



Norfolk County Council

Your views on our proposal to increase council tax in 2023-2024

Overview

Norfolk County Council will set a new budget on 21st February 2023. In this consultation we are asking for your views on our proposed council tax level for 2023-24, including a proposal for the adult social care precept.

Why we are consulting

We want to find out what people think about our proposed increase in council tax.

We are consulting through:

- This online consultation, which is also available as a paper copy
- Letter to key partners and stakeholders
- Letter to members of the Norfolk Residents' Panel

We are consulting from 21st October to 16th December 2022. Please note that if we receive any consultation responses after this date we cannot guarantee that we will be able to take them into account.

We will feed back the findings from our consultation to our county councillors as part of the evidence they will use to help them come to a decision about our budget proposals.

If you need a copy of this consultation document in a different format please email haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk, call 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

The consultation should take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

The questions start on page 9 of this document.

Personal information, confidentiality and data protection

We will use any personal information to understand how different groups of people feel about our budget proposals.

We will process any personal information we receive from you in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679), the Data Protection Act 2018 and Norfolk County Council's data protection policy and guidelines. This means that Norfolk County Council will hold your personal data and only use it for the purpose for which it was collected, being this consultation. You can find a copy of our privacy statement at <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/privacy>

We won't identify individuals when reporting back our findings and under our record management policy we will keep this information for five years. We will also, under normal circumstances, not pass your personal data on to anyone else. However, we may be asked under access to information laws to publish or disclose some, or all, of the information you provide in response to this consultation. We will only do this where such disclosure will comply with such relevant information laws which include the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

You can choose not to take part in the consultation, to stop responding at any time, or to ignore any personal questions that you do not want to answer.

Introduction

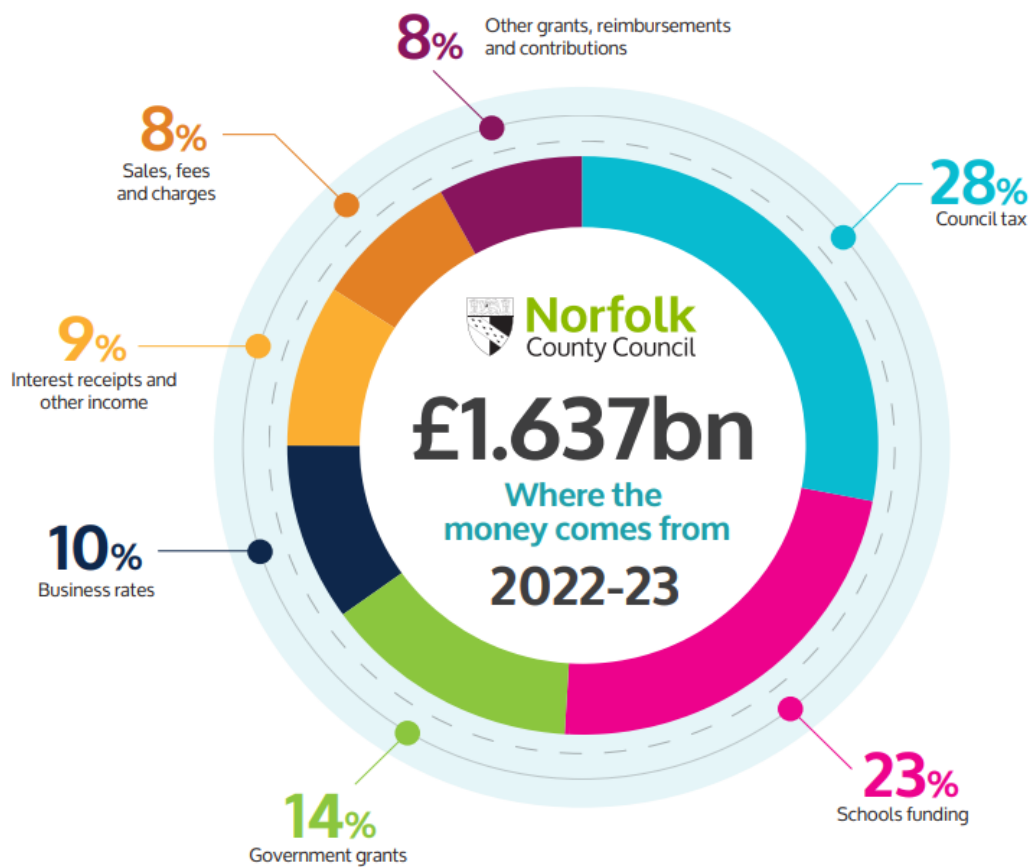
Norfolk County Council is committed to making Norfolk a county where businesses, organisations and communities continue to thrive together. Our [Better Together, For Norfolk](#) strategy sets out the Council's five, interlinked, priorities: a vibrant and sustainable economy; better opportunities for children and young people; healthy, fulfilling and independent lives; strong, engaged and inclusive communities; and a greener, more resilient future. We're proud to provide the valuable services that our residents need and deserve.

