

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 11 December 2025 for a £5 increase in the council tax precept for the year ahead. The consultation ended at 5pm on 4 February 2026, the results are set out below.

The consultation was promoted during the period through a variety of channels:

- Seven articles were published in the media with an opportunity to see of 17.2 million.
- Featured in Hot Topics and Prevention Matters stakeholder newsletters and 351 key stakeholders emailed directly.
- Details were sent to 84,572 subscribers of our In The Know public e-newsletter.
- Social media posts reached 73,939 people.
- Community groups were engaged by community fire safety officer with some paper surveys completed.
- Promoted internally on the Service’s intranet and staff newsletter.

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

Analysis of the budget consultation – February 2026

Total respondents: 970.

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	576	59%
Support	160	16%
Neither support nor oppose	54	6%
Oppose	48	5%
Strongly oppose	124	13%
Don't know	8	0%

2. Comments

490 comments (50% of respondents).

Positive Sentiment

A strong majority of comments express clear support for Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, recognising its essential, life-saving role and the need to maintain high standards of emergency response. Many respondents emphasise that the proposed increase is modest, reasonable, or “worth every penny.” Examples include:

- “LFRS provide an excellent service and I believe we need to ensure that the high level of service is maintained by this relatively small increase in the precept.”
- “Happy to pay this modest increase for such a professional public service.”
- “The fire service is vital, so a small increase as proposed will not be noticed for the vast majority of residents.”

These comments demonstrate widespread appreciation for the work of firefighters and a willingness to financially support the continuity of services.

Negative Sentiment

A substantial minority of comments reflect concerns about the financial burden on households, particularly during the ongoing cost of living crisis. These respondents often feel that council tax is already too high or increasing too frequently, and some express frustration about perceived inefficiencies or unnecessary spending. Others oppose the principle of raising local taxes instead of using central government funding. Representative comments include:

- “Council tax just seems to increase year after year. As a pensioner even small increases matter.”
- “Too many increases to the cost of living.”
- “The government should fund this, not residents who are already struggling.”

There is also a cluster of comments criticising equality and diversity spending or the inclusion of equality questions in the survey, which contributes to negative sentiment.

Neutral Sentiment

A smaller proportion of respondents take a neutral or conditional stance. These comments often seek additional information, express uncertainty about the cumulative impact of future rises, or state that support depends on how the funding is allocated.

Examples include:

- “It is difficult to say whether I support the increase without knowing if we are getting good value for money already.”
- “Would this guarantee that appliances stay on the run and stations stay fully staffed?”
- “I need to know what other services are planning to increase before I decide.”

Neutral comments frequently request reassurance around transparency and efficiency.

Percentage Breakdown

- Positive Sentiment: 59%
- Neutral Sentiment: 16%
- Negative Sentiment: 25%

Overall Summary

Overall, there is strong support for Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, with many residents recognising the essential role it plays in protecting lives and expressing willingness to contribute financially to sustain its performance. However, concerns also exist around the broader affordability of council tax, value for money, and perceived inefficiencies in spending. The inclusion of equality related questions appears to have increased some negative sentiment.

Sentiment patterns captured through social media responses broadly match those obtained through the direct consultation channels. Please note, respondents do not have to answer the equalities questions to take part in the consultation but it helps the Service understand if we are talking to all parts of the community.

3. Are you answering the survey as:

Status	Number	Percentage
A Lancashire resident	923	99%
A Lancashire business owner	5	0.5%
An employee of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service	16	2%
A representative of a partner organisation	3	0.5%
Public representative such as councillor or MP.	9	1%
None of the above	9	1%

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

District	Number	Percentage
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Blackburn with Darwen	78	8%
Blackpool	106	11%
Burnley	80	8%
Chorley	75	8%
Fylde	67	7%
Hyndburn	44	5%
Lancaster	94	10%
Pendle	34	4%
Preston	95	10%
South Ribble	75	8%
Ribble Valley	33	3%
Rossendale	42	4%
West Lancashire	63	7%
Wyre	80	8%

5. What was your gender assigned at birth?

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	400	42%
Female	492	52%
Prefer not to say	62	6%

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

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	397	42%
Female	486	51%
Non-binary	1	0.5%
Prefer not to say	67	7%

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

Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	873	92%
No	8	1%
Prefer not to say	69	7%

8. What is your age?

Age range	Number	Percentage
16-19	2	0%
20-24	8	1%
25-29	23	2%
30-34	33	3%
35-39	61	6%

40-44	39	4%
45-49	51	5%
50-54	78	8%
55-59	68	7%
60-64	116	12%
Over 65	470	50%

9. What is your religion and belief?

Religion	Number	Percentage
Buddhist	5	1%
Christian	554	58%
Hindu	1	0%
Jewish	3	0%
Muslim	20	2%
Sikh	0	0%
No religion	249	26%
Decline	81	9%
Other	37	4%

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

Ethnicity, cultural or racial origin	Number	Percentage
White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	886	92%
White – Irish	7	1%
White – Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0	0%
Any other White background – please describe below in the 'Other' section	6	1%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups – White and Black Caribbean	2	0%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups – White and Black African	0	0%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups – White and Asian	3	0%
Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background – please describe in the 'Other' section	1	0%
Asian/Asian British – Indian	7	1%
Asian/Asian British – Pakistani	10	1%
Asian/Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0%
Asian/Asian British – Chinese	1	0%
Asian/Asian British – Any other Asian background	0	0%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British – African	0	0%

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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	3	0%
Other	34	4%

11. What is your sexual orientation?

Sexual Orientation	Numbers	Percentage
Bi/bisexual	26	3%
Gay	17	2%
Lesbian	7	1%
Heterosexual/straight	749	80%
Other term	5	0%
Prefer not to say	129	14%

12. Do you have a disability?

Disability	Number	Percentage
Yes	213	23%
No	646	69%
Decline	81	9%

13. How did you hear about this survey

Channel	Number	Percentage
Social media	208	22%
In the Know email	662	70%
Hot Topics	3	0%
Prevention Matters	9	1%
Protection Matters	0	0%
Media	20	2%
LFRS employee	18	2%
LFRS internal channels	6	1%
LFRS website	19	2%
Community meeting	4	1%