

Budget consultation feedback 2021/22

Our budget consultation ran for eight weeks, from November 13, 2020 to January 8, 2021.

It was posted on Copeland Council's website and its social media accounts on 20 occasions. A press release was sent to more than 90 media contacts and the consultation was featured in newsletters to Councillors and members of the public on multiple occasions.

The consultation attracted 52 online responses from individuals and one response from Millom Town Council.

The responses were as follows:

- 1. We are working with residents and partners on investment plans for our four towns. What developments would you like to see in our town centres?**

47 people answered this question. Responses included:

- Support for new and small businesses including rent and rate relief
- Enforcement of absent landlords
- Pedestrianizing town centres
- Investment in public toilets, cleaning-up towns and developing derelict buildings
- Transport and cycle routes re-evaluated
- More retail outlets and local events
- Opportunities and spaces for young people
- Free parking

- 2. We are currently assessing our Beacon Museum and potential events. What activities or events would you like to see at the Beacon Museum?**

41 people answered this question. Responses included:

- Market style events with emphasis on a wide range of stalls and the showcasing of local history and produce

- Activities/events:
 - For local crafters
 - That tie into local school curriculums
 - Involving science
 - That are music related
 - For adults
- Exhibitions for amateur artists
- Pop up restaurants by local Cumbrian chefs and restaurant relocated to top floor
- More information on local history including significant mining events
- Discounted rates
- Holiday club for children
- Digital resources
- A similar tourist attraction in Millom

3. Climate change concerns and affects all of us. We are considering planting trees and wild flowers in selected areas across the borough. Would you support this initiative?

51 people answered this question.

- 36 people answered 'yes'
- 2 people answered 'no'
- 13 people answered 'other' with comments around the upkeep of current open spaces, other environmental projects and the funding available for such measures as suggested.

4. Working with partners we are looking at signed public toilet provision in Whitehaven for the benefit of residents and tourists. Do you feel this would be a positive project?

51 people answered this question.

- 28 people answered 'yes'
- 5 people answered 'no'
- 18 people answered 'other' with comments regarding the maintenance and upkeep of the proposed facilities, amongst others.

5. It currently costs Copeland £110,000 per year to collect residents brown (garden) bins. Should this service be continue to be provided free?

52 people answered this question.

- 20 people answered 'yes'
- 6 people answered 'no'
- 26 people answered 'other' with comments including; charging for green waste removal will increase fly-tipping and green waste disposed as refuse, residents pay for and expect this service as part of their council tax payment, some supported a move to monthly collections.

6. Since the COVID-19 pandemic our customer facing services have been conducted online and by phone. Understanding the use of modern digital technology and the resulting cost savings, would you want to see this way of conducting customer enquiries continue, or would you prefer face-to-face contact to resume when possible?

45 people answered this question. Responses included:

- The diversity of online and in person services are needed to ensure residents in any circumstances are able to make contact
- Encouragement to convert to some online processes including the sending a receiving of documents, ability to do more digitally, and current website improvements including the introduction of web-chat
- Face-to-face contact is necessary for those without access to digital resources
- Suggestion of an appointment only face-to-face system

7. We propose a council tax increase of 1.95 per cent, which is less than the rate of inflation. We need to increase our share of council tax in order to maintain the services we provide for you. We would welcome your comments on this proposal.

45 people answered this question. Responses included:

- Acceptable increase as long as there is no reduction in services

- Increasing council tax for higher band properties only
- To start charging for garden waste collections instead
- Freeze the increase and/or council tax entirely due to current pandemic

8. The UK Government has invited the six district authorities and the County Council to submit proposals in respect of the creation of unitary authorities for Cumbria. Our preferred option is two unitary authorities, with an overarching combined authority lead by a Directly Elected Mayor. We would welcome your comments on these proposals.

42 people answered this question. Responses included:

- Support for two unitary authorities
- Suggestion of:
 - one unitary authority for Cumbria
 - four unitary authorities (north, south, east and west)
 - current set-up remaining in place
- Both support for and against an Elected Mayor
- Disagreement on proposed boundaries
- Other comments of a political nature

9. We plan to review our fees and charges to ensure they are covering costs, and where applicable, we plan to raise them by RPI in line with current inflation rates. We would welcome your comments on this proposal.

37 people answered this question. Responses included:

- Some agreed with no objections
- Increase efficiency savings before increasing charges
- Reduce salaries as an alternative to increasing charges
- Cut non-statutory services instead
- Further understanding around RPI is needed
- Freeze increase in light of current pandemic
- Other comments of a political nature

10. Do you have any other suggestions that you would like the Mayor to consider in terms of his budget?

34 people answered this question. Responses included:

- Changing the face of our highstreets and retail outlets to modernize our towns making them fit for the future
- Emphasis should be on statutory services at present
- Concerns around inflation increases alongside reduced services
- Absentee landlord enforcement
- Formation of volunteer committees
- Increase services outside of town centres
- Increase commercialization
- Invest in heritage and preservation of areas
- Other comments of a political nature