



*Proud of our past. Energised for our future.*

# Council Plan and Budget Consultation 2012/13



**Get involved...**

# Introduction

Thank you for picking up a copy of our consultation document on our 2012/13 budget. We hope you will find the information useful and will give us your feedback on our proposals.

In last year's budget consultation, we highlighted the challenging financial times we were facing as a result of government funding cuts. We knew then that we would have four difficult years of cuts to find.

In fact, the budget cuts that Copeland faced were the maximum that any authority would have to find, at **8.9%** per year.

Last year we had to find savings of **£1.771m** and following public consultation, outlined a series of budget savings we would make.

Almost a year on from this point, we have succeeded in saving almost all of this.

This year, the situation is no different, and we are required to make savings of **£1.472m**. On top of this we also have to find additional money to fund some 'pressures' on our budget.

This consultation document outlines our proposals for how we will make the required savings during 2012/13.

There is a form at the end of this document where you can record your views.



## Foreword

Hello and welcome to our 2012/13 budget consultation

document. I would encourage you to take the time to send us your views on what we are proposing, as your



comments will help us in developing and setting our budget and will help us to ensure that we are delivering the services that you feel are important.

The economic position that both Copeland Borough Council and the rest of local government are in, is well documented. We knew that setting our budget this year would be challenging, as it was last year, and as it will be for at least another two years.

In developing the proposals outlined in this document, we have tried to make sure that we protect the services we provide to the public by finding efficiencies and savings in the cost of our back office and internal services. However this cannot continue in the face of on-going cuts.

Last year we asked you about our new vision:

**Working to improve lives, communities and the prosperity of Copeland**

and our four priorities – **people, prosperity, place and performance.**

These form part of our Council Plan, which is our work programme for the coming year.

Last year we produced our new three year plan, as well as a more detailed document for how we would deliver it during 2011/12.

This year we would like your views on what we plan to achieve during 2012/13, to reach the objectives in the three year plan – all at the same time as making the significant savings outlined.

**Cllr Elaine Woodburn**

Leader of Copeland Borough Council

# 1. What we do

Here in Copeland, some local government services are provided by us and some are provided by **Cumbria County Council**.

The vast majority of your Council Tax goes to funding Cumbria County Council's services. We actually only receive around **11.6%** of your Council Tax to fund the services listed below.

We are responsible for:

## Service

## What we do

### Environmental health

Work to protect the environment and people's health through work in the following areas: health promotion, health and safety, food safety, noise pollution, pool sampling, food sampling, contaminated land, drainage, flood prevention, sandbags, infectious diseases, animal welfare, private water supplies, smoke free compliance, emergency planning, enforcement of environmental and other legislation.

### Recycling, waste and the environment

Kerbside recycling collections, recycling points, household waste collection, trade waste collection, street cleaning, street bins, public conveniences.

### Nuclear issues

Support the development of the nuclear sector in the borough, ensuring the area continues to be the country's heart of nuclear expertise, progress work on new Grid connections and nuclear new build, continue to work as part of the West Cumbria Managing Radioactive Waste Safely Partnership to consider whether West Cumbria should host a geological disposal facility for higher activity radioactive waste.

### Open spaces

Parks, play areas, enforcement of environmental and off-street car parking legislation, support to community groups, plant nursery services.

### Bereavement services

Cemeteries and funerals, Copeland's crematorium.

### Cultural services

Provide an extensive programme of sports and arts work in the community, including the Pathways to Arts programme, the Pop up Shops programme, Arts Out West, school holiday sports playschemes, youth engagement work, support for major festivals and events, and work with North Country Leisure who run our leisure facilities.

### Supporting businesses and the economy

Work to promote the regeneration and development of the area. Including economic development work, tourism promotion, business support, advice and grants, community renewal work, sustainability, locality working, helping to reduce crime and fear of crime and much more.

### Supporting local communities

We work with and support community groups, locality partnerships and parish councils across Copeland.

### The Beacon

Our fantastic, award winning museum and art gallery, located on Whitehaven Harbour. On top of its facilities, the museum provides outreach education services and support for other local facilities.

