

Your Membership Number is:



in Lancashire

1. Please read the background information before answering the three questions.
2. Please use blue or black pen to fill in the questionnaire.
3. Return your completed questionnaire in the reply paid envelope provided.

Lancashire County Council Budget and Priorities

We want to ask you some questions on what you think about the county council's service priorities, and the council tax we charge. The questions first have some brief background information on the budget and on council tax.

Priorities

Background

In the current financial year April 2005 to March 2006 the county council will spend £1,464 million.

£325 million of that total spending is funded from government grants and from fees and charges that the council makes for specific services.

This leaves a net spend of £1,137 million. The table below shows how this will be spent.

Spending	£million	%
Education	649	57
Adult social services	239	21
Children's social services	55	5
Highway maintenance	56	5
Recreation, tourism and libraries	21	2
Waste Disposal	35	3
Financing of borrowing costs for capital schemes (eg long-term road and building projects)	35	3
Public transport	10	1
Public protection (trading standards, county analyst, registrars)	8	1
Planning	6	-
Cultural services (museums, arts and archives)	3	-
Supporting economic development in Lancashire	2	-
Other services	18	2
Total	1,137	100

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a) Which three or four of the following services should be the highest priorities for spending next year?

b) And which three or four of these services should be the lowest priorities for spending next year?

PLEASE TICK UP TO FOUR BOXES IN EACH COLUMN

	Highest spending priorities	Lowest spending priorities
Nursery education	13%	20%
Primary and secondary education	56%	3%
Pupils who are socially disadvantaged and children with special educational needs	21%	3%
Children's social care (the protection of vulnerable children)	34%	2%
Libraries	6%	26%
Museums and galleries	2%	53%
Adult education	6%	29%
Services for adults with disabilities	13%	4%
Services for older people (including care in their own homes and in residential homes)	55%	2%
Maintaining roads and bridges (fixing potholes and emergencies)	33%	4%
Traffic management (making road travel safer)	14%	19%
Keeping local bus services running	23%	12%
Waste management (household waste disposal and recycling)	27%	8%
Country parks, open spaces and picnic sites	7%	32%
Support for business and attracting investment to Lancashire	16%	26%
Crime prevention (working with partner bodies to help prevent crime and disorder and the fear of crime)	55%	3%
Trading standards	3%	32%
Welfare Rights (helping people obtain the support to which they are entitled)	10%	32%
Youth and community services (activities and support for young people)	17%	14%
None of these	0%	6%
Don't know	1%	6%

Council Tax

Background

The County Council's spending is funded from three sources. Funding for 2005/06 is:

	£ million	% of total
Business rates	349	31
Revenue support grant	430	38
Council tax	358	31
Total	1,137	100

Business rates and revenue support grant are fixed sums of money from the government. The County Council sets council tax according to how much more it needs to pay for total spending.

The County Council set a spending budget of £1,137 million for 2005/06. We received £779 million from the government, leaving a balance of £358 million to be raised from council tax.

For a household in band D this meant a council tax charge of £950.29 for the year, equivalent to £18.27 a week. This was an increase of 2.5% on the previous year, which was well below the average increase of 3.8% for county councils in the UK.

In a shire county area like Lancashire the council tax bill also includes charges from the borough or district council, the police authority, the fire authority and sometimes the local parish council.

Next year

We don't yet know how much grant the council will get from the government next year. But we do know that there will be major changes to how the county council is funded. From 2006/07 schools will be separately funded by a new "dedicated schools grant". The government will hold back business rates and revenue support grant to fund this new grant for schools, which will mean that the council will receive less grant from the government for other services. This reduced level of grant together with council tax will be used to fund services other than schools.

In its spending review in 2004, the government indicated that it assumed council tax would increase by about 5% in 2006/07. However, recent information indicates that the increase in grant from the government next year may now be lower than previously thought. And this in turn means that the council tax increase would need to be even higher than the 5% assumption - possibly over 7% - to fund the level of spend planned by the government.

In addition to this pressure on funding, pressures on our spending are also higher than those allowed for in the government's plans: for example, rapidly rising energy costs, higher costs of waste recycling compared with landfill disposal, and increased costs for children's and adults' care services.

These pressures on council tax from both the funding and spending sides mean that council tax will probably need to increase by much more than current level of inflation to maintain our current level of services.

2**Which of the following most closely matches your opinion on what the council should do about increasing council tax next year?**

PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY

No increase in council tax over this year, which would mean a reduction in County Council services	27%	→ END
A small increase in council tax, which would mean a reduction in Council services	30%	→ GO TO Q3
An increase in council tax which would maintain Council services at existing levels	37%	→ GO TO Q3
A larger increase in council tax which would fund some development in Council services	6%	→ GO TO Q3

3**And what level of increase do you feel you could support?**

PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY (Note: figures are shown for Band D, and for the lowest and highest bands, A and H, to illustrate the full range. The effects for the other bands would fall within the ranges shown.)

	Band A	Band D	Band H	
Current 2005/06 council tax a week	£12.18	£18.27	£36.55	
with a 3% increase	£12.55	£18.82	£37.65	48%
with a 5% increase	£12.79	£19.18	£38.38	32%
with a 7% increase	£13.03	£19.55	£39.11	14%
with a 9% increase	£13.28	£19.91	£39.84	5%

Please return the questionnaire in the reply paid envelope by 17 December.
Thank you for being part of Life in Lancashire.

Life in Lancashire, Lancashire County Council,
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