

North Northamptonshire Council 2021-22 Budget Consultation

Group Facilitator's Feedback Form

Overview

The first ever draft revenue budget for North Northamptonshire Council was approved for consultation by the shadow executive on 7th December 2020 and now we're seeking views on the proposals for when the council comes into existence in April next year.

The total draft revenue budget for 2021/2022 is £284.8 million with the new authority providing all local government services in the north of the county including looking after the vulnerable, being responsible for housing and economic regeneration, leisure and tourism and waste disposal and collection.

Further integration of adult social care and health services is also key to the future, working towards a new way of delivering important services. This makes sense as not only is there a financial efficiency but also it is much less complicated for those of you out there who want to access the services.

While the wider local government transformation programme is on target to deliver over £80m of savings annually across all eight councils in North and West Northamptonshire, like for many councils, the Covid-19 pandemic has created pressure no one could have foreseen on finances for the coming year.

A lot of budget savings proposals relate to decisions that have already been made in previous budgets, the continuation of projects and financial adjustments to budgets with no service impact.

The consultation focusses on the new proposals for draft budget 2021-22 that will likely effect residents and service users:

- Proposal to harmonise Council Tax rates for North Northamptonshire in the first year of the new council via an average Council Tax approach
- Proposal that Council Tax is increased by 4.99%, comprising 1.99% core tax and a 3% adult social care precept
- Fees and Charges
- Draft Capital Programme 2021-25 and Capital Strategy 2021-22

The appendix section of this form contains the explanatory information to the above proposals provided within the online consultation questionnaire, which is available on the following website.

However, you can comment on anything with the Draft Budget.

This form is to help assist a group of respondents to record and provide their feedback as a collective group (for example a community group) to one or more of the consultation proposals.

If you would like to respond to the consultation as an individual, or if you are responding on behalf of an organisation, then we would encourage you to complete the [online questionnaire](#) (paper copies are available upon request).

Please read the related documents to gain a better understanding of the budget proposals before you comment on them.

All of the supporting documentation is available on North Northamptonshire Council Draft Budget 2021-22 Consultation page via the following link:

<https://futurenorthants.citizenspace.com/north/budget-2021-22/>

About you

Name of facilitator(s)	
Name of organisation/group	
Date of meeting	
Number of participants	

Which of the below customer categories best describes the participants?

(Please tick (✓) all that apply)

Older People	<input type="checkbox"/>
Younger Adults	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental Health	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black or Minority Ethnic Group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify):	
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Individual equality monitoring forms completed? *(Please refer to page 6. (This is optional and if collected facilitators should allow participations to provide this information confidentially. Facilitators may wish to print and hand out individual sheets)*

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Feedback on proposals

Please comment on the proposal/s that may affect/interest your group. Please duplicate the following sheet containing questions 1 to 3 if you wish to provide feedback about more than one proposal.

Question 1

Please tell us which proposal you wish to comment on?

Question 2

**Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal, and why?
Please tick (✓) relevant answer**

Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tend to agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tend to disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>

2a) If you would like to tell us why you answered the previous question in the way that you did, please do so here:

Question 2a) continued:

Question 3

If you feel this proposal would have a negative impact, please tell us what you think that impact would be, along with any suggestions on how any potential negative impacts could be mitigated?

Other comments

The budget report sets out the latest estimated funding position, service budget pressures, key financial risks and challenges influencing the development of the new North Northamptonshire Council's financial plans for 2021-22 and the ongoing financial impact of those plans, together with the longer term estimates of funding and spending requirements.

Question 4

If we do not go ahead with any of these proposals, do you have any other ideas about how we could save the same amount of money or generate the same amount of income as outlined within the Draft Budget 2021-22?

Question 5

Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the savings proposals in this draft budget?

Thank you for comments.

Please return your discussion feedback to us by **29th January 2021**.

Email Address: futurenorthants@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Postal address: Budget Consultation response
North Northamptonshire Shadow Authority
Sheerness House
Meadow Road
Kettering
NN16 8TL

Optional About you (equality monitoring)

It would be really helpful for us to know about the participants who are responding to this consultation. This will help us to make sure that we are talking to a diverse range of people. Completion of this equality monitoring information is voluntary. Any information provided will be treated confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation and regulations.

