
FW: Budget consultation

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Dear Clerks, Chairs and Councillors,

Westmorland and Furness Council launches budget consultation

At a meeting of Cabinet (16 December), Westmorland and Furness Council launched its annual budget consultation.

The council is seeking views from its residents on:

- a proposed council tax increase of 4.99%
- other savings and income generating proposals

Cabinet warns most vulnerable could be hit if Government funding is reduced as it launches annual budget consultation

At the Cabinet meeting held (16 December), members agreed to launch its annual budget consultation, seeking views from residents and businesses on its proposals to help achieve a balanced budget for 2026/27.

Cabinet members also expressed their concerns that it could be facing substantial funding cuts when the Government's proposed Fair Funding Review goes ahead and the negative impact that these likely funding cuts would have on its residents and businesses.

This year's budget consultation includes a proposed 4.99% council tax increase alongside a number of other charging proposals.

Cllr Andrew Jarvis, Westmorland and Furness Council's Cabinet Member for Finance, said:

"We feel we have had no choice but to launch our budget consultation to allow us to meet our legal requirements, but we are doing this even though we do not yet know what our final financial settlement from Government will be. We are still waiting for the announcement on what our share will be in this year's local government settlement and the detail of their proposed fair funding review. Based on early information, the review is likely to lead to significant reductions in our funding as the proposed new formula will strongly disadvantage sparse, rural areas like Westmorland and Furness. This means we are likely to face significant funding cuts at the same time as seeing increasing demand for our services and continued inflationary pressure."

Cllr Jarvis continued:

"We recognise that the increasing cost of living continues to have a huge impact on many of our residents, so our recommendations in this year's budget consultation have not been taken lightly. As a council we want to reassure the public that we are looking at every aspect of how we run the

council to identify ways in which we can be more efficient and effective, including using new technology to help drive savings and make every pound count. But with the likelihood of reduced funding and higher demand, it is becoming even more of a challenge to deliver a balanced budget. In that context, we feel we have no option but to propose the measures included within this consultation.”

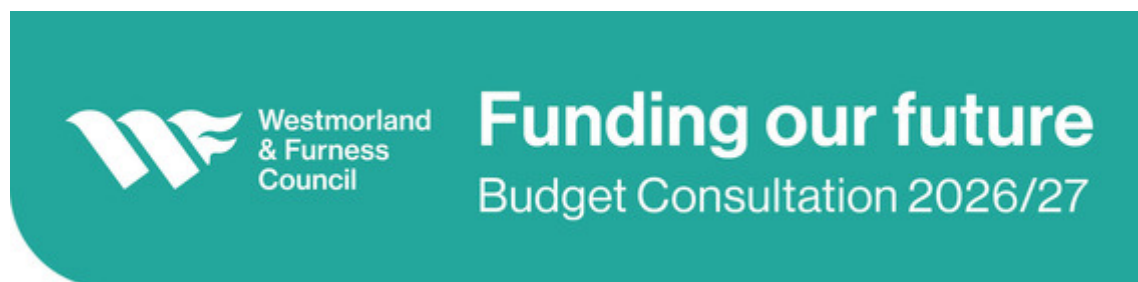
Like all councils across the country, Westmorland and Furness Council is facing difficult financial challenges.

Following Local Government Reorganisation in 2023, the council has worked hard to ensure it continued to deliver services and provide essential support to those in need, delivering a balanced budget in the previous two years, alongside an ambitious programme of savings.

Becoming a unitary council has given the council the opportunity to think and do things differently, and challenge and maximise its efficiency and effectiveness. It has remained focused on putting communities at the heart of everything it does, providing excellent services to residents and businesses and delivering on its vision to make Westmorland and Furness “a great place to live, work and thrive”.

The consultation document is now available at westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/budget and will run until 16 January 2026.

Feedback from the public consultation will be considered by Cabinet and then go to Full Council on 26 February 2026 with recommendations, presented alongside the Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).



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