## Service

## What we do

### Development control and building control

We provide the statutory development control (planning) and building control and building regulations services. Our building control service is one of only a handful in the country to be chartered.

### Legal services

Including licensing work, local charges and local land and property gazetteer, scrutiny, election administration, democratic services. We also provide grant support to the Copeland Citizens' Advice Bureau and to the Community Law Centre to help people with legal and other issues.

### Housing

We provide a strategic housing service and officer advice, support and even temporary accommodation to those who are made homeless.

### Council tax and council tax and housing benefits

We process claims and distribute Council Tax and Housing Benefit, provide support and guidance on benefits, collect Council Tax on behalf of Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Police, Parish Councils and ourselves, promote benefit take up, and work to stop benefit fraud as part of a shared service with Allerdale and Carlisle Councils.

### Customer services

We provide customer services from our offices in Whitehaven, Millom and Cleator Moor as well as via our website.

We also provide back office support for these services.

# What Cumbria County Council do

Cumbria County Council provide services in the following areas:

- **Adult social care**
- **Children's services**
- **Schools**
- **Registration and coroners' services**
- **Archives**
- **Libraries**
- **Supporting businesses and the economy**
- **Sustainability**
- **Waste and recycling (disposal)**
- **Roads and rights of way**
- **Buses and transport**
- **Planning and the environment**
- **Trading standards**
- **Fire and rescue services**
- **Emergency planning**
- **Community safety**
- **Health and safety**
- **Customer services**
- **Supporting local communities**

# 2. Our Council Plan

Our Council Plan is our business plan. It is the document that sets out our goals, and the objectives and key projects which we hope will deliver these. The document and its contents are designed to support our ambitions and aspirations for the borough.

Last year, with the help of the feedback we got to this consultation, we developed our three year council plan.

We also produce a one year plan which details the specific things we will do in the year ahead to help achieve our objectives.

We have now done some work to look at what we think are the big issues we will address in each of the four themes of our plan: people, prosperity, place and performance during 2012/13. These are shown below.

Under our **people** theme, to achieve our goal ‘to support the development of strong, healthy and engaged communities’ we will focus on the following areas:

- Enable families and communities to get involved in health and sport activities to help improve health.
- Provide ways for young people to share issues; get involved and make a difference to their area and their council.
- Prepare for the introduction of Universal Credit. This will ensure that there is a smooth transition when the government welfare reform comes into force in 2012/13.
- Develop ways in which we may continue with locality working. We will ensure that communities will be able to have a voice and develop ways of empowering communities through the Localism Act.

Under our **prosperity** theme, to achieve our goal ‘to build a sustainable, modern, low carbon economy that delivers economic security to the whole community’, we will focus on the following areas:

- Attracting external funding into the borough - this will be so that the local economy and community well-being projects can be supported.
- Work with new and existing businesses to support and encourage growth.
- Support the development and promotion of tourism including: accommodation; attractions and events. This will include partner events and events we hold.
- Ensure that sufficient resources are available to deal with major projects by securing the Planning Performance Agreements for nuclear new build and grid developments.
- Work in partnership with Britain’s Energy Coast to deliver the Energy Coast Masterplan.



Under our **place** theme, to achieve our goal 'to support Copeland becoming an attractive, safer and greener place to be', we will focus on the following areas:

- Working with housing providers and the private sector to address housing need across the borough, taking into account different areas' needs. This will be addressed in our Copeland Housing Strategy Action Plan.
- Review our Emergency Planning capabilities. This is in light of the Weightman Review regarding Nuclear Futures.
- Continue to deliver improved refuse and recycling services for the residents of Copeland. This will be done through specific projects by the service.
- Continue to reduce crime rates in the borough by working with the Community Safety Partnership, and prepare for the introduction of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- In order to deliver our targets on climate change and carbon management we will deliver specific projects to reduce our carbon footprint.

Under our **performance** theme, to achieve our goal 'delivering excellent and value for money services', we will focus on the following areas:

- Ensure we retain the appropriate skills, knowledge and capability for the future. This will be done through developing and implementing an approach to organisational development.
- Meeting the changing role for councillors in light of the Localism Act.
- Deliver and monitor progress with budget reductions for 2012/13 and prepare savings for 2013/14.
- Look at the best way to deliver our services given the changing times in the public sector.
- Deliver our Customer Services Strategy, which will demonstrate how we are committed to improving services for the customer.



