

Draft Council Plan 2019-23

Summary of Consultation Responses

Allerdale Borough Council undertook a Budget and Priorities Consultation to provide an opportunity for the public and key stakeholders to review and comment on the Council's new draft priorities, its approach to meeting the budget challenges ahead and proposed Council Tax and fees and charges increases for 2019/20. The consultation was launched on 12 December 2018 and ended on 17 January 2019.

The consultation asked the following questions:

- Do you think the proposed priorities and areas of focus are the right ones for the council?
- Are there any other areas of focus that you think should be priorities for the council?
- Do you have any comments about the proposed approach to Transforming the Council? (for example, do you have any specific ideas about how the council can save money or generate additional income to protect services)
- Should we increase Allerdale's portion of the Council Tax bill by £5 on Band D properties (with proportionate increases to properties in other council tax bands) in 2019/20?
- Should we increase fees and charges by 3% in line with inflation?
- Do you have any other comments to make?

The consultation was promoted in the following ways:

- Launch of the consultation on 12 December 2018 with a dedicated web page and media release
- Direct email notification to a range of stakeholders including: all Chief Executives of the Cumbria Chief Executives Group, Cumbria Association of Local Councils, Chamber of Commerce, a range of third sector partners
- Direct email notification to all town and parish councils
- Direct email notification to all Allerdale Borough Council elected members
- Social media was used to generate interest via Facebook and Twitter
- Posts on homepage of intranet to alert staff

People were able to respond online, by post or email. There were 31 responses to the consultation received (all online). Comments were received from individuals, parish councils, and third sector partner organisations. The consultation was not designed to be a statistically representative sample of public opinion, but to gauge the opinions of those who have chosen to participate in the process.

All the feedback received has been considered to inform the development of the draft Council Plan 2019-23. Some responses raised points that related to more detailed elements of service or project delivery which will be used to inform service delivery and project planning. A summary of responses is set out in the table below with proposed comments that address the points raised. Views relating specifically to the proposed Council Tax and fees and charges increases are referenced in the Executive and Council paper in respect of the 2019/20 Budget.

Summary of feedback received in respect of draft Council Plan	Comment
<i>Summary of comments on proposed priorities and any other areas of focus:</i>	
Only 5 respondents stated that they did not think the proposed priorities were the right ones.	The support for the proposed priorities is welcomed.
Two respondents positively commented on the importance of economic development as a catalyst for improving the area.	The support for economic development is welcomed.
One respondent suggested there should be a greater focus on helping companies to create opportunities for young people to enter the labour market.	The draft Council Plan states that the Council will work with partners to ensure that unemployed people, those who currently have few employment choices, and young people coming into the world of work, have the skills training and advantages they need to access jobs and build a career.
One respondent suggested the Council could offer more apprenticeships and traineeships as an employer.	The Council does offer a number of apprenticeship places each year and has introduced a number of traineeship posts in recent years.

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Four respondents mentioned tourism as an important area of focus with the following specific areas mentioned: tourism in the Solway Plain; tourism in Maryport and the importance of signage and image; the general availability of TICs, buses etc.	'Developing key economic sectors such as tourism to create jobs' is a key area of focus under the Economic Opportunity and Growth priority in the draft Council Plan. The Council is committed to encouraging and supporting the tourism sector across the whole borough as set out in the draft Council Plan.
One respondent felt there should be more investment in infrastructure.	The draft Council Plan states our intention to work with partners to improve connectivity and infrastructure across the borough.
One respondent commented that the high street/main street should be a focus with particular reference to empty shops.	The draft Council Plan recognises that access to shops is an important part of making our towns attractive and vibrant places and sets out our commitment to support and improve our towns.
Four respondents felt that street cleaning should be an area of focus for the Council particularly in Maryport (three respondents).	This reflects the results of our recent Residents Survey through which residents told us that 'Cleaning streets and public places' was the most important service to them and whilst 68% were satisfied with the cleanliness and appearance of town centres overall, this figure was much lower in Maryport. The draft Council Plan recognises the importance of clean streets and public places to our residents with Keeping places clean, green and tidy' a key area of focus under the Quality Places to Live priority.
One respondent commented that the Council's environmental and waste services were very good.	This comment is welcome and chimes with the results of our recent Residents Survey where 93% of respondents were satisfied with refuse and recycling services.
One respondent suggested there should be more events for local people not just visitors.	The draft Council Plan recognises that access to leisure and cultural facilities and supporting festivals, arts and sporting events are important for healthy, active lifestyles and helping our towns and villages to thrive. The Council has a successful
One respondent suggested a strong cultural offer is important.	

