive destination for inward investment, providing programmes to help establish new businesses and support existing businesses as well as supporting the development and delivery of Britain's Energy Coast. We remediate land to create new employment sites; provide support to over 700 social enterprises; and secure and manage regeneration funding from external bodies including Europe. We address worklessness through identifying and establishing new programmes that address poverty in all its forms. We also manage and operate the Port of Workington. |
| <b>Sustainability</b>                        | We work to reduce our carbon emissions and encourage better use of resources and work with partners to reduce the impact of and adapt to climate change.   |

| Service                             | What we do now  |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Waste and recycling</b>          | We dispose of waste and manage household waste recycling centres working with residents and communities, schools and other organisations to drive down waste to landfill and raise recycling rates.   |
| <b>Roads and rights of way</b>      | We manage and maintain 7,700km of highways, 1,700 bridges and highways structures and 44,000 streetlights and electrical appliances as well as public rights of way and open access land.   |
| <b>Buses and transport</b>          | We develop passenger transport services and support bus services where there is a clear need; co-ordinate the Rural Wheels and voluntary drivers schemes; support community bus provision; provide home to school and college transport and adult social care transport; and manage community rail partnerships.  |
| <b>Planning and environment</b>     | We provide a statutory planning function to protect and enhance Cumbria's environment and ensure sustainable development including: developing the county's Minerals and Waste Development Framework; working with partners on nuclear and related issues; providing development control services and specialist advice on strategic planning applications; deciding planning applications for the county council's own developments; advising on archaeological, ecological and landscape matters, maintaining the county's register of Common Land and Town and Village Greens. |
| <b>Trading standards</b>            | We are responsible for the enforcement of a wide range of legislation controlling the advertising, marketing, distribution and supply of goods and services throughout the manufacturing, importation, distribution and service delivery chain. Our remit covers civil, criminal and contract law and includes food standards, product safety, fraud, consumer credit, animal health and welfare, weights and measures, trade mark protection, e-commerce and unfair trading practices.   |
| <b>Fire and Rescue Service</b>      | The core duty of our Fire and Rescue Service is to respond to a range of events from fires and road traffic accidents to major flooding and chemical incidents. We also work with residents and businesses to promote fire and road safety. We engage with young people across the county to help raise awareness of fire and road safety and reduce antisocial behaviour. We are also responsible for building fire safety enforcement.  |
| <b>Emergency planning</b>           | We work in partnership with the emergency services, military, health and voluntary groups to prepare emergency plans and other arrangements to respond to major emergencies in Cumbria. We also work to protect Cumbria's communities and help them recover.  |
| <b>Community safety</b>             | We work with partner agencies on community safety plans to address crime, antisocial behaviour and substance abuse.   |
| <b>Health and safety</b>            | As an employer we have duties to protect the health and safety of our employees, service users and members of the public who may be affected by our activities.   |
| <b>Customer services</b>            | We process and respond to residents' enquiries over the phone, online and in person via our customer contact centre and at our nine Local Links across the county.  |
| <b>Supporting local communities</b> | Through our community-based teams and neighbourhood forums we listen to and respond to the needs of local people and bring together a range of people and organisations to address local issues. Working with councillors we provide financial help for community and voluntary groups.   |

# The current situation

In terms of our revenue budget, in order to balance the books for 2012/13 the council needs to reduce its spending by £19.6m. For the majority of this reduction we decided last year where it would come from. But there are still more new savings to find this year. In terms of capital spending the situation is much more positive and we are proposing to make significant investments worth over £114m in 2012/13.

## Revenue

Last year as well as making £44m revenue savings for 2011/12, we also made decisions about how we would make significant savings in this year's 2012/13 budget. These already agreed changes will contribute £16.8m to this year's savings target, leaving just £2.8m still to find. Set next to last year's budget savings this is a comparatively small amount.

Last year's savings included things like changes to contracting arrangements for social care; reductions in waste prevention activity; and reductions in countryside access services. In addition we worked hard to reduce what we spent by changing the way we do things and becoming more efficient. For example centralising human resources functions, management restructures, getting better value from external contracts, sharing services with partners and changing how we purchase goods and services. These are things that have not had an impact on services to the public but have made significant savings.

This year's savings target of £2.8m also takes into account the budget pressures the council is facing. These are the areas where we know we will have to spend more money in order to meet our commitments. They include things like more funding to deal with the increasing number of children who are being placed in Local Authority care, increases in the amount the council is charged to dispose of waste in landfill through the Government's landfill tax and increasing costs due to changes in how children with special needs move between child and adult social care as they get older.

## Capital

In terms of capital spending the reductions in government funding have not been as severe meaning we can continue to invest significant sums. At the same time we are reviewing all the buildings, land and other assets we own with the aim of disposing of what we no longer need and so reducing the significant maintenance costs for the future.

