

## Council Tax Precept Consultation

### Background

The legal requirements for council tax increases are primarily governed by the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Localism Act 2011. A consultation with the public was launched on 7 January 2025 on a £5 increase in the council tax precept for the year ahead. The consultation ended at 5pm on Monday 3 February 2025, the results are set out below.

Appendix F of this report also contains the Fire Brigade Union response to the budget.

### Analysis of the budget consultation – January 2025

Total respondents: 602.

#### 1. To what extent do you support Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service increasing its council tax precept in line with the levels set out above?

Level of support	Numbers	Percentage
Strongly support	346	57%
Support	113	19%
Neither support nor oppose	37	6%
Oppose	37	6%
Strongly oppose	69	11%
Don't know	0	0%

#### 2. Comments

306 comments (51% of respondents).

##### Sentiment Analysis

- Positive Sentiment:** Many comments express strong support for the fire service, acknowledging its vital role and the importance of maintaining high standards. For example, comments like "Fully agree for the life saving they do while endangering their own", "Vitality important to support this organisation", and "Fire fighters do an immense job, putting themselves in danger to protect and save the public" highlight the appreciation and willingness to support the fire service financially.
- Negative Sentiment:** Some comments reflect concerns about the financial burden of increased taxes and the perceived inefficiency in spending. For instance, comments such as "Council tax increases are not justified", "I pay enough council tax, keeps going up but services keep getting reduced", and "The public sector is addicted to other people's money and repeatedly issues pleas for more without ever looking internally to why it is needed" indicate dissatisfaction with the proposed budget increase and the current financial management.

### Percentage Breakdown

- Positive Sentiment: 45%
- Neutral Sentiment: 25%
- Negative Sentiment: 30%

### Key Areas of Support

1. **Recognition of Service:** Many comments acknowledge the essential and life-saving work of the fire service. For example, "The fire Service is one of the most vital assets we have" and "A vital service that deserves as much funding as possible".
2. **Willingness to Pay More:** Several comments indicate a willingness to pay more to support the fire service. For example, "Happy to pay more to go towards resources, wages etc. necessities" and "I would much rather contribute a fiver a year more on essential public service workers than pay anything towards vanity projects or other fluff that money gets wasted on".

### Key Areas of Negativity

- **Financial Concerns:** Many comments express concerns about the financial impact of the proposed budget increase. For example, "Cost of living pressures make any increase unpalatable" and "Council tax is already expensive, surely extra income could be generated by alternative means".
- **Perceived Inefficiency:** Some comments criticise the perceived inefficiency and wasteful spending within the fire service. For example, "Better management should be able to make savings without being a burden on the already cash-strapped residents" and "The public sector is addicted to other people's money and repeatedly issues pleas for more without ever looking internally to why it is needed"

Overall, while there is strong support for the fire service and recognition of its importance, there are also significant concerns about the financial impact of the proposed budget increase and the perceived inefficiency in spending. Several comments were made in response to social media posts about the consultation, which reflect the same sentiments as comments made via the direct consultation feedback.

This sentiment has been analysed by Microsoft Copilot and there has been criticism about the equality questions in the survey which increases the negative sentiment.

**3. Are you answering the survey as:**

Status	Number	Percentage
A Lancashire resident	546	91%
A Lancashire business owner	3	1%
An employee of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service	42	7%
A representative of a partner organisation	0	0%
Public representative such as councillor or MP.	5	1%
None of the above	3	1%

**4. Which area of Lancashire is your home or business in?**

District	Number	Percentage
Blackburn with Darwen	40	7%
Blackpool	43	7%
Burnley	42	7%
Chorley	47	8%
Fylde	45	8%
Hyndburn	36	6%
Lancaster	51	9%
Pendle	32	5%
Preston	55	9%
South Ribble	47	8%
Ribble Valley	46	8%
Rossendale	37	6%
West Lancashire	36	6%
Wyre	41	7%

**5. What was your gender assigned at birth?**

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	271	46%
Female	282	48%
Prefer not to say	35	6%

**6. Which of the following best reflects how you would describe your gender identity?**

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	268	45%
Female	282	48%
Non-binary	2	1%
Prefer not to say	39	6%

## 7. Does your gender identity align with the gender assigned to you at birth?

Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	540	92%
No	3	1%
Prefer not to say	41	7%

## 8. What is your age?

Age range	Number	Percentage
16-19	1	0%
20-24	6	1%
25-29	10	2%
30-34	29	5%
35-39	36	6%
40-44	37	6%
45-49	38	7%
50-54	58	10%
55-59	53	9%
60-64	69	12%
Over 65	247	42%

## 9. What is your religion and belief?

Religion	Number	Percentage
Buddhist	2	0%
Christian	335	57%
Hindu	1	0%
Jewish	0	0%
Muslim	11	2%
Sikh	0	0%
No religion	167	29%
Decline	45	8%
Other	23	4%

## 10. What is your ethnicity, cultural or racial origin?

Ethnicity, cultural or racial origin	Number	Percentage
White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	524	91%
White – Irish	4	1%
White – Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1	0%
Any other White background – please describe below in the 'Other' section	6	1%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups – White and Black Caribbean	1	0%

<b>Ethnicity, cultural or racial origin</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups – White and Black African	1	0%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups – White and Asian	2	0%
Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background – please describe in the 'Other' section	0	0%
Asian/Asian British – Indian	7	1%
Asian/Asian British – Pakistani	5	1%
Asian/Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0%
Asian/Asian British – Chinese	0	0%
Asian/Asian British – Any other Asian background	0	0%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – African	1	0%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – Caribbean	0	0%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – Any other Black/African/Caribbean background	0	0%
Other ethnic group – Arab	1	0%
Other	25	4%

### 11. What is your sexual orientation?

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Bi/bisexual	17	3%
Gay	6	1%
Lesbian	6	1%
Heterosexual/straight	475	82%
Other term	5	1%
Prefer not to say	70	12%

### 12. Do you have a disability?

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	121	21%
No	408	71%
Decline	49	8%

### 13. How did you hear about this survey

<b>Channel</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Social media	132	22%
In the Know email	403	68%
Hot Topics	4	1%

## Appendix E

<b>Channel</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Prevention Matters	1	0%
Protection Matters	1	0%
Media	12	2%
LFRS employee	15	3%
LFRS internal channels	13	2%
LFRS website	11	2%