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	Festival and Events Fund which supports the development of festivals and community-based events that will enhance the arts and cultural offering in the borough.
Four respondents gave quite detailed and specific suggestions relating to regeneration in Maryport including the importance of improving the image of places as well as physical infrastructure.	These comments are very useful and will help to inform the ongoing work to develop detailed project plans as part of the Maryport Delivery Programme.
One respondent mentioned housing, querying why any more housing would be required if the population of Allerdale was projected to decline and suggesting that the only new housing should be affordable.	The draft Council Plan sets out the rationale for the right mix of housing to be available to meet current and future needs. The draft Council Plan recognises that affordable housing is important for our area and sets out our continued focus on providing affordable homes.
One respondent mentioned the importance of addressing health inequalities and suggested mapping current provision and gaps with partners.	The Council is a key partner in the Allerdale Health and Wellbeing Forum and works closely with health partners to identify health inequality issues and develop plans to address those.
One respondent suggested that creating opportunities to lift residents out of poverty should be a focus.	The draft Council Plan sets out the Council's commitment to addressing inequality and poverty and sets out our continued approach to working with partners to address poverty.
Two respondents expressed concerns about drug misuse problems particularly in Workington with the suggestion that the Council should take the lead and collaborate on the issue (one respondent).	The draft Council Plan sets out our approach to working as a key partner through the West Cumbria Community Safety Partnership and the Allerdale Local Focus Hub to address our communities' safety issues and concerns.

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<p>Three respondents mentioned the importance of sports and community facilities for supporting healthy lifestyles – the lack of facilities was highlighted (two respondents), whilst one respondent suggested there should be reduced gym fees for those on low incomes.</p>	<p>The draft Council Plan recognises that access to leisure and sporting facilities is important for healthy, active lifestyles and sets out our approach to offering a range of opportunities to participate in sport, arts and leisure activities either directly through our leisure centres or by supporting other facilities and activities. Our leisure centres already offer range of concessionary and off-peak memberships for students, seniors and anyone currently receiving benefits.</p>
<p>Two respondents mentioned footway lighting and one respondent mentioned rural road sweeping.</p>	<p>The issue of footway lighting is the subject of ongoing discussion with parish councils to find an appropriate sustainable future approach.</p>
<p><i>Summary of comments on Transforming the Council:</i></p>	
<p>Five comments relate to the importance of greater collaboration with other bodies and the third sector to reduce duplication, save money and make sure that decisions are what the local community really need. Two respondents specifically referenced the need to rationalise layers of local government, move to a unitary authority, reduce the numbers of elected members or reduce management layers.</p>	<p>The approach set out in the draft Council Plan highlights the importance of working collaboratively with key partners across the public, private and third sectors to ensure that we can deliver the proposed priorities. This will include exploring: new ways of working; opportunities for joint working; and other service delivery models.</p> <p>Following a Boundary Review the number of elected members in Allerdale will reduce from 56 to 49 in May 2019. Discussions regarding any reorganisation of local government in Cumbria are ongoing.</p>
<p>One respondent suggested that decisions should be devolved lower down to reduce red tape.</p>	<p>As stated in the draft Council Plan the Council has already worked with local communities to transfer some important community facilities such as parks to town and parish councils, bringing them back under more local control, and will continue to look for opportunities to give local communities more influence over local facilities and services.</p>

