

Your Views on council tax

Respondent information

Respondent Numbers

There were 314 responses received for this proposal. Of these the majority (**219 people or 70%**) replied as individuals.

Responding as:			
An individual / member of the public	219	70%	90%
A family	64	20%	
On behalf of a voluntary or community group	0	0%	1%
On behalf of a statutory organisation	4	1%	
On behalf of a business	0	0%	
A Norfolk County Councillor	0	0%	7%
A district or borough councillor	2	1%	
A town or parish councillor	11	4%	
A Norfolk County Council employee	6	2%	
Not Answered	8	3%	3%
Total	314	101%*	101%*

How we received the response

Email	19	6%
Letter	1	0%
Consultation paper feedback form	1	0%
Online submission	293	93%
Total	314	99%*

*Please note: Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%

Responses by groups, organisations and businesses

Broadland Older People's Partnership responded but did not identify as a **voluntary or community group**. The partnership were broadly supportive of the proposal to increase council tax provided the 3% social care precept is ring fenced for Adult Social Care.

Four respondents told us they were responding on behalf of a **statutory organisation**. The respondents are: Costessey Town Council, Shipdham Parish Council, Snettisham Parish Council and South Norfolk Council. The statutory organisations expressed the following views:

- Councils were worried that the proposal could push demand and costs onto other public sector partners.
- Councils were concerned about the affordability of the proposal for local residents.
- Councils should continue to work in collaboration to tackle issues and seize opportunities rooted in the principle of what will make a difference for people rather than what works best for organisational structures.
- Others took the opportunity to express their views on the decision to increase County Councillors' allowances.

Two respondents told us they were **district or borough councillors** but didn't name the council. District and borough councillors were concerned about the affordability of the proposal, an above inflationary increase during a period when people's incomes are not keeping pace and the decision to increase councillors allowances.

Eleven respondents told us they were **town or parish councillors** although eight did not name the council. The named councils are: Redenhall with Harleston Town Council, Rollesby Parish Council and Warham Parish council. Town and parish councillors were concerned about the affordability of the proposal, an above inflationary increase during a period when people's incomes are not keeping pace and suggested that efficiencies should be realised before proposing an increase in council tax.

A response from **Brandon Lewis MP** was also received which noted the importance of protecting services for local residents while continuing to find further efficiencies and generate income, for example by increased returns from property assets. Brandon Lewis also asked the council to take the effect of our proposals on other local authorities and partners into account and consider savings in administrative functions before making changes to frontline services. He also expressed his regret that the Council had decided to increase councillors' allowances, rather than use the funding to mitigate the impact of some of the budget proposals.

What do you think about our proposal to increase council tax by 4.9% in 2018/19? How, if at all, do you think that the proposal might impact on you? Please write in below:

Overall theme	Issues raised	Number of times mentioned	Quotes
<p>Proposal would be difficult for people to afford</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a great deal of concern about the affordability of the proposal, even amongst those that felt increasing council tax was reasonable. • Some people were particularly concerned about pensioners' ability to afford the increase (21). 	<p>131</p>	<p>"I don't agree with the council increase of 4.9% as times are getting harder for families and we are struggling at the moment".</p> <p>"It is a big increase and will cause difficulties for many people, but it must be done I guess."</p> <p>"It's the only way to support people who live in Norfolk. It won't be easy to pay the increase however more cuts would impact too much."</p> <p>"We simply can't afford it!! We currently don't turn our heating on unless we really have to as can't afford the oil"</p> <p>"This comes on top of an increase last year. Increasing council tax two years in a row is bad news and my families council tax bill is the single biggest bill we face every month!"</p> <p>"I understand the need to raise funds etc, but it hits us at the bottom of the ladder the hardest. I struggle to make ends meet as it is! Every time I get the annual "living wage" pay rise (for which I am grateful) it ends up being swallowed up by the increase in my council tax, so I am no better off".</p>