Given the comparatively positive state of our capital budget this year we are proposing to spend just over £114m on a range of projects. This is real money being spent in Cumbria which can only be good for the local economy.

£21m will be spent completing the final stages of major projects like academies with a further £48m going on maintenance and upgrading for buildings and facilities we know we are going to keep. That includes work on schools, supported accommodation, elderly care homes, bridges, highways maintenance, libraries, offices and children's homes. Some of these investments are about spending money now to save money in future, by doing things like making our buildings more energy efficient or re-modelling to allow more staff to use them.

The final £45m of this capital cash relates to the Connecting Cumbria project - which aims to roll out super fast broadband access across the county - the development of a construction skills centre and a transport project with the Lake District National Park. We are awaiting final confirmation that we will receive this money from external funders.

Our budget forecasts show the amounts we have available for capital investment will reduce significantly in future years, so this year we want to get as much done as we can to get our buildings and facilities up to scratch and ready for the future.

# Proposed revenue savings for 2012/13

The majority of the £2.8m revenue saving the council still has to make this year will come from internal changes to how we do business. These will not achieve the full £2.8m saving meaning some changes to services are also being proposed.

The internal changes include removing some posts where there is a current vacancy, changes to how we buy goods and services to get better value and efficiencies in how we manage the council's finances. This amounts to almost £2m of saving.

That leaves two proposals for changes that would directly affect services. These are:

- The introduction of charging for residents' parking permits
- Decreasing the level of subsidy for social care charges

Each of these proposals is discussed in more detail overleaf, including details of how much money the changes would save.

## Decreasing the level of subsidy for social care charges – saving £549,000

The Council funds services such as day care and home care for eligible people. The numbers of older people, and therefore demand for services, in Cumbria are increasing.

Services that the Council provides are generally paid for by a combination of a Council subsidy through Personal Budgets and individuals through a personal contribution to the cost of the service, although the amount that people pay, if anything, depends on personal circumstances. People with the lowest level of income have the greatest level of subsidy and pay the least (if anything). People with greater income still receive a subsidy from the Council.

Decreasing the subsidy that the Council provides to those who are more able to pay, would enable the Council to maintain investment in prevention and reablement services for all vulnerable adults. These services are provided free and can prevent people needing health or social care services. This change

will also assist the Council to maintain eligibility criteria for those who need social care services. The approach means that Council resources are most focused on those least able to contribute themselves.

Personal contributions are calculated on an individual basis and are means tested. As a consequence, some people will make no contribution to the cost of the services that they receive because they have a low income. The staff who undertake this calculation also look to make sure that people are claiming all the benefits to which they are entitled.

The amount people pay is based on a combination of the percentage of the value of the services that they use (currently set at 66.1%) and their income/liquid assets and disability related expenses. The value of people's houses is not taken into account. This means that even those who are assessed as being able to pay the maximum amount are only asked to pay 66.1% of the value of the services they receive from the Council and the Council provides a subsidy for the rest.

Weekly contributions are capped and as part of last years budget the cap was agreed at £297 per week for 2012/13. No one pays more than this, irrespective of the total value of the services they receive nor how wealthy they are (whereas people in residential care with the greatest wealth receive no Council subsidy and pay the full cost of their care).

The council's proposal is to reduce the subsidy it pays towards the cost of care and increase the amount that people contribute themselves (subject to their income) over the next three years to 80%, 90% then 100% of the value of services.

Decreasing the subsidy to people who are more able to pay, and increasing charges in this way would, by 2014/15, make available to the council £1.63m per year.

## Introduction of charging for resident's parking permits – saving £250,000

The proposal is to start charging residents for parking permits in order to cover the majority of the administration and enforcement costs.

Currently around 20,000 permits are issued free of charge across the six district areas. The county council currently funds their administration through subsidies to the District Councils who administer residents' permits schemes on its behalf.

It is proposed that parking permits would be issued at a rate of £25 per permit per annum. In 2010 a comparison of other neighbouring authorities' charges provides the following information:-

- **York** - £650 per annum - £60 per month
- **Lancaster** - Zoned – some are £40 per annum and some zones are £15 per annum
- **Edinburgh** - Zoned 1 – 4 are £160 per annum – Zones 5 and above are £80 per annum
- **Glasgow** - £250 per annum - £65 per quarter
- **Newcastle** - 1st Car - £20 per annum – 2nd Car - £40 per annum
- **Durham** - £30 per annum

## Further information on council tax levels

The council's draft budget is based on an assumed 2.5% increase in council tax in 2012/13. However this year the Government has offered councils across the country a one-off payment to allow them to avoid increasing council tax. We have not yet decided whether to accept this offer as there are some implications that we must consider carefully.

The council generally increases council tax each year roughly in line with the cost of inflation. Last year the Government asked councils not to increase council tax and provided councils with the additional funding to allow us to do this.

