



Northamptonshire County Council

Draft Budget and Council Plan Consultation 2017/18 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – Consultation and Budget Scrutiny

Where can I find out more information?

- Visiting: www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/draftbudget
- Free access is available at libraries for people who don't have access to a computer.

How can I have my say?

- Visiting the Draft Budget webpage: www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/draftbudget
- Completing the online survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DraftBudget2017-18>
- Email: consult@northamptonshire.gov.uk
- Write to: The Draft Budget and Council Plan Consultation 2017/18, Northamptonshire County Council, County Hall, Northampton, NN1 1DN.
- By using social media: Tweeting @mycountycouncil or posting comments on the mycountycouncil Facebook page.
- Using the Draft Budget toolkit to hold your own discussions about specific areas of the Draft Budget Consultation of concern to you and feed the results back to us by email or post.
- Signing or submitting a petition or e-petition.
- Taking part in our Budget Scrutiny Process (please see below for more details). For further information contact James Edmunds, Democratic Support, 01604 366053, Democraticsupport@northamptonshire.gov.uk

When will I receive a response to my question/query?

- We will respond to your enquiry within 3 days. If we send you an acknowledgement, we will let you know when you can expect a full reply. This follows our Customer Service Standards.

When does the consultation finish?

- The consultation starts on the 13th December and runs for 6 weeks until the 24th January.

Why is the consultation only 6 weeks long?

- Part 4 (C) Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules states that the consultation period shall not be less than 6 weeks unless the Council agrees otherwise.

Why does the online survey request demographic information?

- Any consultee who completes the online survey for this Draft Budget Consultation will be asked a series of demographic questions. These are called equalities monitoring questions.
- We ask these questions in every consultation, although *you will always have a choice not to complete these questions if you don't wish to*. We collect this information to build up a picture of the communities that we serve so that services and policies can be delivered to meet the needs of everybody.
- All of the information gathered is confidential and only used for evaluation purposes.

How will you use my consultation feedback?

- Feedback will be used to inform decision makers on a weekly basis throughout the 6 week consultation.
- The final budget report will include an appendix illustrating the consultation findings.
- We will send feedback to everyone that takes part in the process who provides their contact details.

What is 'Budget Scrutiny'?

- Scrutiny is a means for councillors who are not in the Council's Cabinet to investigate local issues, influence the development of policies and services, and hold to account decision-makers. It helps to produce more

effective services for the people of Northamptonshire and to support local democracy. Scrutiny councillors will be reviewing the Council's draft budget during December and January.

- They will look at the most important proposals from across the draft budget, focussing on what these proposals are designed to achieve, how they will be delivered, and how they may affect local services. Their findings and recommendations will be reported to the Council's Cabinet on **14th February 2017** for it to consider and respond to before the final budget is agreed by the Council.
- Members of the public and representatives of community groups can contribute to budget scrutiny by giving councillors their views about which proposals they should scrutinise, and about how particular budget proposals may affect services. There will be an opportunity for members of the public to give their views about which budget proposals councillors should select for scrutiny, as part of a meeting of the Council's Budget Scrutiny Working Group, on **Monday 19th December 2016 at 12.15pm** in the Council Chamber at County Hall.
- The Budget Scrutiny Working Group will then hold further meetings during January 2017 to scrutinise selected budget proposals relating to different Council service areas. There will be an opportunity at each of the following times for members of the public to give their views to councillors:
 - **Tuesday 3rd January at 12.00pm** in the **Blue Room at County Hall** - this meeting will focus on environment, planning and transport matters
 - **Wednesday 4th January at 4.00pm** in the **Blue Room** - this meeting will focus on children, families and education services
 - **Thursday 5th January at 12.00pm** in the **Blue Room** - this meeting will focus on adult social care services
 - **Friday 6th January at 12.00pm** in the **Blue Room** - this meeting will focus on adults' and children's health and wellbeing matters.
- The Council's Finance & Resources Scrutiny Committee will then agree the final budget scrutiny report at a public meeting on **Friday 20th January at 10.00am** in the **Council Chamber at County Hall**.

How is Budget Scrutiny different from the consultation process?

- Scrutiny of the draft Council Budget proposals happens at the same time as the council's public consultation process but has a different focus. Budget scrutiny involves councillors looking at the draft budget proposals and making recommendations that reflect their views about whether proposals will do what is intended. People who provide information to budget scrutiny are therefore also encouraged to use the consultation process to give their own views on the draft budget to the Council.

When will the final decision be made?

- The budget will be discussed by a meeting of full council on **23rd February 2017** by a meeting of Northamptonshire County Council's Full Council.

Can I attend the meeting where the final decision will be made?

- Council meetings are normally held in public and members of the public are welcome to attend to listen to the discussion.
- Members of the public also have the right to speak on any item on the agenda for that meeting.
- Anyone wishing to speak at Full Council should contact Jenny Rendall, Democratic Services on 01604 367560 by 12 noon, two working days before the meeting.
- Anyone wishing to speak at a council Cabinet meeting should contact Barbel Gale, Democratic Services on 01604 367730 by 12 noon, two working days before the meeting.
- An individual addressing the meeting is allowed up to 3 minutes to make their point.