<p>Proposal would directly affect people's lives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several respondents commented that they would be directly affected by an increase to council tax. 	<p>87</p>	<p>"It will have a direct effect on my income/ standard of living as I am retired and therefore on a fixed income".</p> <p>"I think this is excessive and it would impact on my monthly family budget."</p> <p>"I can not believe you are even thinking of doing this, we are struggling with our bills and having to make ends meet"</p>
<p>Impact of above inflationary rise in council tax</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several respondents were worried about being able to afford an above inflationary increase in council tax during a period when they felt people's incomes are not increasing. 	<p>83</p>	<p>"Wages are stagnant and most people see less than inflation pay "rises" meaning in real terms a pay cut".</p> <p>"Salaries have not increased at a comparable rate to the cost of living while council tax and other costs continue to rise at a rate beyond any salary increase."</p> <p>"Haven't had a pay rise for years, so how can I afford more?"</p> <p>"My (public sector pay) has only increased by 1% in the last 7 years and inflation is higher than this".</p>
<p>Support for increasing council tax by 4.9%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several respondents felt the proposed increase was reasonable to protect services for Norfolk residents. 	<p>77</p>	<p>"I am in full agreement that council tax should be increased. It is necessary to maintain vital and valued services for the people of Norfolk that affect us all, whether directly or indirectly. On the whole, council tax is a fair tax based on ability to pay."</p>

			<p>“It will be hard but we need to do it. The alternative of paring back services yet further is unthinkable. I support the County Council on this.”</p> <p>“Yes increase the council tax. I pay all of my council tax although I'm a very variable low income of a few hundred pounds a month but this is what we have to do to maintain services so go ahead”</p> <p>“I think that increasing level of council tax is crucial. I will be impacted as a council tax payer but cannot see how vital services can be protected without additional income.”</p>
<p>General opposition to proposal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several respondents did not want to see any increase in council tax. 	<p>72</p>	<p>“I can not believe you are even thinking of doing this, we are struggling with our bills and having make ends meet”</p> <p>“This comes on top of an increase last year. Increasing council tax two years in a row is bad news and my families council tax bill is the single biggest bill we face every month!”</p> <p>“I don't agree with the council increase of 4.9% as times are getting harder for families and we are struggling at the moment.”</p> <p>“I don't agree with this large increase in tax. It will affect me because I am a pensioner and each year find it more and more difficult to make ends meet. There is a limit to how much I can reduce my food intake and lower the thermostat on my heater.”</p>

			<p>"This increase should NOT happen, we are struggling with bills everyday".</p>
<p>Support for raising council tax but by less than 4.9%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others commented that although they recognised the need for an increase in council tax they thought that this should be a smaller increase. For example, some respondents were happy to pay the 3% social care precept but not the 1.9% increase in general council tax. 	23	<p>"I don't mind paying towards the social care bill but disagree with a rise due to inflation. My husband and I are both public service workers and have had our pay capped at 1% for years and inflation has meant we have had a significant pay cut over the years."</p> <p>"It is a disgrace. We should have regular smaller increases"</p>
<p>Proposed increase not high enough</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents thought that the council should go further and increase the council tax by the full amount available to them. 	15	<p>"I do not think this is enough. I would rather pay substantially more to receive IMPROVED services."</p> <p>"I don't think it's enough. Council tax needs to levied at a rate which preserves services."</p> <p>"I fully support an increase in Council Tax. Indeed I would go further and support a more substantial increase if it were legally possible and in order to avoid any cuts in services".</p>
<p>Concerns about partners raising precepts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents were worried that the overall council tax bill will increase by over 4.9% if partners also choose to increase their precept. 	19	<p>"If the County Council increases its Council Tax bill, the others (district councils, police and parish councils) all follow suit which means that a 4.9% increase becomes more like a 9% increase"</p> <p>"I disagree with this increase. What happens is each time NCC increase the Council Tax is that the Parish Councils and District Councils also do the same. This means that the Council Tax rise in real terms will be greater than 4.9%"</p>

