**Your views on our proposal to increase council tax by 2.99% in 2019/20**

**Respondent information**

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| **Respondent Numbers** |
| There were 157 responses received for this proposal. Of these, 103 people or 65.6% replied as individuals.   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Responding as: | | | | | An individual / member of the public | 103 | 65.6% |  | | A family | 44 | 28.0% | | On behalf of a voluntary or community group | 1 | 0.6% |  | | On behalf of a statutory organisation | 2 | 1.3% | | On behalf of a business | 0 | 0% | | A Norfolk County Councillor | 0 | 0% |  | | A district or borough councillor | 0 | 0% | | A town or parish councillor | 2 | 1.3% | | A Norfolk County Council employee | 3 | 1.9% | | Not Answered | 2 | 1.3% |  | | Total | **157** | **100%** |  | |

Of the 157 responses received, the majority (154 or 98.1%) were online submissions to the consultation.

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| **How we received the responses** | | |
| Online submission | 154 | 98.1% |
| Email | 3 | 1.9% |
| **Total** | **157** | **100%** |

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| **Responses by groups, organisations and businesses** |
| **Three** respondents told us they were responding on *behalf* of a group, organisation or business. The organisations cited were:   * Chedgrave Parish Council * Norwich Older People’s Forum * South Norfolk Council |

**Summary of findings**

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| **Q1: How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to increase Norfolk County Council’s share of the council tax by 2.99% in 2019/20?** |
| We asked how far people agreed or disagreed with our proposal and 154 people responded to this question. Of these:   * 28 (18.2%) said they strongly agreed * 23 (14.9%) said they agreed * 7 (4.5%) said they neither agreed nor disagreed * 19 (12.3%) said that they disagreed and * 77 (50%) said that they strongly disagreed   We included an open text box so that people could tell us the reason behind their answer and how, if at all, the proposal would affect them.  Of those strongly agreeing (28) or agreeing (23) with the proposal, people said that they felt that services needed to be protected, especially frontline services and adult social care. People also cited the reduction in government funding and increase demands made on the council. Some of those agreeing felt that the increase was small and would have little impact on taxpayers. Some stated support for local taxes and that it was appropriate for the wider community to contribute where they can.  Of those disagreeing (19) or strongly disagreeing (77) with the proposal, people stated that earnings were not keeping up with increases in council tax and that they felt council tax was already expensive. People commented that they felt they were paying more council tax for fewer services, with some saying they felt they got little back in return for the amount they paid. Several said that council tax keeps increasing, that the proposed increase was above inflation and was unaffordable.  Comments by people who said they **neither agree nor disagree** raised some similar themes. One felt that there was not enough information about what the council tax was going to be spent on in order to come to a decision.  “How is it possible to make a judgement on an increase, whether it is fair, reasonable, justified or not without any detail about what the money will be spent on?”  Comments from those who didn’t tick one of the six options and so are shown in the chart above as ‘not answered’ did not reveal any new themes. |

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| **Q2: It is possible that in the future the government could allow councils greater freedom to increase council tax by more than 3% without the need for a referendum. How far do you agree or disagree that Norfolk County Council should consider this?** |
| We asked how far people agreed or disagreed with our proposal and 153 people responded to this question. Of these:   * 15 (9.8%) said they strongly agreed * 14 (9.2%) said they agreed * 6 (3.9%) said they neither agreed nor disagreed * 20 (13.1%) said that they disagreed and * 95 (62.1%) said that they strongly disagreed * 3 (2.0%) said they did not know   We included an open text box so that people could tell us the reason behind their answer.  Of those strongly agreeing (15) or agreeing (14) that the council should consider any future freedoms to increase council tax, the main reasons given were similar for the reasons people gave to agreeing with our proposal to increase our share of council tax in 2019/20. This included the need to protect services.  Of those disagreeing (20) or strongly disagreeing (95) people stated that they felt residents needed to have a say on any larger increases. There was also a concern that the council could exploit council tax payers in order to generate additional income, with some suggesting that there needed to be a cap. Some said they felt that this would signal even bigger increases and that any further increase would be a burden on squeezed families and low earners.  Comments by people who said they **neither agree nor disagree**, **don’t know**, or didn’t tick one of the six options and so are shown in the chart above as ‘**not answered’,** did not reveal any new themes. |

