

Your Say on Herefordshire Council's budget and tax for 2021/2022

Residents questionnaire

Herefordshire Council is responsible for a range of services in your local area, such as refuse collection, education, social care services and road maintenance. The Council Tax paid by residents currently makes up 35% of the council's budget for these services, so we're keen to get your views on how we can make the best use of our budget and give you even better value for money.

The information gained from this consultation will be used to inform our budget and the results will be published in February 2021 on the council website. Any comments provided will be treated as confidential and will be anonymised before publication.

Any information you provide will be held and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. The information you provide will not be shared with any third parties, but where appropriate, it will be used to support the planning of services and the continuous improvement of various functions. For further information, please visit Herefordshire Council website: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/council/access-information/4>

Please complete this survey by **Friday 8th January 2021**.



If you have any queries or would like this questionnaire in an alternative format or language, please contact: researchteam@herefordshire.gov.uk

The Council Transformation and Savings Programme

All councils continue to experience constraints on spending, alongside increasing demand for some of their services. To balance the books, councils must continue to review what they do and how they do it.

Additionally, there is currently uncertainty over the amount of funding we will have in future and levels of funding from the government have yet to be confirmed, and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has made it hard to be sure how much funding we will receive.

However, Herefordshire Council has a successful track record of delivering savings and has already delivered substantial savings of £90 million. Through early planning and carrying out a range of efficiency measures, the council has protected frontline services and minimised the impact of spending reductions.

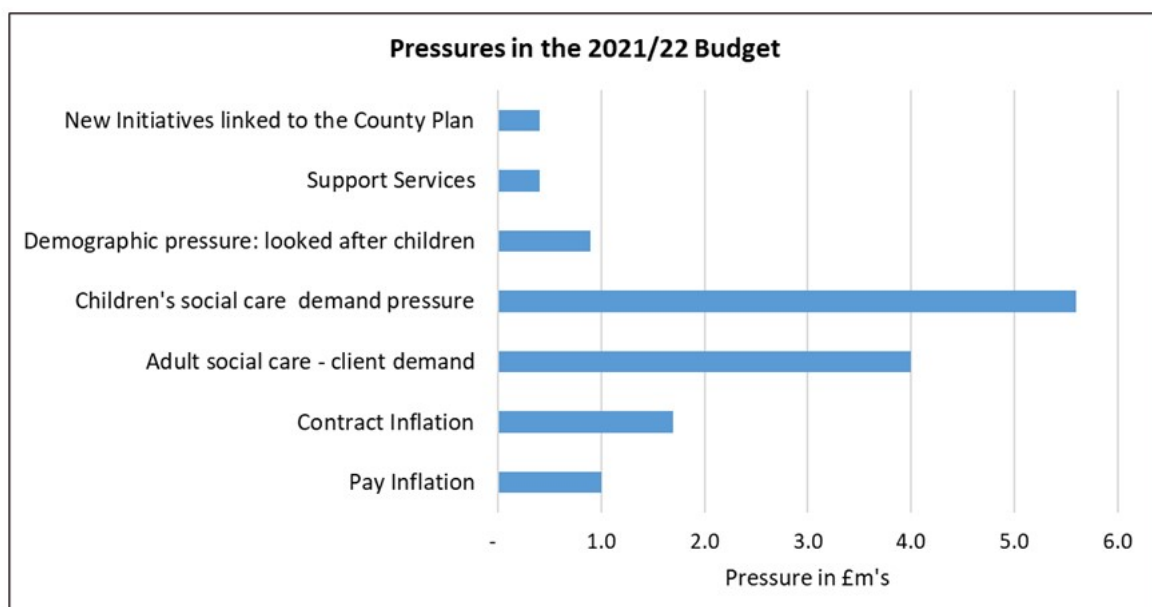
To reduce the continually increasing gap between our available resources and our expenditure, we will need to make further reductions in spending. Whilst the value and timing of such cost reductions is predicated on the level of financial support provided by central government and the impact of Covid-19 on the council's finances and demand for our services, the council is looking to make preparations for areas where cost reductions may need to be made. Current indications are that savings of up to £16m are required in 2021/22.

Savings of this level would involve continued changes to our role and the services we provide and we will continue to review our priorities, as shown in the County Plan summary, to make sure our more limited resources are focused on our 'core' activities.

The next year

Meeting our proposed plan of continued savings would require finding potential savings of up to £16 million in 2021/22.

The main source of these financial pressures, driven by coronavirus and coronavirus legacy issues, are shown in the diagram below:



Q2 Looking at the information in the consultation document (<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/budget-consultation-summary>), how do you feel about the proposed amount of savings by directorate? Please visit Herefordshire Council website for summary of what directorates do: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/21504/county-plan-summary>

	Far too little	Too little	About right	Too much	Far too much	Don't know
Adults and Communities Up to £5m or 5.2% of directorate budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children and Families Up to £2.9m or 7.9% of directorate budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economy and Place Up to £6.71m or 13.5% of directorate budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Corporate Centre Up to £1.49m or 7.9% of budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q3 If you have any comments on the proposed savings please let us know:

Q4 To help us plan for the future, please tell us what impact, if any, the council's previous reductions in spending have had on you, your local community, or the services you receive? Please be as specific as possible.

