



Cheshire
Fire Authority



2025-2026 Precept Consultation

Consultation Feedback Report

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www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

Cheshire Fire Authority has a duty to consult when considering the amount of precept it will levy for the provision of fire and rescue services across Cheshire.

Part of the budget setting process for 2025-2026 is to consult on the proposed level of precept to be charged by the Authority for the financial year. A detailed overview of the financial planning process is provided in the covering report submitted to the Fire Authority meeting of 12 February 2025.

This report provides details of the feedback received through the consultation process.

Consultation process

An online consultation was held for five weeks between December 16 2024 and 27 January 2025, which was hosted externally on www.surveymonkey.com.

The consultation was promoted through the issuing of a press release, social media posts, the Service's website and the use of the Service's Neighbourhood Alert email system.

A total of 288 responses were received.

Feedback

Respondents were asked to what extent they would support the Authority increasing its 2025/2026 precept by the equivalent of £5.00 per year on a Band D property. 63.9% of respondents indicated their support for the proposed increase, compared to 27.1% who opposed the increase. A further 9% of respondents stated they neither supported nor opposed the increase in precept.

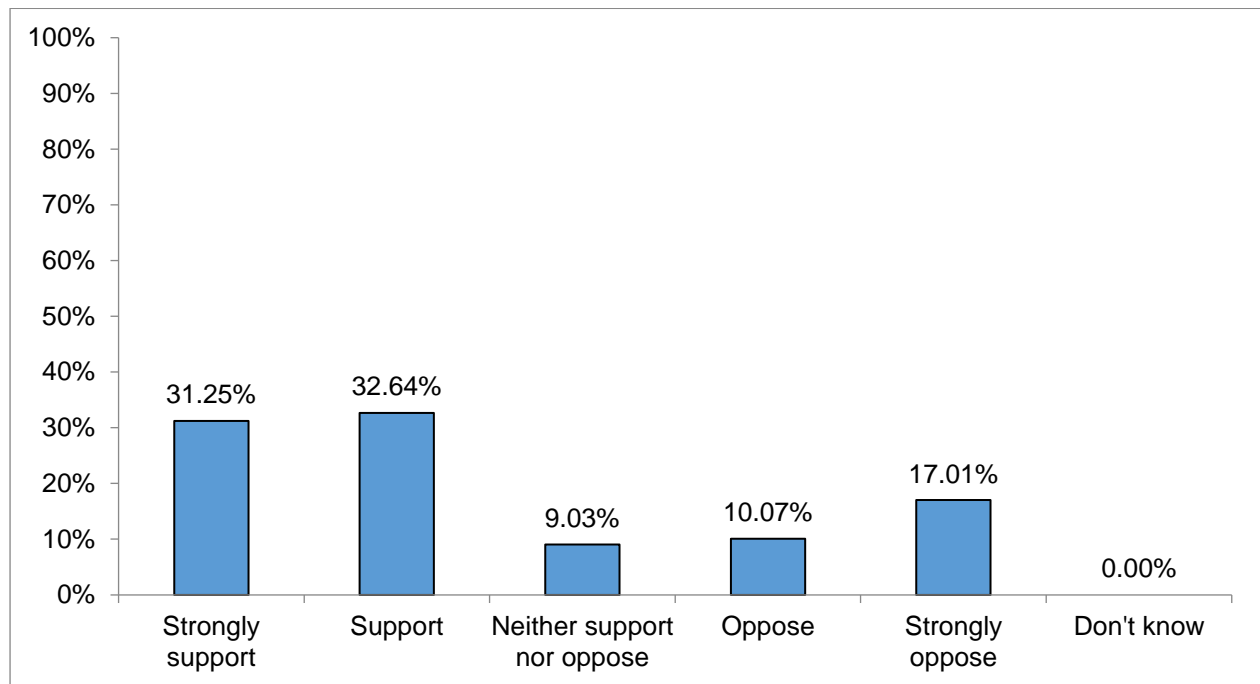
There were 169 additional comments provided. Of these, 56 comments expressed support for the proposed increase, with themes centring around the service being a vital service that needs properly resourcing and the increase being relatively small in monetary terms.