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| **Summary of main themes** |
| * Table 1 Analysis of main comments by people who agree/strongly agree with the proposal to increase Norfolk County Council’s share of the council tax by 2.99% in 2019/20 * Table 2 Analysis of main comments by people who disagree/strongly disagree with the proposal to increase Norfolk County Council’s share of the council tax by 2.99% in 2019/20 * Table 3 Analysis of main comments by people who agree/strongly agree that Norfolk County Council should consider any future government freedoms to increase the council tax by more than 3% without the need for a referendum * Table 4 Analysis of main comments by people who disagree/strongly disagree that Norfolk County Council should consider any future government freedoms to increase the council tax by more than 3% without the need for a referendum  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Table 1 Analysis of main comments by people who agree/strongly agree with the proposal to increase Norfolk County Council’s share of the Council Tax by 2.99% in 2019/20** | | | | | **Overall theme** | **Issues raised** | **Number of times mentioned** | **Quotes** | | Protect services for Norfolk residents | Several agreed with our proposal to increase council tax in order to protect services.  Some said it was particularly important to protect Adult Social Care services / other services. | 15  10 | “Having worked in local government I appreciate the need for more funds to protect frontline services”  “I think council taxes have to increase to maintain services even though both myself and my husband are on pensions so the increase will impact on us”  “The services we all use and appreciate need to be paid for”  “We need to robustly finance these services”  “Our social services and mental health services desperately need more funding. I would select 'strongly agree' if more money was being ringfenced for these services.”  “Caring for the elderly and other adults is part of what we should all be concerned with. Smaller homes mean that families can no longer care for their elderly in their homes when they become unable to manage their own homes. Provision has to be made across all sectors to provide adequate care. A more joined up system would be welcomed and part of the revenue should be to ensure that this happens”  “Services for vulnerable people need to be protected, adult social care and children's services in particular need to be able to expand to cover expanding numbers.” | | Central government funding | Some respondents acknowledged the impact of government funding cuts. | 9 | “With less contributions from central government we need to increase the pot of money so that we do not need to cut back on essential service”  “I support the provision of strong public services paid for out of public revenue. The current government's philosophy of reducing taxation and limiting the revenue raising powers of councils runs counter to that. Cuts in revenue are causing real degradation to public services, which damages the fabric of our society, and so I support the raising of taxes to pay for public services.”  “Because central government funding is decreasing and unless we want to see further cuts to services we have to fill the gap somehow” | | Proposal would have little impact | Some respondents said that the increase was small, and /or they felt it would have little impact. | 8 | “The small yearly increase is worth paying to ensure all services are supported.”  “The increase is small enough that, spread out over the year, it is worth it for the amount of extra money that ought to go towards adult social care.”  “This won't affect me too much. I think that it is a reasonable amount for an important issue. I consider it societies responsibilty to care for more vulnerable individuals.” | | Contributing to local services | A few respondents commented on the wider community contributing to services. | 4 | “Following the governments continued cutting of local government funding raising funds for essential services is paramount, and this should be shared by the wider community who want to live in a great part of the world that Norfolk is.”  “The Council is being asked to do ever more with ever little from central government and we need to fund the services for our community” | |