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One respondent suggested making better use of technology to make services more self-service.	The draft Council Plan sets out the Council's approach to making the best use of technology to improve services and make more services available on-line.
One respondent suggested additional taxation measures on second homes.	The Council has recently agreed to increase the Council Tax premium payable on empty properties in the borough to provide an incentive to owners to bring empty properties into occupation therefore increasing the availability of accommodation either to buy and/or rent.
Four respondents suggested changes to waste collection services – three respondents suggested reducing bin collections to fortnightly to increase recycling and save money, and one respondent suggested suspending garden waste collection in the winter months.	From our recent Residents Survey we know that 93% of residents are satisfied with the refuse and recycling services we provide. We have recently negotiated new contracts for waste and recycling services, street scene services and grounds maintenance which has given us the opportunity to review delivery of those services to make sure that we are getting value for money in delivering services residents have told us are important to them. Garden waste collection is already suspended through January and February.
One respondent suggested investing in functions that generate income through compliance or enforcement such as licencing and parking.	The draft Council Plan sets out the Council's approach to reviewing and redesigning processes, including how to make services operate more commercially so that they better cover their costs.
One respondent suggested it would be better to rent out assets rather than sell them off.	The draft Council Plan sets out the Council's approach to making the best use of assets in our control and will involve a mixture of approaches including repurposing, rental and sale of assets.

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One respondent suggested increasing fees by greater than inflation to increase income.	Fees and charges are an important source of income for the Council, offsetting the cost of service provision and reducing the amount of expenditure that needs to be met from Council Tax and business rates. For existing charges, the Council's general policy is for levels of fees and charges should rise each year in line with inflation as determined as part of the budget planning process.
Other comments:	
Two respondents mentioned concerns about the impact of council tax increases on low income households including pensioners.	The Council offers a number of discounts on Council Tax to support those on low incomes, including the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Single Occupier Discount.
One respondent queried how the implications on rural areas of the plan had been assessed	The Council's Equality Impact Assessment includes rurality as a factor. An impact assessment has been undertaken for the draft Council Plan and more detailed impact assessments will be completed for individual projects and activities as they are developed.
Four respondents made the point that it is important for the Council to focus on its basic services and maintaining what already exists – reference to street cleaning (one respondent) and maintenance of specific areas of Workington (one respondent), concerns expressed about spending on the stadium instead of other things (two respondents).	The draft Council Plan recognises the importance placed on basic services such as street cleaning and refuse collection by our residents with 'Keeping places clean, green and tidy' a key area of focus under the Quality Places to Live priority.
Two respondents expressed concerns about where funding for all the priorities will come from.	The draft Council Plan 2019-23 and associate financial plans are being developed with an aim of ensuring the Council is in a healthy financial position for the future. The approach detailed in the draft Council Plan 'Transforming the Council' recognises that there are financial challenges ahead and that in order to

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	deliver the priorities the Council will need to find ways to do things differently, generate income and savings.
<p>Three respondents commented that there was too much resource and attention given to different areas of the borough – one respondent felt Workington received too much and Cockermouth, Silloth, Wigton and Keswick and rural areas too little, one respondent suggested there was too much spending in Cockermouth whilst Maryport is neglected, and one respondent felt that all the built up areas get too much resource whilst the rural areas do not get enough.</p>	<p>One of the principles set out in the draft Council Plan 2019-23 ('Services and actions that meet local needs') recognises that Allerdale is made up of distinct areas with differing issues that may require different approaches. The Council takes evidenced-based decisions about spending and resource allocation across the borough.</p>
<p>One respondent suggests that the 3% Council Tax increase should go to the police instead.</p>	<p>The Council Tax increase referred to in this consultation related purely to Allerdale Borough Council's share of the total Council Tax bill – the Police and Crime Commissioner has a distinct share of that bill and is able to propose any changes to that element.</p>