However, we continue to face significant challenges which includes higher costs and demand for services, this was the case even before the recent rise in inflation and cost of living. There were two phases to our budget planning; phase one included initial proposals [to save £13 million](#), these were considered by councillors on 4th July and phase 2 savings were considered by councillors on 3rd October, when an additional £19.5 million in savings were presented to councillors. Together, this brings the [total savings to £32.5 million](#).

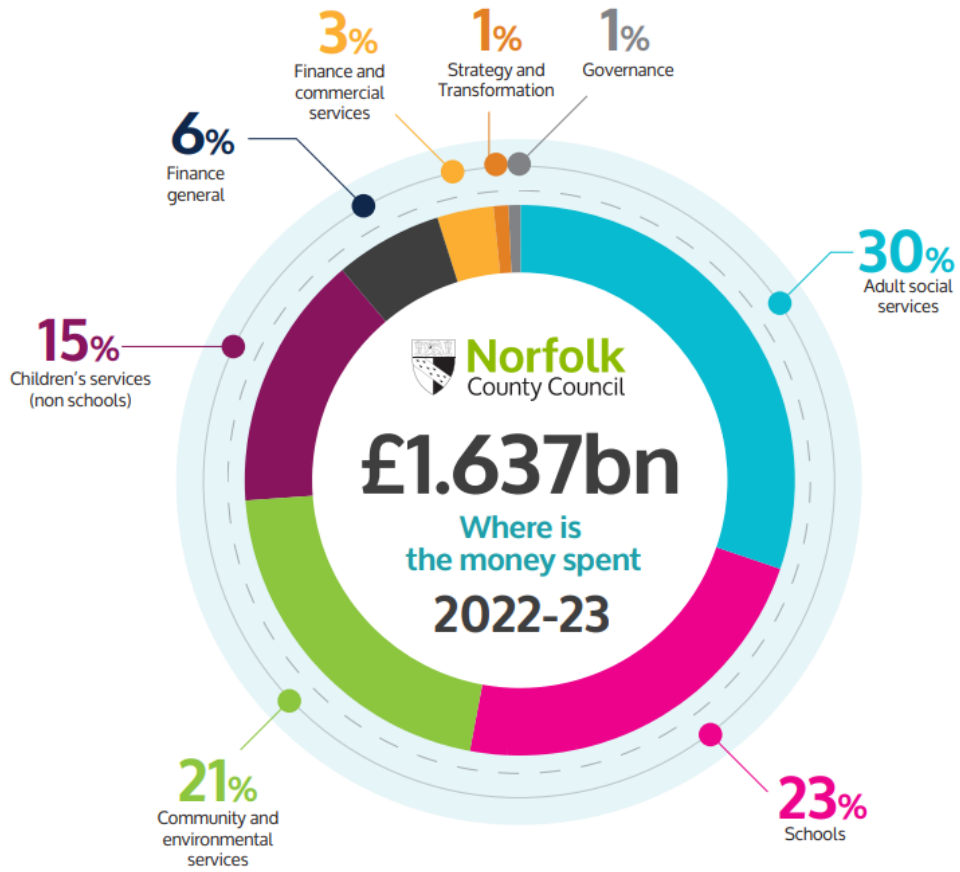
As we continue with huge uncertainty around our finances Norfolk County Council is continuing to work to bridge the gap in our budget with a target of £60 million. As a part of this, we are publishing this proposal to raise council tax and gather wider feedback about future rates of council tax from people across Norfolk. We want to hear your views on our council tax and budget approach to help our elected councillors make the right, even if tough, decisions in agreeing a balanced budget for 2023-2024.

Where the money comes from:

A significant proportion of our funding comes from council tax and we depend on this source of income to deliver vital services across the whole county. Council tax is the only source of funding which the County Council directly controls.



Where the money is spent:



Background to council tax

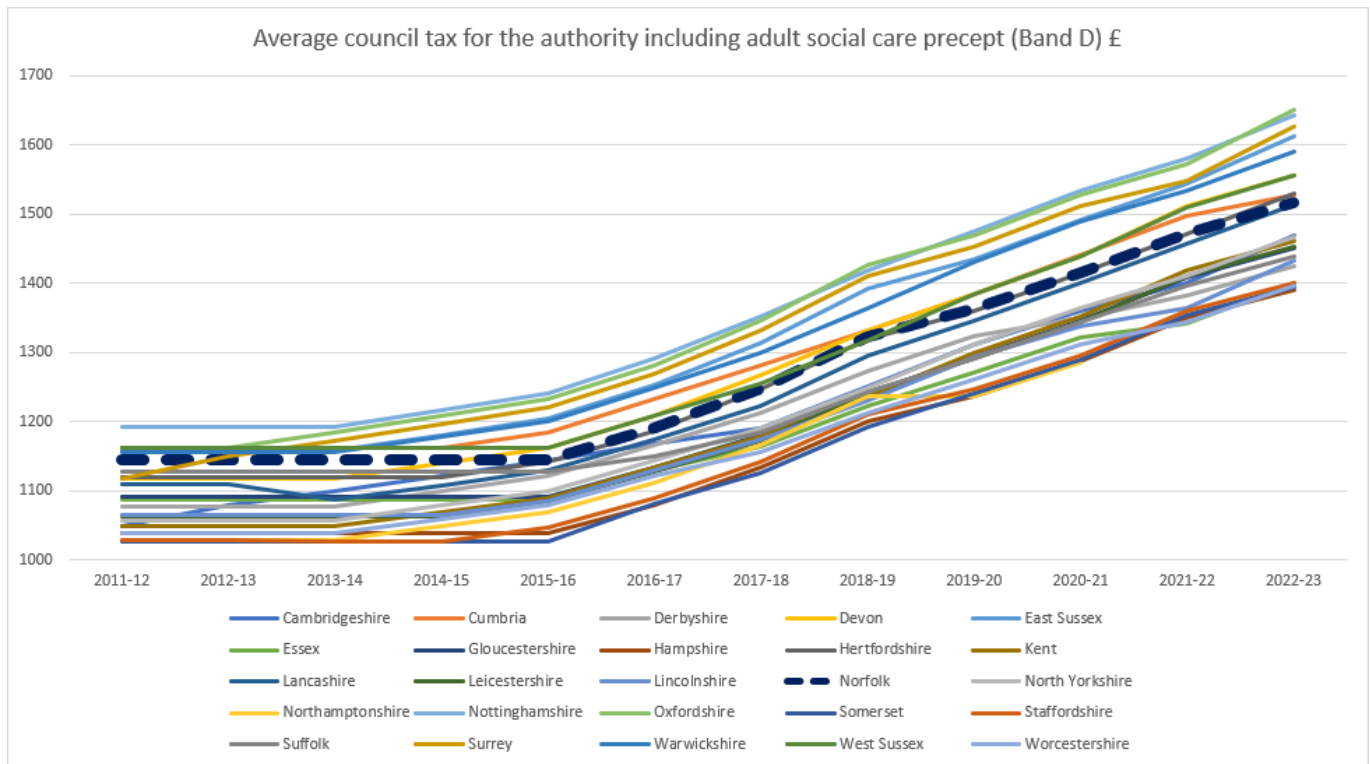
Council tax helps pay for local services and applies to all domestic properties whether owned or rented. How much you pay depends on the valuation band of your property. The responsibility to pay council tax usually lies with the occupier.

Each organisation that provides services in your area sets their own proportion of the council tax bill you receive. These are:

- Norfolk County Council
- your district council
- your parish council (if you have one)
- Norfolk police

Last year, Government set a referendum limit of 2.99%, and this is the level currently included in our financial planning for 2023-24. If the Council wishes to increase council tax by more than the limits set by Government, we would be required to hold a local referendum to agree this. Central Government has not confirmed the limits for 2023-24, but they are expected to be 2% per year for increases in general council tax. In addition, councils responsible for social care, like Norfolk, are expected to be able to increase the Adult Social Care precept by up to 1% per year.

Many other local authorities have and continue to raise council tax:¹



1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/council-tax-levels-set-by-local-authorities-in-england-2022-to-2023>

Our council tax questions

To help us deal with our cost pressures and invest in vital services our current budget planning is based on an assumption to raise general council tax by 1.99% in 2023-24. However, final decisions about the level of council tax will be made by the Council on 21st February 2023, taking into account the Council's overall funding and budgetary position. We are therefore seeking your views about different levels of council tax increase. The money you pay as part of Norfolk County Council's general share of the council tax helps fund the costs of all the services provided by the Council and is not linked to specific services.

Adult Social Care is a collection of wide-ranging activities aimed at helping people who may be older or living with disability or physical or mental illness. For some, this may include access to an ability to draw upon services that provide "personal care" either in their own homes or in more formal settings such as a care home. However, for many Social Care is about providing support to potentially overcome obstacles and enable people to live the lives they want to lead in a place they can call home. The County Council spends over £1m a day of our funding, that's 30% of our total spend, in providing support through our Adult Social Services department.

To help us maintain our adult social care services our budget planning is based on an assumption outlined in our Cabinet paper on 3 October, to increase the adult social care precept by 1% in 2023-24. A final decision about the level of the adult social care precept will also be made by the Council on 21st February 2023. The money we raise from the adult social care precept is ringfenced, this means we can only spend it on adult social care services. The adult social care precept was introduced by Government in 2015 and has been part of the council tax bill since 2016-17.