			<p>"I simply cannot afford it. Especially if the pcc puts his precept up by 1.99% or even higher if the cap isn't lifted!!!"</p>
<p>Meeting individual priorities and changes before agreeing to proposal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents commented that they would like the tax revenue to be spent on specific services and for the council to be more transparent and efficient before agreeing to an increase in council tax. 	28	<p>"Be more efficient in these areas first and ask tax payers for more money only when this has been done."</p> <p>"I agree with the increase, but only if some of the income can be spent on maintaining those services that improve the quality of life in Norfolk, eg libraries, mudeums, arts provision."</p> <p>"The priority should be NHS, mental health and Education"</p>
<p>Central government responsibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents expressed strong opinions about national government decisions impacting on council tax locally and that Norfolk County Council should be doing more to advocate on behalf of its residents. 	44	<p>"The government must be made to realise that the councils need help, we are still paying the same amount of tax to the government to help the councils, the councils are continually increasing the council tax and we are getting far less for that"</p> <p>"I think this proposal is essential. The government has cut money for councils drastically and we must do our best to continue to fund public services which we all use."</p> <p>"Members need to put pressure on MPs to redress the whole Council Tax."</p> <p>"It is regrettable that Council Tax has to increase, this is mainly due to the fact that central Government is no longer taking its responsibilities to support local services seriously, but in the current situation an increase in tax is preferable to an even further reduction in services."</p>

<p>Proposal would have an impact on caring responsibilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small number of respondents were worried about council tax increases having a detrimental effect on their caring responsibilities at a time when support services have been cut. 	<p>8</p>	<p>“My son has a life long disability and cannot always work full time, so we have the added pressure of supporting him financially, medications, keeping the house warm and hot baths. Adding this increase will only put further financial pressures on myself and my husband.”</p> <p>“I think this is a high increase and will certainly make families like mine struggle more than we already are despite working all the hours that we physically can whilst supporting two children with additional needs.”</p> <p>“As a parent of 2 disabled young adults who have had their services slashed because of cuts you will have to excuse my cynasim.”</p>
<p>Concerns over council’s efficiency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents were concerned that the council would be unable to spend revenue raised by council tax efficiently or effectively. 	<p>44</p>	<p>“It is difficult as I appreciate the need for improved social care by raising the precept, but have little faith the money would be spent effectively. When you look at some of the pointless spending by NCC, and the waste in other areas, it can make you resent paying extra money to be frittered away.”</p> <p>“...The council need to get priorities in check and stop wasting masses of cash on NDR, and other meaningless road projects”</p> <p>“...It also seems that it cannot control costs for publicly awarded contracts and that the local tax payer is always left to pick up overrun costs. Be more efficient in these areas first and ask tax payers for more money only when this has been done.”</p>

			<p>..." Get your own house in order before expecting everyone else to pay for your wastage."</p>
Disagree with banding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some respondents questioned the banding system and the overall fairness of council tax. 	13	<p>"...What we need is for Council tax bands to go beyond the current scale so that people with large expensive house pay more than they do now."</p> <p>"...A fairer way would be to have a graduated council tax so if you received all the amenities you paid a slightly higher rate."</p>
No alternative to the proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some respondents felt there was no alternative to increasing council tax. 	12	<p>"It is too high but I understand you have no other choice."</p> <p>"It will be hard but we need to do it. The alternative of paring back services yet further is unthinkable."</p>
Explain how council tax is spent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few respondents asked for more clarity over how council tax is being spent. 	12	<p>"...If I could see where that spending was going I would feel happier."</p> <p>"...I want to know you will not use the extra to pay off failing managers or those you've recruited Who don't work out, or to give people a send off with a nice wad to go with their very early retirement. This is unfair when basic services are being cut."</p>
Lack of services / people not using council services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some respondents felt they did not use council services so should not be asked to pay any increase. Of these, two responses highlighted that they felt lack of services was particularly evident in rural villages. 	15	<p>"I live in a rural village where we have very few amenities, hardly any street lights, no pavements and the roads are not gritted or even relaid very often. I cannot see what we age getting for our council tax."</p> <p>"This is why I find it laughable that you want to put the council tax up. We get nothing from it now anyways, and now it gets more expensive???"</p>