1) Are you: (Please tick the appropriate box)

Male Female Prefer not to say

2) Are you currently Pregnant or have you had a baby in the last 6 months? (Please tick the appropriate box)

Yes No Prefer not to say

3) How old are you? (Please tick the appropriate box)

0 to 9 10 to 19 20 to 29 30 to 49
 50 to 64 65 to 74 75+ Prefer not to say

4) Do you have a disability? (Please tick the appropriate box)

Yes No Prefer not to say

4a) If 'Yes', please tick the appropriate box(es) which best describes your disability?

Mental Health Physical Disability Hearing Impairment
 Learning Disability Sight Impairment Other

5) What is your religion or belief? (Please tick the appropriate box)

None Christian Hindu Jewish
 Muslim Sikh Buddhist Prefer not to say
 Any other religion (please write in)

6) How would you describe your ethnic origin? (Please tick the appropriate box)

White
 White British White Irish Indian Pakistani
 White Gypsy or Irish Traveller Other White Background Bangladeshi Chinese
 Other Asian Background

Asian or Asian British

Mixed / Multiple ethnic Background
 White & Black Caribbean White & Black African Caribbean African
 White & Asian Other mixed / multiple background Other Black Background

Black or Black British

Other ethnic group
 Arab Any other ethnic group (please state)
 Prefer not to say

7) If you are 16 or over which of the following options best describes how you think of yourself? (Please tick the appropriate box)

Bisexual Gay Man Gay Woman/ Lesbian
 Heterosexual Other Prefer not to say

8) Is your sex (called your gender identity) the same as the gender you were assigned at birth? (Please tick the appropriate box)

Yes No Prefer not to say

9) Are you: (Please tick the appropriate box)

Married Single Civil Partnership Co-habiting/Living together
 Widow/widower Other Prefer not to say

Appendix

This section contains the explanatory information to our main proposals, which is provided within the online consultation questionnaire.

All of the supporting documentation is available on North Northamptonshire Council Draft Budget 2021-22 Consultation page via the following link:
<https://futurenorthants.citizenspace.com/north/budget-2021-22/>

Proposed changes to Council Tax

Historically, across the North of Northamptonshire different levels of Council Tax were set in each of the borough and district areas. This came about because, whilst the proportion of the Council Tax bill that was set by the County Council was the same for all parts of the County, the rates set by the Districts and Boroughs were different.

With one new authority we need to set one single rate of Council Tax, doing this through a process known as Council Tax harmonisation.

This is a process where the rates of Council Tax are adjusted over a suitable period to arrive at a single consistent rate across the new authority area.

The aim is to both maximise Council Tax yield while setting an acceptable level single rate of Council Tax for North Northamptonshire.

Just how we can go about this is determined by law but essentially there are two ways in which it can be done:

1. **Average Council Tax** approach – This approach uses a **weighted average of the current North Northamptonshire Authorities** to calculate new Council Tax Bands from A – H. Council Tax income is crucial to the viability of the new unitary, this option maximises income for the new North Northamptonshire Council and would ensure that there are no reductions in service provision as a result of reduced council tax yield from the alternative option. **This is our preferred option and the one used in the draft budget.**
2. **Individual Area Council Tax** approach – This approach would not maximise Council Tax yield for the new Council, this is because we would be limited to the referendum limit on the lowest Band D in North Northamptonshire. So, the current Authority with the lowest Band D in North Northamptonshire would only be allowed to increase Council Tax by the referendum limit, and the others would harmonise to that level. The demographics in the North means budget pressures are high and in order for the new Council to meet its budget demands and consider future budget pressures this option would be the least viable. For this reason, **this option has been dismissed.**

This proposed change will apply to all bands of Council Tax (all properties through from Bands A-H). **This will impact on all residents within North Northamptonshire who are eligible to pay Council Tax.** However, our examples below are based on Band D.

Information in the draft budget assumes that Council Tax harmonisation will start from 1st April 2021.

The equality impact assessment for this proposal is available on the [Future Northants North website](#).

Example: What would this mean for a Band D property?

Data published by the Government for Council Tax for 2020/21 shows there are 58 Unitary Councils in England and the highest Council Tax Band D is £1,848.39, the average Band D for Unitaries is £1,542 therefore, the average for North Northamptonshire based on 2020/21 of £1,460.04 is well below the highest rate and the average rate in England.

The amount proposed in the Draft Budget for 2021/22 is £1,532.90 which includes an increase up to the referendum limit of 4.99%.

As an example, the Council Tax for 2020-21 levied for each of the individual areas (based on a Band D property) is set out below. The proposed Harmonised Rate for Band D (before any annual increase) is £1,460.04, the composition of this being the weighted average of sovereign councils.