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| **Table 2 Analysis of main comments by people who disagree/strongly disagree with the proposal to increase Norfolk County Council’s share of the Council Tax by 2.99% in 2019/20** | | | |
| **Overall theme** | **Issues raised** | **Number of times mentioned** | **Quotes** |
| Council tax in relation to incomes and inflation | Many people commented that wages were not keeping up with the increase in council tax.  Some people also mentioned the effect of any increase on those with a fixed income, such as a pension.  People also commented about inflation in general / cost rises elsewhere. | 19  7  12 | “All my bills have increased yet my wages have not, I doubt I am in that alone, any further increase in bills just puts more stress on me”  “At a time when salaries are not keeping place with inflation, this will have an affect on those with lower incomes.”  “these fiogures are ok if i am to get a pay rise at that rate which i will not.so please do NOT bleed us dry.”  “Wages are not increasing as quickly as the council tax rises and this is getting difficult to find the extra money.”  “Wages are not increasing enough to cover all the 'increases' elsewhere. We do not all have endless pockets of money. There are only so many hours a week you can work before you burn out!!!”  “I am on a fixed income and will not be seeing my monies increasing by 2.99%.”  “My company pension will increase by 2.4% So should Council Tax which is already too high”  “cannot afford to pay my council tax on my pension.”  “My salary hasn't increased in over 4 years, cost of living is increasing and additional Council Tax burden will hurt.”  “Hard to keep on paying extra all the time when my pension does not increase sufficiently to cover this -also bearing in mind that food prices have risen significantly over the year - and utility gas and electric continue to rise as well.”  “All my bills have increased yet my wages have not, I doubt I am in that alone, any further increase in bills just puts more stress on me.”  “Due to increase in costs of bills and living.” |
| Cost of council tax | Several people expressed their view that council tax was already expensive.  People also shared their concern about the amount of council tax continuing to increase. | 18  13 | “Council tax is far too high. Taxation levels in the UK are at their highest since the 1960s and last year Norfolk County Council presented taxpayers with an increase in excess of 11%.”  “My Council Tax bill is currently the most expensive bill we have to pay in our household.”  “Already pay a substantial amount.”  “Because i pay enough already and would struggle to pay more.”  “Council tax keeps going up but services aren't improving and more cuts are being done...”  “Last year my council tax was increased by 6% so its ok for you to keep increasing this Tax every year and us the general public just have to take it on the pocket”  “the council tax is going up by far to much every year”  “You have raised council tax by nearly 6 per cent for the last two years including a sizeable expenses increase for yourselves” |
| Affordability | People told us the felt that people could not afford to pay the council tax / proposed increase.  People also talked about family incomes being ‘squeezed’.  There was some concern about the impact the proposal would have on low earners. | 14  7  6 | “A 2.99% increase would mean my rent arrears would escalate, the likelihood of my family’s eviction and homelessness increase significantly. I would visit food banks more often for food. I wouldn’t be able to heat my home sufficiently and my children’s health and welfare would suffer.”  “This council tax rise will mean that I can't afford to live in my house and force me to move my family.”  “We do not have spare funds in our household to fund this”  “with 8 yrs of austerity i see no reason to hit low wage families with more price hikes. they simply cannot afford it.”  “Council tax increases are well above rises in earnings. The squeeze on the working population is becoming intollerable.”  “People have been hit hard enough by the government. It's one thing crippling our public services. Like education and are amazing healthcare service. Now they are hitting our pockets too”  “I think that the council tax is far too much money at the moment when you have young people like me working hard to earn the money to live, and we’re struggling. It’s great that you try to help vulnerable people, but hard working people are vulnerable too and I feel we do not get credit for essentially paying to help other people”  “Raising the council tax would place me in poverty. I work full time and barely earn enough to pay all of my bills as it is” |