# 3. Our budget

All local authorities are obliged to set a balanced budget – we are not allowed to plan to overspend. Our budget helps us to deliver the priorities in our Council Plan that we have just outlined.

The budget and our Council Plan are very closely linked together. This is because we need the budget in place to be able to deliver our priorities, and our priorities need to be linked to what we can afford to do.

This is why we are continuing to ensure that our Council Plan is focussed and target orientated, so that we are completely clear on what we will do, and that we can afford to do it.

## How much have we got to save?

Over the four years that the government have announced their spending plans for local government, we have to save a total of **£4.5m**.

This breaks down as:

2011/12:	<b>£1.771m</b>
2012/13:	<b>£1.472m</b>
2013/14:	<b>£0.652m</b>
2014/15:	<b>£0.605m</b>

This equates to over **30%** of our starting budget in 2010/11, and is therefore a big challenge for us to address.

## Next year: 2012/13

On top of the **£1.472m** we need to save to meet the government's Comprehensive Spending Review targets, there are pressures on the budget – these are areas where we have to spend more money that we currently do, or where we are unlikely to get the income we thought we would. For example, inflationary costs, reductions in grants and income and investment income decreasing.

These pressures total **£0.588m**.

This means that the total we have to save in 2012/13 is **£2.06m**.

Our total budget for 2012/13 will be **£11.06m**.

Cuts of this magnitude require a wholesale review of services and ways of working. This is part of the programme which is designed to help us to become leaner and more efficient and this approach has already helped to identify how we can save **£2m** in the coming year.

Our approach to reducing our budget has focussed on:

- Being as efficient as possible
- Increasing savings
- Keeping our customers at the heart of everything we do



# 4. Budget proposals

As we have outlined, we have to make major savings over the next four years to balance the books. We have now completed a set of proposals that will save us the **£2m** we need to deliver the 2012/13 budget in the previous section. These proposals were agreed in principle at our executive meeting on Monday 20 December 2011.

Our approach to reducing our budget has focussed on:

- Driving through efficiencies
- Increasing savings, and
- Identifying council wide savings

whilst putting our customers at the heart of everything we do.

We have also started fundamental reviews of all of our services to help us meet the challenging budget shortfalls we will see in future years.

Last year we started fundamental reviews of all of our services, to help us meet the shortfalls, and to ensure that our services are operating as efficiently as possible. Some of these reviews have already been undertaken, and will help us make savings in 2012/13, and further reviews will be taking place in the near future.

## Administrative savings

For 2012/13 we have identified over **£545,000** of administrative and internal savings.

- Reducing the fee we pay for audit work
- Reducing our spend on supplies and services
- Reviewing some of our employee terms and conditions
- Producing our air quality strategy in house
- Reducing the cost of waste disposal
- Reducing the cost of producing some of our housing surveys
- Reducing the cost of our planned sustainability work
- Spending less on the cost of website maintenance due to the use of a new system

## Service changes

We have also identified over **£349,000** of savings that we can make to service provision that we think will have a minimal impact on the services we provide to the public. These include:

- Reducing the cost of our PFI contract for the Copeland Centre
- Reviewing the contract for the management of our leisure facilities
- Reviewing other contracts to reduce spending
- Reducing the training budget within the organisation

## Additional income

We have identified further areas of additional income totalling over **£232,000**, including:

- Increasing recycling rates and income from recyclable materials
- Increasing fees and charges in certain areas, including for interments and cremations
- Increasing car parking charges by around **10p** per hour
- Taking on new work to raise income, such as through new grounds maintenance contracts and in our Building Control service
- Reviewing the rents for some of our properties, where these have not been reviewed for some time



## Corporate savings

We have identified further corporate, cross council savings totalling over £680,000, including:

- Savings from full reviews of some of our services
- Savings from the strong management of vacant posts
- Savings from our review of management

Last year we reviewed the size and scope of our senior management team, and reduced this from seven to four. This year we are

reviewing the tier of service management below this and are likely to reduce the size of this team.