The effect our proposals around different increases in council tax would have

An increase at the currently assumed level of 2.99% would mean in 2023-24 Norfolk County Council's council tax charge for a typical Band D home would see an indicative increase of approximately £0.87 per week or £45 for the year (made up of £30 for general 1.99% increase + £15 for 1% Adult Social Care Precept increase) and the charge for a Band D home would be around £1,562.

Q. How far would you agree or disagree with increasing Norfolk County Council's share council tax (including the Adult Social Care precept) by 2.99% in 2023-24? Please tick (✓) one answer only:

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know

Q. Why do you say that? Please write in the box below:

The average council tax increase since 2016-17 for Norfolk County Council has been 4.10%. An increase at this level would mean in 2023-24 Norfolk County Council's council tax charge for a typical Band D home would see an indicative increase of approximately £1.19 per week or £62 for the year and the charge for a Band D home would be around £1,579.

Q: How far would you agree or disagree with increasing Norfolk County Council's share of council tax (including the Adult Social Care precept) by 4.10% in 2023-24? Please tick (✓) one answer only:

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know

Q. Why do you say that? Please write in the box below:

Like household bills, the cost of the services that the Council provides are impacted by the level of inflation. The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) in September 2022 confirmed inflation is currently running at 10.1%. An increase at this level, as advised by the Council's Chief Financial Officer, would mean in 2023-24 Norfolk County Council's council tax charge for a typical Band D home would see an indicative increase of approximately £2.94 per week or £153 for the year and the charge for a Band D home would be around £1,670. It is likely that this would require a local referendum to be held

Q: How far would you agree or disagree with increasing Norfolk County Council’s share of council tax (including the Adult Social Care precept) in line with current rates of inflation in 2023-24? Please tick (✓) one answer only:

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don’t know

Q. Why do you say that? Please write in the box below:

Our budget approach 2023-24

At our Cabinet Meeting on 3 October 2023, an additional £19.5 million in savings were presented to councillors, bringing the [total new proposed savings for 2023-24 to £32.5 million](#). We continue to face significant challenges and enormous uncertainty as we work to bridge a £60 million budget gap, one of the largest the Council has faced.

At this stage we know Norfolk has started to make a strong post-Covid economic recovery. However, the county is set to be hit by another sharp slowdown compounded by inflation reaching a new highpoint in July with financial experts expecting prices to continue to increase. This, in turn could have a knock-on impact on demand for our services, particularly those who are vulnerable along with those estimated 95,000 household across Norfolk that are in fuel poverty.

Although some Government funding announcements have been made, including the Energy Price Guarantee,² there remains significant uncertainty about what the detailed policy and funding direction from central Government will be. At this point, the Government's Spending Review announcement in September 2021 is the most recent available information to inform our planning for 2023-24. This suggested that any additional funding for local government in both 2023-24 and 2024-25, other than grants for the new social care charging reforms, would need to come from council tax.

We are proposing to make savings by, wherever possible, cutting running costs and reducing the impact on frontline services. Our aim is to protect services for the most vulnerable while ensuring that the Council becomes more financially resilient and sustainable for the future. To this end, we are also embarking on a strategic review of the council, to improve the way it operates and save between £15 million and £20 million. Once detailed proposals are developed and checked, they will be added to the budget for 2023-24.

Our [strategic and financial planning papers have been published](#) and provide details of our budget approach. If, once the budget is agreed and the Council starts to implement all proposals, we identify that any of the proposals impact on delivering services, we may need to carry out detailed consultation on those proposals in the future.

2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-bills-support/energy-bills-support-factsheet-8-september-2022>

We welcome any comments you have, either about our budget approach or our savings which are attached.

Q: Do you have any comments about our budget challenge and savings? If yes, please write in box below.

How we will make our decision and report back to you

We will take a report about the findings of this consultation to the Council Cabinet in January 2023. We will set a new budget on 21st February.

Our county councillors will consider the consultation responses we receive very carefully. In particular, they will take into account:

- The impact of any proposal on individuals, groups or communities and in particular on people identified as having 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. As well as this equality impact assessment, councillors will consider the impact of proposals on rural areas
- The views of people and stakeholders consulted
- The evidence of need and what is proven to work effectively and well
- The financial and legal positions and any constraints at the time
- Any potential alternative options, models or ideas for making the savings.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this and respond.

You can fill in our online feedback form at: www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget

You can send back a paper feedback form to:

Freepost Plus RTCL-XSTT-JZSK, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH.

However, if you want to help the council save money please use a stamp and send to this address: Stakeholder and Consultation Team, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, NR1 2DH.

You may wish to keep a copy of your response to our consultation for your own records.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please email us at haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk or contact Customer Services on 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.