Evidence of spending on the adult social care precept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few respondents commented that they wanted evidence that the 3% social care precept would be ring-fenced. 	8	<p>"I, for one, would not want to pay any more than the 1.9% increase for inflation as, despite the 'ring fence' claim this money would simply disappear into the 'pot'"</p> <p>"You say 3% is for adult social services, yet you as a council have the audacity to close Prior's Mead, Thetford."</p>
Proposal will protect and maintain services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some residents felt that increasing council tax would mean that current services could be protected and maintained at their current levels. 	41	<p>"I think that increasing level of council tax is crucial. I will be impacted as a council tax payer but cannot see how vital services can be protected without additional income.</p> <p>"It is important to maintain services and therefore I would accept a raise in council tax as necessary."</p> <p>"I am in full agreement that council tax should be increased. It is necessary to maintain vital and valued services for the people of Norfolk that affect us all, whether directly or indirectly. On the whole, council tax is a fair tax based on ability to pay."</p>
Reduce council costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small number of people commented that the council could do more to reduce costs by cutting services that they felt were non-essential. 	9	<p>"You have not cut out non essentials like the monthly news magazine, arts and entertainment have far too much. There is so much more you can cut before making us pay even more. Is it needed or just desirable.the latter should be cut totally."</p>
Priorities for spending revenue generated by council tax increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small number of respondents prioritised key service areas they would like to see council tax spent on. 	5	<p>"I would prefer to have an increase in council tax than have a reduction in services particularly in the area of education, s=Social services and the the environment."</p>

<p>Ideas to help the council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some respondents put forward their own ideas about how the council should be run or changed. 	<p>28</p>	<p>“At the same time as these cutbacks I would like to see that the council offices are limiting their wastage by setting an example and not using water coolers, single use plastic : cutlery or cups and are generally doing their best to ensure that our council tax is spent wisely.”</p> <p>“I would welcome more of an effort to charge individuals who have 2nd homes in Norfolk paying more council tax to support the community.”</p> <p>“...perhaps the higher earners within the council should not receive a pay rise to cover it instead.”</p>
<p>Reduce staff, pay and conditions and councillor expenses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some people took the opportunity to express their concern about the council’s decision to increase member allowances. Others said that they did not want council tax to be raised in order to pay for an increase in councillors’ allowances. (51) Some respondents felt that the council should cut the number of staff and reduce pay and conditions, particularly of senior officers. (14) 	<p>65</p>	<p>“Just do the right thing. Reverse the 11% for councillors. What a kick in the teeth for the people of Norfolk. You should be so ashamed. I don't know how you can hold your heads up. Disgusting.”</p> <p>“...I also disagree with the proposal to raise the allowance for councillors above the rate agreed for Local Authority staff. That is wrong”.</p> <p>“I am not happy with paying extra council tax to increase your allowances. If the money was going to support local Sure Start centres or other vital services, it would be a different matter”.</p>

			<p>“Out of order! Norfolk counsellors give themselves a 11% increase that they were advised not to do. And now they want to charge us more to cover social care plans that could have been paid for twice over without their raise”.</p> <p>“Why also do we need so many heads of service and assistant heads of service and then the managers directly under them these need trimming down not given a regrade of salary.”</p> <p>“Cut back on the number of managers and their huge salaries and exorbitant pensions to make some savings.”</p>
<p>Comments about the consultation or proposal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people raised concerns about the consultation process. For example, respondents were worried that consultation responses would be ignored and there was not enough information supplied to respond fully. 	<p>16</p>	<p>“Thank-you for putting this out for consultation. Having served on a committee a few years ago I know that this is done to make everyone feel that they are involved, whereas their comments and suggestions are, in most cases, ignored.”</p> <p>“This is one of those areas where we are asked to comment on a proposal without a great deal of information being supplied.”</p>

A second question was added to the consultation on 20 December 2017.