However as part of the savings we have to make, we do think we will have to lose some staff. We hope to minimise the number of redundancies.

We are also consulting separately on proposals to change our discretionary concessionary travel scheme. We have contacted the customers who use this scheme directly and comments can be sent to the address on page 10.

# 5. Your Council Tax

## The government's offer:

As part of our budget consultation, we want your views on what our Council Tax level should be next year.

The government has offered all local authorities a grant equivalent to a **2.5%** increase in Council Tax, as a one off payment.

To access this payment, local authorities must agree to freeze Council Tax levels.

Any authority that increases Council Tax will not receive the funding.

However, because the funding is only available for one year, if we were to accept the grant and freeze Council Tax, we'd have to find this money next year. This would be on top of an additional funding we might need that year.

In addition, the level of the grant is much lower than the current level of inflation. This means that we would suffer a loss even if we did accept the grant.

## What it means for Copeland:

For Copeland Borough Council, the **2.5%** grant adds up to about **£100,000**. So, if we accept the freeze in Council Tax we would get **£100,000** from the government in next year's funds.

But we wouldn't get this money the year after (2013/14). This would mean that for our income to be the same in 2013/14 as it was in 2012/13 that we'd have to raise the **£100,000** income that we got from the grant before we even consider what income we might need that year

Therefore, we'd have to look at a much higher Council Tax increase next year.

Only **11.6%** of your Council Tax actually comes to Copeland Borough Council. The vast majority of your bill goes to Cumbria County Council for the services they provide.

In Copeland, most homes are band A. If we increased Council Tax by **3.5%** this would mean an increase of around **42p** per instalment (or **£4.21** a year).

Cumbria County Council have been given the same 2.5% grant offer from the government – and are currently consulting on their budget proposals, so we do not yet know whether they plan to accept it or increase Council Tax. So even if we did accept the grant, and froze your Council Tax, your bills still might rise if Cumbria County Council does not accept the grant.



### Your views:

The government's Council Tax proposals present a complicated situation for local authorities like Copeland. There are both advantages and disadvantages to accepting the freeze and to increasing Council Tax.

We would like to hear your views to help us reach a decision when we consider our budget at our February full council meeting.

It is important that we listen to people's views and consider all the options available to us to ensure we are making the best decision for the borough and the council's service delivery.

## 6. Summary and conclusions

These are difficult and challenging times for local government. We have worked to put together a budget that helps us deliver the services that you have told us are important, whilst also reducing the amount we spend by **£2m**.

We have tried to do this with minimal impact on our frontline services, and by making cuts to our back office costs. However this is becoming increasingly difficult.

The savings we have outlined in the document, and which can be viewed in full in our budget reports at **[www.copeland.gov.uk/budget2012](http://www.copeland.gov.uk/budget2012)**, are not easy to make, and require us to take difficult decisions. However they are necessary if we are to balance our budget.

Please take your time to look through the details outlined and send us your views. Your feedback is important to us.

## 7. Having your say

We want to hear your views on our Council Plan, our budget and our budget process for the next four years.

Please fill in the form to let us know your views on each of the areas of this document. If you need any further space, please feel free to use an additional sheet of paper. Send your comments to: Communications, Copeland Centre, Catherine Street, Whitehaven CA28 7SJ.

Alternatively, email your comments and suggestions to **[communications@copeland.gov.uk](mailto:communications@copeland.gov.uk)**, adding the words **BUDGET CONSULTATION** to the subject line. It would be helpful if you structured your responses as per the form, overleaf.

The deadline for responses is Friday 27 January 2012.



Thank you for taking the time to read this document and to give us your views. We look forward to hearing these.

# Comments form

1. Do you have any comments on our four Council Plan themes?

2. Do you have any comments on the issues we plan to focus on to deliver our Council Plan themes?

3. Do you have any other comments on our Council Plan?

4. Do you have any comments on our proposed budget savings?



# Comments form

**5. Do you have any other comments on our proposed budget?**

**6. Do you have any specific comments on the Council Tax proposals?**

**7. Do you have any other comments?**

**Name** .....

**Address** .....

.....

.....

**Email address** .....