There were 53 comments which opposed the proposed increase. Themes from these comments included the impact on low earners and pensioners given other impacts such as the withdrawal of the winter fuel allowance; the cumulative impact of precept increases from a range of authorities, and the need for the fire and rescue service to cut out waste, improve efficiency and concentrate on its core functions.

Consultation Feedback

Question One

To what extent would you support Cheshire Fire Authority increasing its precept (its share of council tax) in line with the levels set out above? (288 responses)



Question Two

Are there any comments regarding this proposal that you wish to make? (169 comments)

- The proposed increase is obviously needed. However, with the potential proposed additional increase in council tax, this will cause more financial pain and austerity for CEC residents
- A £5 increase on the Band D is reasonable. Thank you.
- £5 pa is necessary to maintain the service in line with inflation.
- They do a fantastic job in the local community and support when required
- The Fire Service and Ambulance Service are worth every penny they require. We should NEVER underfund these services, which are there to protect and save lives. I would happily pay this small increase.
- Would rather the fire stations remained funded than closed
- In the circumstances this seems very reasonable.
- It's been very helpful to know what % is covered locally and by government. It's also been helpful to have an explanation of how the increase is to be used. Thank you for providing this. I think if residents know why there's an increase and what it's to be used for, which I am certain can't always be provided, then they will be understand better the need for the increase.

- The cost of everything is increasing. If we want an efficient service we must take responsibility and pay the extra
- These changes appear necessary and reasonable and I would support the increase suggested.
- I completely trust the fire service make good use of public funds and the fleet, equipment and buildings are new and well maintained. Asking for a little more is fair and justified, plus there's plenty of people who can afford the small increase.
- The Fire department is not an area I feel we can afford to overlook. Fire can devastate lives. The brave men and women who fight to save lives and property should get the best training and equipment possible.
- It's a necessary service
- With limited central funding, we have no choice.
- Think it is good that the differential with different band properties is being suggested.
- the fire service provides an essential service and needs paying for accordingly.
- I have never needed the fire brigade in 60 years but I have to pay every year.
- This is OK, when you think what the Fire Authority do for us.
- The fire service is a vital service that should be funded properly and personally, I am more than happy to increase my share
- I realise Cheshire East is having difficulty balancing its books, which is cause for concern about how Govmt & councils are governing currently. The increase is a small one & so I support it but increases across the board are coming thick & fast for residents. Tough times ahead.
- I am in agreement with the proposal outlined
- I do feel that certain costs that CFRS choose to make are unnecessary such as gifts, floral displays at meals/the cost of hospitality and presentation evenings. However I'm happy to pay the extra and feel that they do an excellent job given the limited resources.
- Fire Service deserve everything they get. They are front line and indispensable.
- We need to make sure the service is funded so if that means an increase each year then so be it
- Maintaining the high standards of the Cheshire Fire Authority is essential and worth the rise in precept.
- Needs must.
- For the service provided the increase is deserved
- Subject to the second pump at Chester not being used as a strategic reserve then I agree with the increase. The reality is that CFRS continues to use Chester's second pump as a cover appliance, despite assurances to the contrary.
- Most people I know would vote for a larger increase in the precept.
- There will always be a need for a fire and rescue service so we need to support the service as much as possible but with due diligence