This year the Government offer is different. The Government is offering to give us a one-off payment to allow us to not increase council tax in 2012/13. But because each year's council tax increase is on top of the increase from the year before, and we wouldn't get the Government payment again, to meet the accumulated cost of inflation when we set the 2013/14 budget we would have to have a 'double whammy' council tax increase of 5 percent to allow us to catch up.

Alternatively we could make even bigger reductions in spending to keep the increase to just 2.5 percent; with a 0.5 percent increase in council tax equal to £1m in income this would mean finding a further £5m of savings in 2013/14 on top of the £5.4m we already need to identify.

This is a complicated situation which presents the council with a dilemma. Some councils have already decided what they want to do, but we will not rush the decision. We will have made a decision about which option to choose by the time the draft budget is presented to Full Council for approval in February.

# Future budget challenges

When the Government announced its cuts to council funding it decided to stagger their implementation over a four year period. This year (2012/13) the reductions in funding are comparatively modest. In 2013/14 and 2014/15 the reductions again become very significant.

Taking into account the funding cuts, predicted future council tax income, budget pressures and the changes to services we have already agreed we estimate that we will have to make a further £5.4m of savings in 2013/14 and £16.1m in 2014/15. However there is no guarantee that these figures will not increase given the current uncertainty around the country's economic prospects or that further reductions will not be imposed beyond 2014/15. It would be prudent to view these savings targets as representing a "best case" scenario.

However, these are still very significant sums of money. In effect, by 2014/15 the council will have made savings of £87m compared to its budget for 2010/11. To put this in some context £87m is roughly equivalent to the total combined annual budget of all six of Cumbria's district councils.

To date the council has been able to make the necessary savings for the most part without major impacts on frontline services to the public. We have done this by looking carefully at how we provide services, identifying ways we can do things differently and more efficiently. This is not to underplay the impact some of the changes have had on council staff, and in some instances, service users.

We are now in a position where the amount of savings that can be achieved in future simply through ever greater efficiency is becoming limited. The savings required in future years will demand increasingly difficult decisions about how, and indeed what, council services are provided. The priorities in our council plan will become ever more important in guiding the choices that we make.

Significant change and uncertainty is one of the few things that we can be sure of as we look to the future.

## What happens next

The council's Cabinet will receive regular updates on responses during the consultation period. Once the consultation closes all feedback will be collated and a final summary report presented to Cabinet at the start of February 2012. Cabinet will consider the feedback before they agree a final budget to recommend to Full Council later in February.

This report will be publicly available and include responses from the council to issues that emerge through the consultation.



# Have your say

We would like to hear your views on the proposals in our draft budget and your views on how we should prioritise our services when it comes to making savings decisions in future years.

If you want further detailed information you should refer to the council's full draft budget papers available at [cumbria.gov.uk](http://cumbria.gov.uk)

## Proposed revenue savings in 2012/13

Having reviewed the options the council has identified for making savings we'd like know to what extent you support or oppose each option. The option titles are listed below.

|   | <b>Strongly agree</b>    | <b>Agree</b>             | <b>Neither/<br/>Nor</b>  | <b>Disagree</b>          | <b>Strongly disagree</b> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Introduction of charging for residents' parking permits | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Decreasing the level of subsidy for social care charges | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Further comments on each option

Introduction of charging for residents' parking permits

  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  

Decreasing the level of subsidy for social care charges

## Suggestions for how to prioritise services

As discussed above further significant savings will be required in 2013/14 and 2014/15. The council is currently considering the options available to it. As part of the feedback from this year's consultation we would like to hear your views on how we should prioritise the different areas of service we are responsible for.

1. From the list of service areas below please select up to 5 that you think it is most important for the council to try and protect

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult social care                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Buses and transport          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's services                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and environment     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Schools                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Trading standards            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Registration and coroners' services   | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire and Rescue Services     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archives                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency planning           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Libraries                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Community safety             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting businesses and the economy | <input type="checkbox"/> Health and safety            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Customer services            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waste and recycling                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting local communities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Roads and rights of way               |   |

2. Do you have any specific suggestions for how the council could make major savings over the next several years? Please continue on another sheet if necessary.

Send your completed form to:

**Budget Consultation, Freepost NWW6059A, The Courts, Carlisle, CA3 8NA**

If you require this document in another format (e.g. CD, audio cassette, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone 01228 606060.

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে 01228 606060 নম্বরে টেলিফোন করুন।

如果您希望通过母语了解此信息，  
请致电 01228 606060

Jeigu norétumėte gauti šią informaciją savo kalba,  
skambinkite telefonu 01228 606060

W celu uzyskania informacji w Państwa języku proszę  
zatelefonować pod numer 01228 606060

Se quiser aceder a esta informação na sua língua,  
telefone para o 01228 606060

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