

Copeland Mayor sets out budget plans

COPELAND'S Mayor is proposing to limit the council tax increase for residents among his spending plans for the forthcoming year.

Mike Starkie's proposed budget includes a 1.95 per cent increase on a household's council tax bill - lower than the three per cent the council is able to impose in line with inflation - and a freeze on car parking charges.

Also included in the Mayoral budget proposals is over £2million investment in the council's recycling, bereavement and IT services, including the building of an additional small chapel for more intimate services at Distington Hall Crematorium.

Further plans during 2018/19 include a new Tourist Information Centre for Copeland, for which £75,000 has been earmarked in the budget, and the expansion of the popular Pride of Place Town Centre Regeneration Scheme to include public realm improvements.

Mr Starkie said: "This is a first-class budget and it is a credit to all at Copeland that we have got to this position. We have suffered 26 per cent central government cuts over a four-year term, yet none of these cuts are being passed on to frontline services. Given the perilous financial position we were in when I took office in May 2015, it borders on an economic miracle that we have turned things around in this way.

"The budget is one of growth and regeneration and is fully aligned to our corporate strategy, underpinned by our four key priorities of town centre regeneration; commercialisation; employment, skills and social wellbeing; and strengthening the way we operate.

"For the third year running, I'm pleased to announce that we are planning to not only maintain frontline services, but grow and invest in them, including our recycling, bereavement and IT services, along with investment in tourism with the new Tourist Information Centre.

"Furthermore, we are continuing to prioritise the most vulnerable people in society, illustrated by a £250,000 investment in projects tackling social issues including isolation, inclusion and domestic violence.

"I'd like to thank all those who responded to our budget consultation. Residents told us where their priorities lie, including their reluctance to pay more for parking or a higher-than-inflation rise in council tax, fees and charges, and I have listened."

Copeland Council collects council tax from the borough's residents, but only keeps around 11 per cent. The remainder goes to Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Constabulary and town and parish councils.

Mr Starkie's budget proposals will be formally received by the Full Council on February 7 and a vote will take place on February 20.



Proud of our past. Energised for our future.

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