

Consultation on Budget Strategy 2019/20

The Council is in the process of updating its Financial Plans for the medium term and its spending plans for 2019/20.

The Council has prepared a draft ten-year financial strategy which forecasts funding from central government, the impact of inflation and other cost pressures on the costs of service provision, income from retained business rates and council tax.

The way local government is funded will change significantly with effect from April 2020 as central government implements the following changes:

- Spending Review 2019 – which allocates government funding to various departments;
- Local government Fairer Funding Review – which allocates local government funding from the Spending Review to individual local authorities;
- Changes to the scheme which allocates a share of Business Rate income to local authorities
- Reviews the New Homes Bonus grant scheme.

These changes are making financial forecasting and planning past 2019/20 very difficult for every local authority. The Council has prepared some scenarios to indicate the potential risk to the Council finances of further cuts to central government funding post April 2020. Despite recent announcements of the “end of austerity”, it is highly likely that central government priorities will be the NHS, Police, Adult Social Services and Children Services. As a District Council we play an important role supporting these services but do not have direct responsibility for them. For this reason our forecasts assume there will be a redirection of funding away from District Councils. However, this will become clearer over the course of the next 12 months as Central Government provides more detailed information and issues consultation documents.

Full details of the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy are contained within the report which can be found at:

<http://www.cmis.cotswold.gov.uk/cm5/Meetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/410/Meeting/4494/Committee/879/Default.aspx>

This document sets out the key points of the Budget proposals for 2019/20 and the Council would welcome your feedback which will then be considered at the Council meeting in February 2019.

The closing date for the consultation is Friday 18th January 2019.

You can email your views to BudgetConsultation@cotswold.gov.uk

Alternatively, you may write to:

Mrs Jenny Poole, Chief Finance Officer, Cotswold District Council, Trinity Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1PX

The consultation is open to businesses and residents within the District Council area. Please could you provide the following details:

Your Name:

Are you responding as a resident or a local business?

Resident

Business

Both

Resident Address:

Business Name and Address:

The Council will not be able to consider your response if you do not provide your name and address. Your personal information will only be used in connection with this consultation and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations.

Please could you indicate your view on each of the budget proposals for 2019/20 by ticking the appropriate boxes.

Q1: The Council has indicated that it may need to increase its council share of the council tax by a maximum of 2.99%. This would increase council tax for a Band D property from £126.40 to £130.18. What are your views on this level of increase in council tax?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Support	Strongly Support

Q2: The Council is proposing a freeze in car parking charges. What are your views on this proposal?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Support	Strongly Support

Q3: The council is proposing a freeze in garden waste collection fees. What are your views on this proposal?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Support	Strongly Support

Q4: The Council is not proposing to make any changes to standards in front line services for 2019/20. Please indicate your views on this proposal below:

Agree

Disagree

Q5: The Council is not proposing to make any changes to grants to the voluntary sector for 2019/20. Please indicate your views on this proposal below:

Agree

Disagree

Q6: The Council plans to use £1.845 million of New Homes Bonus to protect the delivery of existing services to the community. Any New Homes Bonus received in excess of this amount will be made available to fund investment in initiatives which support the Council priorities.

What are your views on this proposal?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Support	Strongly Support

Q7: Since 2013 the Council has provided grants to some Town and Parish Councils to compensate them for council tax lost through changes to accounting arrangements for Council Tax Benefit (now known as Local Council Tax Support).

The grants were funded through Revenue Support Grant received by Cotswold District Council. ***With effect from April 2019, the District Council will no longer receive any Revenue Support Grant from central government.*** The Council has therefore been phasing out the grant to the Town and Parish Councils over the last two years.

From 2019/20 **no** Local Council Tax Support Grant will be passed to Town and Parish Councils, this saves the District Council around £30,000.

What are your views on this proposal?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't mind	Support	Strongly Support

Q8: Looking to the longer term, should the Council need to make savings as a result of changes to central government funding, how would you prioritise the following options?

Please rank the following 6 options with 1 being the most acceptable and 6 being the least acceptable option.

Option Number	Rank 1 to 6 (1 most acceptable, 6 least acceptable)	Option
1		Increase council tax at the maximum level before triggering a referendum.
2		Increase its investments in commercial property.

Option Number	Rank 1 to 6 (1 most acceptable, 6 least acceptable)	Option
3		Identify other innovative ways to generate additional income.
4		Increase discretionary fees and charges so users of a service pay for the services they consume.
5		Work with service delivery partners, Ubico (environmental services), SLM (leisure and cultural services) and Publica to identify changes to service provision which generate further efficiency savings .
6		Work with service delivery partners, Ubico (environmental services), SLM (leisure and cultural services) and Publica to identify changes to service provision or change service standards .

Q9: Do you have any further comments for the Council to consider as part of its budget setting meeting in February?

*Please note that roads/highways are the responsibility of Gloucestershire County Council and **not** Cotswold District Council*

Thank you for your response, your feedback will be reported to the Council in February 2019.