- reasonably modest considering the financial problems
- It's necessary fact of life
- Along with the Police a must to be protected
- I think it is a fair and necessary increase to support the fire service.
- 10pence a week is hardly going to make a difference to our living standards when the government has just taken £300 off us pensioners. I'd willingly pay more.
- It's a small increase so happy to pay it. However it would be pertinent to ensure that none of the funding is wasted. For example the long service awards, pass outs, and Prince's Trust ceremonies, are all very lavish and should be scaled down considerably. These events could be held perfectly well at Fire HQ.
- Of course your service deserves to be paid more.
- Very important service that needs funding
- It seems a sensible thing to do
- I accept the need to ensure safeguarding the security of the fire service
- They do an unenviable job and put their lives at risk for us. Worth every penny. The price of a takeaway coffee.
- Always value for money
- I think thank an increase of £5 per year precept isn't near enough I think it should be more £10
- An increase is necessary to ensure this essential service is able to function effectively
- I am more than happy to allow all the money I pay through my council tax bill towards the Liverpool City Region Mayor (Steve Rotherham) to be redirected to Cheshire Fire Authority. Put that in your proposal for next year. There would be a massive response and uptake.
- Costs are bound to go up each year, and the increases proposed seem reasonable to me
- A very important service and a few pounds a year is very understandable.
- An essential service that must not be short of any funding it needs
- For the work you do, I think it should be double (£10)
- As a council tax payer, I appreciate that if I want the services to keep fully functioning, they need to be properly financed.
- I am not 'happy' to pay, but I realise that I have no option. I find all the Emergency Services very good. But I am not impressed by the wages the Councillors pay themselves!
- It seems a small increase for what it provides
- £5 per year is most acceptable
- Increase supported on basis of increasing resilience, particularly the return of a 2nd pump at Warrington
- I value their emergency cover and am happy to pay what they need
- I am in full agreement with the increases required and just hope I never need your help in the future. Worth every penny for peace of mind
- Too much of a rise

- This is appalling. How dare you seek to increase our already ridiculous council taxes in the cost of living crisis whilst advertising for an ACFO earning over 100K, AND with the fire sector under such scrutiny for its failings. Shameful.
- Cost savings should be considered as long as it doesn't reduce the fire safety support activities it currently is valued for. There should be no compromises regarding fire safety.
- The Service currently holds many millions of pounds in reserves and one of the most expensive senior leadership teams in the UK fire sector, cuts their wages before asking for more funding
- People can't afford it.
- People can not afford more money. Get the council to stop wasting money on woke projects. Cheshire Fire also needs to stop wasting money on LGBT virtue signalling
- Get rid of the high paid tossers at CEC
- This proposal represents a 5.5 percent increase in the precept, more than double the rate of inflation, at a time when residents are facing massive increase in costs in energy thanks to Government increasing the cap, massive increases in taxation, and increased costs of mortgages, rents, and food thanks to Labour's disaster of a budget. Many residents will simply struggle with the combined total of these extra costs.
- It goes up every year, make more savings and plan your budget better. An enormous amount of money is wasted by CFRS and it's the general public that have to make adjustments to their own finances to allow even more money to be spent frivolously. Enough is enough.
- Council tax is already absolutely ludicrous and I do not see how you can justify this when you are wasting money in other areas.
- Pensioners living on same amount with no inflation rises are penalized because they live in above D rated property
- There is no accountability for spending within the fire service. I worked there for 13 years and saw wastage in unnecessary roles, support staff uniform, a heritage motorcycle whilst trying to appeal to the youth. The procurement section does not adhere to value for money and there would be no need for any increase if they handled their finances and budget more effectively so no I do not support more strain on my purse strings to make up for their incompetence.
- households can't cope with more increases
- Every time we are asked to contribute more to the budget it never seems to make a difference. The following year we're asked to contribute more, when does it end?
- It seems that 'Authorities' can continue to raise their cut of the council tax every year. So the meagre pay rise the public get is swallowed up immediately, causing us to make sacrifices, and cut backs. Enough is enough! Do as we all have to do and work with what you get.
- They need to look carefully at how they can reduce overheads

