

Have your say on council tax and council spending



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Merton Council has frozen your council tax since 2010 and has promised to do so until March 2019.

However, council services are coming under increasing financial pressure. The funding we receive from the government to provide local services has been cut significantly, while demand has increased.

This means that on top of the savings we've been forced to make so far, we are now facing an additional £20m of cuts over the next few years.

The local NHS also has a number of funding issues and have told us they will not be able to sustain the funding they give us if we do not raise council tax. Although we would still need to make cuts, increasing your council tax by 2% could reduce the estimated £20m of cuts to around £18m, for example.

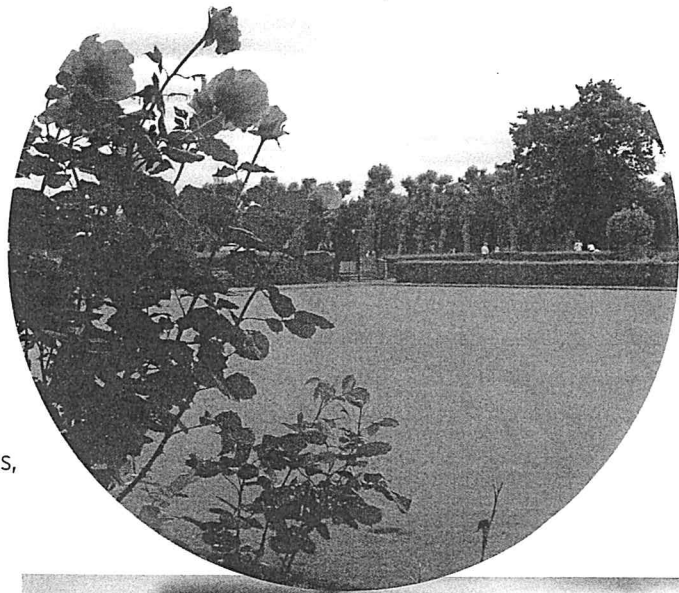
Up until now, the council has ensured that adult social care and children's services have received less of a share of the cuts than other areas.

We want to know what you think. Would you be willing to pay extra council tax in 2017/18 and 2018/19? If so, how much extra? Would you prefer any additional council tax to help reduce the cuts to just one council service (adult social care), or all areas?

These are all questions we want answers to from you.

We hope as many residents as possible will fill in and return the survey overleaf by the deadline of November 4. We want to hear what council taxpayers think so that the important decisions we make about your council tax and your services are based on what you want.

You can also fill in the survey online at www.merton.gov.uk/consultation.



Living within our means

Since 2010 the government funding received by councils has reduced by more than 40%. In Merton we have tightened our belts and reduced our spending in all service areas so that we can live within our means. We have also raised charges where we can, and will continue to use our reserves where available to slow down some of the impact of the cuts.

We have frozen council tax since 2010, and promise to do so until March 2019. However by 2020 we will need to make further savings of £20million, each and every year.

Last year the government allowed councils to increase council tax by up to 1.99% without a referendum of local residents, and in addition to increase council tax by up to another 2%, that can only be used to fund social care for adults. Increasing council tax by 2% would raise an additional £1.5million, so it would not remove the need for cuts, but it would mean fewer cuts than the £20million we are facing.

We want to know what you think about the challenge we face and what choices we should be making.

Section 1 Priorities

In July 2011 we agreed a set of principles that we use to guide the decisions we make about our services despite reduced funding. These were

- Continue to provide everything that is statutory.
- Maintain services - within limits - to the vulnerable and elderly.
- Maintain clean streets and keep council tax low.
- Keep Merton as a good place for young people to go to school and grow up.
- Be the best it can for the local environment.
- All the rest should be open for discussion.

Q1 Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with our priorities

- Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree
 Don't Know

Q2 Please tell us if you think there are any other priorities we should consider

Q3 We provide a wide range of services that cost us money to provide. From the list below please tell us which areas you think we should protect MOST of all.

Please select up to three areas:

- Care services for older or disabled people including homecare and residential care
 Rubbish collections, street sweeping, litter and fly-tip removal
 Protecting vulnerable children and young people including support for children with disabilities
 Parks and open spaces
 Libraries
 Leisure centres, playgrounds and sports facilities
 Activities for young people
 Repairs and improvements to roads and pavements

Q4 Which services do you think we should protect LEAST of all?

Please select up to three areas:

- Care services for older or disabled people including homecare and residential care
 Rubbish collections, street sweeping, litter and fly-tip removal

- Protecting vulnerable children and young people including support for children with disabilities
 Parks and open spaces
 Libraries
 Leisure centres, playgrounds and sports facilities
 Activities for young people
 Repairs and improvements to roads and pavements

Q5 Do you have any suggestions for how we can reduce spending and/or increase income across our services?

Section 2 Council tax

Q6 What do you think would be the best choice for Merton's overall council tax in 2017/18 and 2018/19?

- Continue to freeze my council tax so I pay Merton the same as last year
 Increase my council tax by 1.99%
 Increase my council tax by 2% to spend on adult social care only
 Increase my council tax by 3.99%

Q7 Please tell us if you have any comments about what should happen with council tax in Merton

Please tell us your postcode (without a valid postcode we will not be able to consider your response).

Postcode:

You do not have to answer the following questions but doing so helps us see how representative the responses to the survey are. What you tell us is strictly confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than analysing this survey.

Are you Male Female

Please tell us your age

How would you describe your ethnicity

Do you consider yourself to have a disability Yes No

To give us your views, complete the questions overleaf and return to us for free - no stamp is required. Fold along the lines, as per the instructions below and put it in the post.

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Business Reply
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