Q6 Which of the following County Plan commitments would you say are the three highest priorities for investment over the next 4 years? (Please select only three)

	Highest priority	Second priority	Third priority
Minimise waste and increase re-use, repair and recycling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improve and extend active travel options throughout the county	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Build understanding and support for sustainable living	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Invest in low carbon projects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify climate change action in all aspects of council operation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seek strong stewardship of the county's natural resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protect and enhance the county's biodiversity, value nature and uphold environmental standards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensure all children are healthy, safe and inspired to achieve	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Build publicly owned, sustainable and affordable houses, and bring empty properties back into use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use technology to support home care and extend independent living	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support communities to help each other through a network of community hubs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop environmentally sound infrastructure that attracts investment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use council land to create economic opportunities and bring higher paid jobs to the county	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Invest in education and the skills needed by employers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enhance digital connectivity for communities and business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protect and promote our heritage, culture and natural beauty to enhance quality of life and support tourism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spend public money in the local economy wherever possible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Council Tax options for 2021/22

Proposed Council Tax increase

Following the Chancellor's Spending Review on 25 November 2020, the council's preferred option for the 2021/22 budget is a 1.99% increase in general Council Tax and 3.00% social care precept (Option A), as this will lead to the least reduction in spending on services.

This is on the basis that additional savings of around £1.1m per 1% of Council Tax will need to be found in each year that an increase is not made over and above the savings that the council is already working to deliver.

Due to the large scale savings that the council will need to find in 2021/2022, the council is unable to consider a Council Tax freeze.

please note: the council has no control over the Council Tax collected on behalf of the police, fire service, or parish and town councils. Each of these bodies will make their own independent decisions.

The council would like your views on the level of Council Tax the council should consider for 2021/22:

Option A: To increase Council Tax in 2021/22 by 4.99% (1.99% general Council Tax and 3.00% social care precept)

This would be an increase of £78.53 per year (or £6.54 per month) for a band D household. This would raise an additional £5.4 million.

Option B: To increase Council Tax in 2021/22 by 3.99% (1.99% general Council Tax and 2.00% social care precept)

This would be an increase of £62.79 per year (or £5.23 per month) for a band D household. This would raise an additional £4.3 million.

Q7 Which of the following options would you prefer?

- Option A: increase Council Tax by 4.99%
- Option B: increase Council Tax by 3.99%
- No preference
- Neither
- Don't know

Q8 The government currently sets limits to the annual increases in both general Council Tax and the social care precept. Should government relax the current annual Council Tax increase thresholds, to what extent would you support or oppose a Council Tax rise greater than 4.99%?

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

Potential schemes to support vulnerable residents

Herefordshire Council provides financial support in certain circumstances to households that are in financial difficulty.

There is growing evidence that people are struggling financially as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and applications to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme have increased compared to previous years.

Q9 In principle, would you be willing to pay more Council Tax if the increase was used to help households on low incomes?

- Yes
 No

Q10 Would you support a Herefordshire Community Contribution Scheme that allows residents to pay a voluntary sum to contribute towards community schemes, for example schemes to help create the best start in life for our children and young people?

- Yes
 No

Q11 If a Herefordshire Community Contribution Scheme was introduced would you consider making a contribution?

- Yes
 No

Q12 Please tell us the main reason that you would, or would not, consider making a contribution:

Any other comments about the budget and council savings plan

Q13 Please use this space to make any other comments about the budget and council savings plan:

What do you think of your local area and the council?

Throughout this survey we ask you to think about 'your local area'. When answering, please consider your local area to be the area within 15 to 20 minutes walking distance from your home.

Q14 Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?

- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither satisfied not dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know

Q15 Over the past 2 years, do you feel that Herefordshire has become a better place to live, is the same, or is worse?

- Better
- The same
- Worse
- Don't know

Q16 If you said that Herefordshire has become either better or worse in the last two years, please tell us what you feel has changed:

Your local area receives services from Herefordshire Council, such as refuse collection, street cleaning, planning, education, social services and road maintenance.

In considering the next questions, please think about the range of services Herefordshire Council provides to the community as a whole, as well as services your household uses. It does not matter if you are not aware of all of the services Herefordshire Council provides to the community. We would like your general opinion.

Q17 Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Herefordshire Council runs things?

- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know

Q18 To what extent do you agree or disagree that Herefordshire Council provides value for money?

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Q19 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Herefordshire Council?

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The council keeps me informed about the services it provides	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The council keeps me informed about any proposals for change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can influence decisions affecting my local area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q20 To what extent do you think Herefordshire Council acts on the concerns of local residents?

- A great deal
- A fair amount
- Not very much
- Not at all
- Don't know

About you

If you are responding as an individual please answer the following questions about yourself. This information helps us to understand the profile of respondents and whether views vary amongst different groups of people across the county. It will only be used for the purpose of statistical monitoring, treated as confidential and not used to identify you.

You do not have to answer these questions. If you do not wish to complete them please indicate this below:

I do not wish to complete this section

Which Council Tax band are you in? (if you are not sure a rough guess is fine)

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F
- G
- H
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Your gender

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

What is your age band?

- 0-15 years
- 16-24 years
- 25-44 years
- 45-64 years
- 65-74 years
- 75+ years
- Prefer not to say

Do you have a disability, long-term illness or health problem (12 months or more) which limits daily activities or the work you can do?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

How would you describe your ethnic group?

- White British/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish
- Other White (please specify below)
- Any other ethnic group (please specify below)
- Prefer not to say

Please tell us the first part of your postcode:

Please return your completed questionnaire to:

Herefordshire Council Research Team

PO Box

Plough Lane Offices

Hereford

HR4 0BR

Please note a stamp will be required.

Thank you