| Value for money | Several people commented that whilst council tax was increasing they felt they were receiving fewer services.  In particular, people made reference to the costs of disposing of DIY waste at household waste recycling centres.  Others referred to the lack of streetlights as an issue.  A few said that they did not use council services. | 16  8  5  3 | “We pay enough council tax as it is and see nothing for our money! When weveant the police there are none available because of cutts, when walking home in the night we have no street lamps as they are turned off and also the bins reduced to every other week plus public toilets shut! yet people high up can get a payrise!”  “You already ask a lot and I never see any relevant improvements in the council  For many the council tax charge is the highest bill they have to fund and we are paying a lot more money for less and less services.”  “I feel we pay a large amount as it is with very little change or improvement in the services we expect the money to go to. If anything, in our area, it's becoming more common to see cuts in the services we want and need while money is spent on things we not only don't want, but it will not be beneficial in any way.”  “We see more and more cuts to services yet then we are asked for more of are cash.”  “Council tax continues to rise & services continue to be cut. Stop charging at recycling centres when we have always had this service provided in the past as part of our council tax. Just one example”  “As the payers, we do not see any more for our money that 10 yrs ago or even 20! Infact you've taken things away, such as using the tip!”  “Introducing charging for recycling is just one example where the consequences were not considered and costs increased elsewhere due to "fly tipping".”  “We live in a small rural village and pay market rate council tax for our house. We have no facilities in our village, no play park or family facilities. We have no street lights. Apart from having our bins emptied\* we fail to see what we get for our council tax”  “The streets are dirty, crime is up, poverty and food bank use is up drastically, wages in real terms are going down, we have no street lights where we live, unsafe trees which Norfolk highways and victory housing have been told need removing 2 years ago are still there. fly tipping is up because of fees at the recycling centre, we clear bags of rubbish away every week, erratic general waste collection”  “For me personally I am being asked to pay for additional services which I will not benefit from and we already have a poor infrastructure in terms of connectivity and services.” |
| Reduce staff, pay and conditions and councillor expenses | Some people felt that the council should cut the number of staff and reduce pay and conditions, particularly of senior officers.  People also referred to councillors expenses. | 11  6 | “It is not reasonable to continuously increase the council tax without actually reducing your staff. The number at of staff at county hall can be reduced further and greater efficiency savings found, this should be done first”  “pay cap on council staff, no more sub contractors, bring in house workers.”  “You claim you need more money for services, are you sure it’s not just so council executives can increase their already over inflated pay packets”  “if finances are 'tight' why did you vote yourselves an above inflation expenses increase”  “Councillors gave themselves large pay rises and claim the maximum amount of expenses they can. Why not cut some of this from your budget and allow households more income to invest in the local economy?” |
| Efficiency and waste | People called on the council to save money by being more efficient.  Some people named areas where they thought that the council had been wasteful. | 7  7 | “Whilst you state that there have been efficiency savings there are still significant savings to me made in the back office areas. You need a long hard honest look at these and then you will realise that the rhetoric about service needs is just protecting jobs of council workers. You need to make these cuts before you even consider raising council taxes.”  “There are more significant changes that can be made within the council in terms of greater collaboration between public sectors, reduction in office buildings, reduction in staff by collaboration with other services and sharing of functions such as HR etc.”  “NCC are still overspending on services”  “Norfolk CC is wasting money unnecessarily by removing children from families for no reason. The resulting huge court and legal costs are bankrupting citizens. This wastage must stop first, before any increase is permitted”  “I also hate that the council seem to waste money given to them when they should focus more on things that actually need improving.”  “While I appreciate that you are not getting the money from Gov you used to get perhaps you should review the wasted money paid to consultants and the very high salaries paid to your managers.” |
| Reduce services | Some called for the council to reduce services / cut spending rather than increase council tax. | 5 | “ Cut back on services you arent not legally required to provide and then staffing costs etc!!”  “Please, I beg you to think again. Cut spending. My cupboards are empty. My family are penniless.” |
| Fairness | Some stated that they felt the proposed increase would be unfair. | 5 | “While I sympathise with the financial constraints placed on the Council these are the result of cuts from central Government. We have a Government that is shifting tax from progressive taxes to non-progressive taxes (i.e. Council tax) while claiming to be reducing the tax bill for all. Another example of spin that is making for a less fair society, reducing the tax burden on the wealthy and shifting it to those on lower incomes.”  “Adding more financial strain to families is unfair.” |