- You waste money like it's going out of fashion. Be more efficient instead of milking the taxpayer year after year.
- As a single income household, it's not possible to agree to yet another increase in council tax, as I do not in turn receive an increased salary to budget for these increased costs.
- Being a pensioner and already lost money via winter fuel any increase just sets me back even more.
- Cost of living continues to be on the up, so sadly need to be objective on any increase in tax cost.
- We are already taxed enough.
- £5 Increase on Band D doesn't seem alot to pay, but in this day and age it is. The average person is being hit with increases in everything. I feel the local authority should pay the higher portion of the split. The fire fighters deserve more but then so does the police , doctors and nurses, schools and teachers the list goes on and on.
- It is about time we stopped wasting monies on the Hotels for Immigrants and then we the real honest people of the UK would not need to pay more in taxes
- Already pay a hefty council tax alongside increased bills and food
- The authority seems to be very well funded at the moment, it has spent millions in the last couple of year renewing fire stations, and has a regular capital budget expenditure for new appliances, three I think this last year at around a million pounds. Having spent this amount and done all this work, I don't think they will need to spend so much on capital in projects in the next year, so therefore should need less expenditure.
- council tax is high enough for pensioners, I have already lost the winter fuel allowance
- I already pay more than enough
- You ask for money every year. We have none left. Need it for my gas bill.
- Concentrate on your core role.
- Fire service already have too much money
- Expenditure is too high. More cuts are needed in non essential costs
- Although its is only a small amount these small amounts add up at a time when the government is ensuring we struggle anyway
- It's yet another increased charge which, when added to all the others, becomes unsustainable. Yes, £5 isn't much but add that to all parking charges, fuel cost to recycling centres, and increases in council tax, this is another nail in my financial coffin.
- It's about time governments and councils started budgeting properly, we can't keep increasing tax every single year it's disgusting. Why don't you try cutting down ok MPs perks and subsidised food etc?
- Perhaps if the Councillors stopped having so many buffets at NWFC they wouldn't have to push the price up
- Where are we supposed to get the extra money for increases year on year we have already lost our winter fuel allowance.

- These are difficult times for everyone and each must make sacrifices to balance the books.
- As with all public sector organisations there is a considerable amount of wasted money. This must be looked at first before any increases.
- People are already struggling enough as it is, with (still) rising prices. 'Only' £5 for a Band D property might not sound like much, but combined with other increases in Council tax, water rates, energy and food prices, this is all adding up to too much pressure on household budgets. There is only so much money you take from people, and the limit has been reached.
- Every year this survey goes out, no matter what the objections the precept is raised each year, so what's the point? No doubt Cheshire Constabulary will be along next with their annual increase. Why is there a difference in house bindings to what people contribute. I assume the presumption is if you live in a higher band property you can afford to pay more. The reality is many who live in higher band properties bought their homes a long time ago, worked to pay off their mortgages and are now pensioners on a fixed income.
- Like all public services the fire service should be clear about how it is being more efficient and effective in the future.
- Over the years cheshire fire and rescue have reduced the fire cover in Northwich and Knutsford areas and given bonuses to the fire chief and that this as a tax payer in not to keep putting it up every year. As a tax payer i cannot afford to keep paying these increases to council when I don't get any value for money from them.
- I think the council is inefficient and should make efficiency savings I get very little for my council tax as it is.
- Cost of living to all families
- The comments by the councillor about modest increases are typical of the odious complacency with which they regard residents as cash cows to be milked for their own ends.
- Look, my position is that at all levels, government needs to stop paying those who won't work. Something like 75% of funds go on social benefits - that's mad. Save here and spend where its required. JDI.
- It doesn't matter what we put down you'll do whatever you want. No matter what it is I oppose it and the government of the day shuts pay ALL of it
- I see LGBTQ events, fire trucks etc painted in rainbows I expect t that any precept wouldn't be paying for that, but you can't guarantee that so we expect no increase!
- Everything is going up, but wages, pensions and benefits are not keeping pace. The Fire Authority needs to rationalise any non-fire fighting/fire safety activities before increasing costs for the public.
- Chester Council already waste too much of our Council Tax, ask them to manage the budget more efficiently.
- I understand you are struggling for money but every single service provider is saying the same thing and passing the cost on to me. It is becoming unmanageable.
- Where does all the increase in prices stop?