The Government has now said that councils can increase general council tax next year by an additional 1% without the need for a referendum. Although this is not our proposal we could now increase council tax by 5.99% in 2018/19. If you have any comments about whether or not the council should increase council tax by 5.99% please write these in below.

Overall theme	Issues raised	Number of times mentioned	Quotes
Comments relating to increasing council tax by 5.99% in 2018/19	<p>Comments relating to increasing council tax by 5.99% showed no significant differences to the comments we received relating to increasing council tax by 4.9%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a great deal of concern about the affordability of the proposal, even amongst those that felt increasing council tax by another 1% was reasonable (18 mentions). • Some respondents were worried about being able to afford an above inflationary increase in council tax during a period when they felt people's incomes are not increasing (14 mentions). 	77	<p>"The government don't have my bills to pay how can you justify this amount of a rise I can not afford to have my heating on now."</p> <p>"6% (or just under) is a huge increase for much less services. If you were increasing services it may be worth looking at but some of us have fixed incomes and some of us have none at all and live off our savings."</p> <p>"With inflation and pension increases at 3% this would not be justified."</p> <p>"No increase in council tax, my income hasn't changed yet all my outgoings have."</p> <p>"Again, I am happy to pay this to protect essential front line services such as social care. This will have a financial impact for on my family but it's worth it for the common good."</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some respondents felt an increase of 5.99% was reasonable (15 mentions). Of these, a few (8 mentions) commented that they wanted to see services maintained or protected.• Some respondents did not want to see a 5.99% increase in council tax (24 mentions).• Others took the chance to express their feelings about increasing councillors' allowances (13 mentions).	<p>“I would support an increase of this level, so long as services are maintained and the poorest receive full rebates”</p> <p>“That's ridiculous, you should be looking to cut taxes not raise them. Shame on you”</p> <p>“I think that NCC shouldn't be bandying these figures about to see if anyone notices or cares! Council tax should not be increased just because it can be - only when proper value can no longer be provided without a measured and rational increase, which should be properly justified!”</p> <p>“...Whilst I appreciate that the council has to make savings, taking the money from my bank account when the councilors have just awarded themselves a ridiculous back dated pay rise is insulting. In summary, I'll grit my teeth over the 3% for adult social care, but until the Councilors can show a level of fiscal responsibility to all their staff and constituents rather than just themselves I do not want to pay anymore.”</p> <p>“You can't make cuts, pay yourselves more and ask us to pay more!”</p>
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Additional responses

List responses received in addition to the standard format (eg. petitions, postcard campaigns, letters) and summarise main points

Norfolk County Council Labour Group organised and promoted their own separate consultation. They described this consultation proposal as: “Increase Norfolk County Council council tax by 4.9% on top of last year’s 4.9% increase – you will be paying far more for far worse services.”

Seventy five of the responses contained comments relating to the proposal. Respondents took the opportunity to express their concerns about the decision to raise councillors’ allowances (19 mentions) particularly at a time when salaries are not keeping pace with wider inflationary costs (18 mentions). Some respondents said they felt decisions made by central government have had a direct impact on a local level (22). Overall there was no consensus on the proposed increase. Where people stated they were supportive (14 mentions) they generally felt that increasing council tax would help to maintain and improve services. Where people felt they couldn’t support the proposal (19 mentions) they generally felt concerned about reduced levels of services.

Produced by Stakeholder and Consultation Team

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