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| **Table 3 Analysis of main comments by people who agree/strongly agree that Norfolk County Council should consider any future government freedoms to increase the council tax by more than 3% without the need for a referendum** | | | |
| **Overall theme** | **Issues raised** | **Number of times mentioned** | **Quotes** |
| Protect services for Norfolk residents | Several agreed with that the council should consider any future freedoms to increae council tax in order to protect services. | 8 | “I do not want to see further cuts in services”  “I believe that local services are vital for the people living in the County. It is worth the increase in order to keep services available and feel that local services should be at least maintained at present level if not bettered and that if this requires more funding using more Council Tax to do this” |
| Central government funding | Some respondents acknowledged the impact of government funding cuts. | 3 | “Central government has stripped funding, money has to come from somewhere”  “Increases beyond that are still unfortunately necessary when councils are faced with increased demands and reduced support from Central Government” |

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| **Table 4 Analysis of main comments by people who disagree/strongly disagree that Norfolk County Council should consider any future government freedoms to increase the council tax by more than 3% without the need for a referendum** | | | |
| **Overall theme** | **Issues raised** | **Number of times mentioned** | **Quotes** |
| Engagement | Several said that residents needed to have a say on any larger increases. | 16 | “The public should get a say of how much of our hard earned money the council want with the little we see in return”  “If you expect residents to pay you have to ask”  “should give the paying public the right to say and see the reasons behind proposed changes”  “Families are struggling to make ends meet and freedom to continually increase the council charges without consulting the public that it impacts is unsafe and unfair. Openness and transparency is of utmost importance.” |
| Council tax in relation to incomes and inflation | Several people commented that wages were not keeping up with the increase in council tax.  People also commented about inflation in general / cost rises elsewhere. | 13  6 | “Because wages haven't gone up online with increased in council tax”  “We must have support from residents, therefore dictating significant rises to people on lowing incomes and not receiving cost of living pay rises sends wrong messages.”  “Wages don't inflate like this, it'll be less money in already struggling pockets of families”  “Difficult to keep up with ever rising cost of living”  “As above, the working population are being squeezed and squeezed, real incomes are decreasing. It's hardly worth working any more.” |
| Using council tax to generate more income than necessary | Some expressed concern that the council could exploit council tax payers in order to generate additional income. | 11 | “Even when the Government imposed cap was in place the Police Precept went up and up yet if you are not at Bethel Street you would think they are hiding police officers as you never seem to see them. Therefore why should there be a trust in restraint by the Council. Look at salaries and vanity projects and be more commercial instead of treating Council Tax payers as a cash cow,”  “There would be no stopping NCC of raising tax, you wouldn't need to keep check on your savings”  “It's a terrible idea to even consider such a large increase. Yet again an excuse to take more money from people who don't have it to spare.” |
| Affordability | People talked about family incomes being ‘squeezed’.  People told us the felt that people could not afford to pay the council tax / any further increases.  There was some concern about the impact any increased council tax would have on low earners. | 11  9  6 | “We struggle to pay it as it is band b. This increase would add to my stress and anxiety and no doubt affect my ability to work and therefore my ability to pay”  “Services in this part of the county are poor and pensioners already stretched.”  “I’m all ready in debt with my council tax and if raised further, which bill do I not pay in order to pay the council tax, the electric, water rates, tv licence - you tell me?”  “We do not have the funds as a family to support this”  “The council tax will rise so much that we can't afford to pay it.”  “There are a lot of people in this county that already struggle with poverty and those that are on the verge of it. Would the council be happy to push them into it with extortionate price hikes whist still cutting services and still taking wage increases?”  “Any increase in council tax hurts the poor more than the wealthy. Large increases in council tax, such as the proposed 2.99% increase, are self destructive. The less money the people have after paying their bills (including council tax) the more likely they will need financial support from the council in the long term (for example, no savings and subsidies from the council for social care costs in old age).” |
| Reduce staff, pay and conditions and councillor expenses | Some people felt that the council should cut the number of staff and reduce pay and conditions, particularly of senior officers.  People also referred to councillors expenses. | 9  5 | “I don't mind paying council tax for important public services including looking after the old/disabled/vulnerable members of society but I begrudge paying taxes for non-jobs at the council and an ineffective police force.”  “Because the county council will take from everyone and pay their workers very well until normal people are struggling to keep up their houses that they spend no time in as they are working so much!”  “Freeze councillors pay and use this money to keep council tax as low as possible.” |
| Value for money | Several people commented that whilst council tax was increasing they felt they were receiving fewer services. | 9 | “Where are we suppose to get our rise in income. Services are getting worse even though you get this increase.” |
| Efficiency and waste | People called on the council to save money by being more efficient. | 8 | “I would have concerns that the tendency would always be to raise taxes without such rigorous efficiency savings being attempted.”  “… stop overpaying for everything, get business minded people running things instead of the idiots who make it rain with public money.” |
| Limiting the amount of council tax increase | Some called for there to be a cap /upper limit to the amount of council tax increase. | 8 | “There should be a cap on the amount raised. We do not disagree with raising the amount but not without a limit.”  “I think any more than 3% starts to have a greater impact, particularly for people on low incomes so you shouldn't be allowed to just up it by whatever you want”  “To allow councils the right to raise bills above 3% without a system in place to check the reasonableness of their request would only encourage thoughtless spending by each department as they would know that regardless of their inability to manage their budgets they could simply ask the public to pay more.” |
| Cost of council tax | Some people expressed their view that council tax was already expensive. | 7 | “You have taken enough” |
| Large council tax increases | Some expressed concern that greater freedoms to increase council tax would result in much larger council tax increases. | 6 | “If councils have freedom to do this they could up it by 50% or 100% if they really wanted to.”  “If this were to be allowed then council tax rises could be limitless and could lead to a return of council inefficiencies.” |

**Other information**

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| **Other information relevant to the consultation** |
| Organisations responding expressed the following views not captured elsewhere in this summary:   * The council was asked for their support in promoting the District Council’s Network’s call for a 3% prevention precept for district councils in order to recognise the role that district councils play in prevention. * The council was asked to ensure that any savings and cuts do not impact negatively or cause any pressures on services provided by the wider public-sector system. * That the council should lobby the government for money for local authorities and for the government to maintain the Revenue Support Grant. * One organisation called for an increase in line with inflation, disagreeing strongly with the proposed 2.99% increase on the basis that local issues, in particular highways matters, were not being addressed.   We received a few comments about the consultation materials and process and in general.  “You are gaming the system! 2.99 is so obviously manipulated to stay within the referendum limit it makes the whole budget consultation process a farce. There is zero credibility in this proposed increase which means you are not financially trustworthy.”  “A rise is inevitable. Nothing I say will make any difference.” |

**Produced by Stakeholder Team**

[**ConsultationTeam@norfolk.gov.uk**](mailto:bi@norfolk.gov.uk)