- CT is the wrong finding stream and central Govt needs to provide additional funding looking at all UK regions to achieve a generic and strategic change plan.
- Very few fires
- Will this increase be added to the standard council tax that we already pay or is it going to be like the police tax which was introduced a few years ago.
- government needs to get its act together. It is very good at increasing taxes but still unable to determine how to provide the most basic of services to all residents. No more tax increases are justified. Services in Cheshire East are appalling for such a wealthy shire: the means of collecting taxes must be changed and based on property values, not bands.
- I only wish that other council services were proposing this small level of increase.
- No - the fire service I'd ditch an important emergency service and other duties are asked of them that aren't so urgent.
- Half the increase is fair how much money do you think taxpayers have police want more cheshire east want more
- It doesn't matter which area you live in the rise should be the same throughout.
- First of all the fire and rescue services should be paid for by central government . Secondly they in particular should not have to pay for gas or electricity in the stations
- I feel in Cheshire east we need more EPPR facilities, and have more water based equipment such as boats as we have a large networks of reservoirs, large rivers and we are in close proximity of main motorways, WCML and have a lot of rural and hilly areas.
- Did you really need a new independent training centre? Could you not have shared facilities with other counties/boroughs or carried out training in existing stations?
- It should not be a local council issue
- There is not enough information provided to make a considered response.
- they are located in Chester, so if you live in Chester or surrounds you're ok. I live in Ellesmere port so by the time they get here my house (or myself) will be a pile of cinders. what's wrong with keeping one appliance in Ellesmere port, the council have just spent a fortune on replacing their offices!
- Another vital public service that has been seriously underfunded over the last 15 years and now needs investment
- It's a shame council tax has to increase in this cost of living crisis. However I fully understand councils have been centrally underfunded and therefore money needs to come from somewhere. Perhaps residents can pay half of what's required and government supplement the remaining cost through grants. Either way essential fire services must continue.
- I think it is a great shame that you have to scabble about trying to gong the money to enable you to provide such a wonderful service.
- It shouldn't be down to a stealth tax by the government

- You said that the tabled proposed increase should address some of the shortfall of £1m. I can't say "Strongly support" when you give no indication of how far the proposed increase will go - should it meet 10%, 50% or 90% of the shortfall?
- The money should be funded by Central Government.
- It appears that normal tax payers have to pay for Rachel Reeves' increase in employers PAYE.
- Increases should be in line with cost of living. Increase last year was below RPI. This year it's above RPI. Overall, it's slightly below RPI over past 3 years.
- disgraceful that council has been so badly mismanaged financially that you have to put out the "begging bowl" for an essential service
- Go to a North West Fire and Rescue Service for economies of scale.
- The Fire Authority is a key and valued service; however, the public are being pounded from all directions at the hands on an incompetent government, which bases its policies on a fabricated "hole" in its inherited economy, which in reality was growing.
- You say your left with a million pound shortfall, it's about time councils lobbied government heavily to cover this shortfall instead of the hard pressed taxpayer
- I'm not sure why there is a different additional charge depending on the council tax band a particular house happens to be in. It would be fairer to take the increased precept required and simply divide it by the number of properties paying council tax.
- What does Cheshire Fire Do? It's annual call outs seem lower than the year before?
- Why do CFRS send firefighters and fire appliances to Manchester Pride at the expense of Cheshire taxpayers? CFRS would it not be better to support local pride events, like Crewe as an example (cheaper also).
- Your proposal does not mention pensions
- As long as this is not a regular request
- I think that if, as you state, your costs have increased due to increased employer national insurance contributions then you need to take this up with the incompetents that are now running the country. The ones that said they will not tax working people. Well not directly perhaps!
- Ask Rachel Reeves to fund national insurance increases out of hers and other rich politicians vast personal wealth
- Need fire service demonstrated by fire at Smoker Inn Plumley
- Would have been useful to include a top level breakdown of costs in the information.
- Thanks for giving us opportunity to comment.