- Corby Borough Council £1,474.92
- East Northamptonshire Council £1,434.07
- Kettering Borough Council £1,490.81
- Borough Council of Wellingborough £1,441.30

It should be noted that these figures do not include the Council Tax for individual town and parish councils or the Council Tax set for fire and police by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

These are not within the scope of this consultation and these amounts are added afterwards before people receive their final bills.

Proposed changes to Council Tax - Harmonise rates

The council has a statutory requirement to harmonise Council Tax rates for North Northamptonshire.

The proposal is to do this in the first year of the new council. The rationale for harmonising Council Tax in the first year is so all residents are paying the same rate for the same services from day 1.

If we do not implement a harmonised rate in the first year then there would be different rates of Council Tax in the 4 areas of North Northamptonshire.

Proposed changes to Council Tax - Increased rate

As well as harmonising Council Tax, the Council is also proposing to increase Council Tax up to the level currently allowed by the government, without triggering a referendum – 4.99%. This increased rate includes a **general increase of 1.99%** and the allowable **adult social care precept increase, which is 3%**.

By law, Councils are required to have a scheme to help people on low incomes to pay their council tax. The Local Council Tax Support Scheme (also known as Council Tax Reduction) is to help people on low income to pay their Council Tax.

Local Council Tax Support Schemes (LCTSS) were introduced from April 2013 when Council Tax Benefit was abolished and replaced by locally agreed schemes. Those of pensionable age are protected by the prescribed regulations set out by central government.

The Council has already consulted on the harmonisation of this scheme earlier in the year and details can be found on the [Future Northants Consultation Hub](#).

As a reminder, the equality impact assessment for this proposal is available on the [Future Northants North website](#).

Example: What would this mean for a Band D property?

This 4.99% increase would result in a 2021-22 Band D Council Tax increase for North Northamptonshire Council of £72.86 per year, which is £1.40 per week.

- A 1.99% general increase would result in an increase of £29.06 per year (£0.56 per week) for 2021/22 for the average Band D Council Tax payer.
- A 3% adult social care precept increase would result in an increase of £43.80 per year (£0.84 per week) for 2021/22 for the average Band D Council Tax payer.

Fees and charges

Income from fees and charges represent an important source of funds to the Council and enable a range of services to be provided within the area and beyond.

A new draft Fees and Charges Policy has been written to establish a framework by which fees and charges levied by the North Northamptonshire Council are agreed and regularly reviewed. For further detail, please see the [Draft Fees and Charges Policy](#).

Due to this being the first year of setting this policy and its first budget process, fees and charges within the previous District & Borough Councils have been reviewed as

to whether harmonisation is required based on statute, recharging and revised costs from an aggregated team moving forward perspective and certain categories of fees and charges have been prioritised to be harmonised for Vesting Day including:

- Pre-Planning fees
- Bulky Waste Collections
- Taxi Licencing
- Houses in Multiple Occupation Licencing

For further details please see the [Draft Harmonisation 2021-22 Fees and Charges](#) schedule.

Details of each District and Borough Councils current fees and charges are available on their websites:

- [Corby Borough Council](#)
- [East Northamptonshire Council](#)
- [Kettering Borough Council](#)
- [Borough Council of Wellingborough](#)

Where these fees and charges have not been harmonised for Vesting Day, separate rates between areas of North Northamptonshire will remain in place and these will be reviewed either during the year or prior to the setting of the 2022-23 budget setting with a view to harmonise where possible over the next 2-3 years.

In the meantime, it is proposed that the District & Borough fees and charges that will not be harmonised within 2021-22 will have an inflationary increase of 2%.

The previous County Council fees and charges are also being reviewed for any required changes and will form part of the overall Fees and Charges Schedule. Details of these will be available shortly and will be subject to their own questionnaire, should any changes be proposed.

Final details of all fees and charges will be published as part of the final report that will be approved in February 2021.

Draft Capital Programme 2021-25 and Capital Strategy 2021-22

The Council needs to optimise the use of its assets so they have a positive impact on costs and help to transform services so they are sustainable for the future.

The Capital Strategy sets out the key objectives and broad principles to be applied by the Council when considering capital investment and its funding. It provides the context for how the Council's Medium Term Capital Programme seeks to support the realisation of the Council's vision and corporate objectives.

Please see the draft [Shadow Executive Committee meeting Draft Capital Programme 2021-25 and Capital Strategy report](#) and its [appendices](#) for further details.