Consultation demographics

Question Three

Are you answering the survey as (279 responses):

Option	Responses
None of the above	1
A member of the public	265
A business owner	1
A representative of a partner agency or local stakeholder	0
An employee of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service	12

Question Four

In which area of Cheshire do you live? (279 responses)

Option	Responses	Percentage
Cheshire East	136	48.75%
Cheshire West and Chester	102	36.56%
Halton	16	5.73%
Warrington	22	7.89%
I do not live in Cheshire	1	0.36%
Prefer not to say	2	0.72%

Question Five

Do you currently pay council tax to either Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Halton Borough Council or Warrington Borough Council? (279 responses)

Option	Responses	Percentage
Yes	273	97.85%
No	6	2.15%

Question Six

Gender (270 responses)

Option	Responses	Percentage
Male	160	59.26%
Female	93	34.44%
Prefer not to say	17	6.30%
I prefer to self-describe	0	0.00%

Question Seven

Does the respondent identify as transgender (270 responses)

Option	Responses	Percentage
Yes	0	0.00%
No	256	94.81%
Prefer not to say	14	5.19%

Question Eight

Age of respondent (262 responses)

Option	Response	Percentage
Under 18	0	0.00%
18-24	3	1.15%
25-34	14	5.34%
35-44	24	9.16%
45-54	22	8.40%
55-64	50	19.08%
65-74	81	30.92%
75+	57	21.76%
Prefer not to say	11	4.20%

Question Nine

Ethnicity of respondent (260 responses)

Option	Responses	Percentage
White English/Scottish/Welsh/Northern Irish/British	229	88.08%
White Irish	3	1.15%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0	0.00%
Any other White background	8	3.08%
White and Black British	1	0.38%
White and Black African	0	0.00%
White and Black Caribbean	0	0.00%
White and Asian	0	0.00%
Any other mixed or multiple ethnic background	1	0.38%
Asian British	0	0.00%
Indian	0	0.00%
Pakistani	0	0.00%
Chinese	0	0.00%
Any other Asian background	0	0.00%
Black British	0	0.00%
Black African	0	0.00%

Black Caribbean	0	0.00%
Any other Black background	0	0.00%
Arab	0	0.00%
Any other ethnic group	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	16	6.15%
I prefer to self-describe	2	0.77%

Question Ten

Religion of respondents (258 responses)

Option	Responses	Percentage
No religion	90	34.88%
Buddhist	0	0.00%
Christian (including C of E, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)	141	54.65%
Hindu	0	0.00%
Jewish	1	0.39%
Muslim	1	0.39%
Sikh	1	0.39%
Prefer not to say	23	8.91%
Other religion (please specify)	1	0.39%

Question Eleven

Sexual orientation of respondents (255 responses)

Option	Responses	Percentage
Heterosexual or straight	214	83.92%
Gay or lesbian	7	2.75%
Bisexual	5	1.96%
Prefer not to say	25	9.80%
Other (please specify)	4	1.57%

Question Twelve

Disability status of respondents (262 responses)

Option	Responses	Percentage
Yes	49	18.70%
No	191	72.90%
Prefer not to say	22	8.40%

Question Thirteen

How did you hear about this survey? (270 responses)

Option	Response	Percentage
Newspaper	1	0.37%
Television	0	0.00%
Radio	0	0.00%
Facebook	49	18.15%
X (formerly known as Twitter)	2	0.74%
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service website or email	174	64.44%
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service social media	17	6.30%
Internet search engine	3	1.11%
Other website	30	11.11%