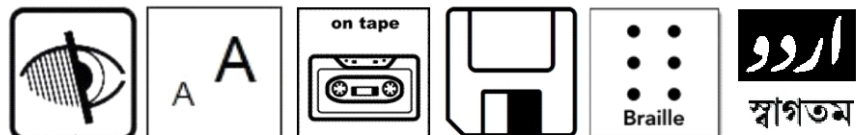


Pride in Rossendale 2010/11

Budget Consultation Exercise

Consultation ends 29th January 2010



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Introduction

Each year the Council has to decide what services it is going provide for the borough's residents, businesses and its visitors, how much those services will cost and therefore how much money it needs to raise from you the Council Taxpayer and its other resources.

Council Tax receipts will make up around 47% of the resources we expect to need in 2010/11, with the balance coming from central government grants, including Rossendale's portion of the national business rates pool.

Decisions concerning Council Tax are not taken lightly. We know the Council Tax is a heavy burden for many residents, but we are also aware that you want us to do more in many areas.

The Council and The Rossendale Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership for the Borough) have a shared view on what they want to see for the borough now and in the future, set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy. This is that:

“By 2018 Rossendale will have strong communities with an enhanced environment and heritage. It will be an attractive place to live, where tourists visit and employers invest.”

You will find more information about the Council's six corporate priorities and our action plans for the next three years on pages 5 to 9.

The proposals for the 2010/11 budget are intended to focus on:

- Coping with the current economic climate, both for the Council itself and for the borough's residents in the levels of Council Tax increases.
- Providing for the investment recommendations coming from the year-long consultation on the future of leisure services in the borough.
- Continuing our investment in **“Pride in Rossendale”**.
- Waste collection operational improvements to the resolve the access issues to the borough's narrow streets.

We want to know what you think of our ideas for improving the borough and what we do as a Council. For the first time we are asking you to help us decide on some very specific options in order to balance the budget, as you will see on pages 11 to 15.

Please take the opportunity to respond to this consultation process. Thank you.

Councillor Brian Essex
Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

Sources of Council funds for services



Pride in Rossendale 2010/11

Budget Consultation

What Happens to Your Money

In 2009/10 the average household in Rossendale pays £1,566.19 in Council Tax (or about £30.12 per week).

Of this:

£21.32 goes to Lancashire County Council

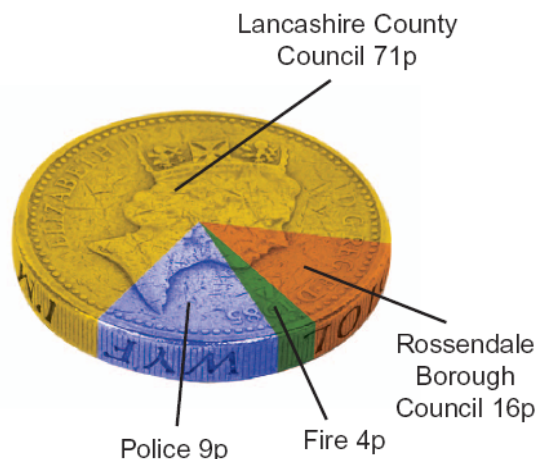
£2.73 goes to Lancashire Police

£1.20 goes to Lancashire Fire and Rescue Services

£4.87 is kept by Rossendale Borough Council

£30.12 Band D weekly Council Tax bill

This is where each £1 of your Council Tax goes



If you live in Whitworth an extra 43p per week is collected for Whitworth Town Council

How Your Money Is Spent

If you went to the supermarket with £4.87, you would probably be going through the ten items or less checkout.

For this Rossendale Borough Council:

- Empties 3.5million household waste bins each year
- Recycles 8,790 tonnes (28.4%) of the total waste collected which is a 2% increase
- Provides and empties 598 street litter bins and maintains 44 free car parks
- Looks after 86.3 hectares of parks & open spaces, 4 cemeteries (15.8 hectares), 3 allotment sites and 68 garden plots
- Receives and determines approximately 700 planning applications
- Manages 3 markets and 37 industrial units
- Pays over £19.5m in benefits to 7,200 people and 11,600 bus passes for 'over 60's'
- Provides homelessness services to around 100 families each year, including rent bond services and arranging temporary accommodation.
- Promotes more than 100 local events through the website and provides funding for the Rossendale Alive festival, the Mela, fireworks display and Christmas lighting.
- Works with partners Rossendale Leisure Trust and Community Leisure Association Whitworth to provide 8 major leisure facilities, 28 sports pitches with a varied sports development programme and operates one museum through the County Council
- Provides adaptation grants to around 90 families struggling with disabilities and equity release loans to vulnerable people desperate to stay in their own homes.
- Annually revises the register of electors, provides elections in 41 polling stations, supports 4 neighbourhood forums and arranges over 70 public meetings a year.
- Visits over 600 commercial businesses to ensure safe production of food and a safe and healthy workplace for employees.

How has 'Pride in Rossendale' improved the borough so far?

The 'Pride' theme was introduced in 2008/09 and amongst other things the Council has:

- Planted 10,000 more bulbs and very successful flower meadows eg Cloughfold
- Cleared four major 'grot-spots' and replanted several key gateways.
- Installed 90 new street litter bins and 15 benches.
- Delivered litter and dog fouling prevention road show to 10 primary schools and two high schools.
- Introduced a free leisure pass scheme for valley service men and women.
- Seen an increase in the number of people voting and those registered to vote.
- Established £20,000 of grant funding for community initiatives, distributed through the neighbourhood forums to get local people involved in projects.

As a result there has been an increased sense of community pride and belonging throughout Rossendale.

Our future plans for 2010 onwards

The Council's Corporate Plan 2009-12, available on our website, sets out the priorities and high level projects that we aim to deliver over the next three years. A summary of the main outcomes and actions under each of the priority themes follows. They demonstrate the Council's continued drive to improve services, deliver better outcomes for local people and focus on the most important things for the Borough.

Delivering quality services to our customers

We are committed to developing and delivering high quality, cost effective services, which meet the needs of our customers.

Outcomes:

- 1.1 High quality services
- 1.2 Greater community involvement in the design and delivery of services.
- 1.3 A stronger relationship between the Council and communities.

Key Actions:

- Publicise Whitworth Swimming Pool more effectively through a new website.
- Make it easier for disabled people to visit our parks and cemeteries.
- Implement a 'Choice Based Letting' scheme for social housing vacancies.
- Establish a landlord accreditation scheme to promote decent and affordable private rented housing across the borough.
- Understand customer needs more fully through consultation with customers who use our One Stop Shop and Benefits service.
- Involve residents in Local Democracy Week to find out their priorities.
- Make it easier to vote through accessible, well located polling stations.
- Encourage safe, respectful and tolerant communities through the actions in our Neighbourhood Plans.
- Provide a handyperson scheme to better support disabled/ vulnerable people.
- Involve residents in developing environmental improvement projects in Bacup.

Delivering regeneration across the Borough

Physical and economic regeneration is crucial to Rossendale's sustainable growth and prosperity. We are well placed between Lancashire and Greater Manchester and need to ensure that everyone benefits from future growth.

Outcomes

- 2.1. A thriving local economy.
- 2.2. Well performing town centres.
- 2.3. A well balance housing market.

Key Actions:

- Support appropriate Valley Centre redevelopment.
- Implementation of the Open Spaces Strategy to develop space, sport and recreation facilities which are high quality, attractive to users, well managed and maintained.
- Develop a marketing strategy for Rossendale Markets, increasing the choice of shopping outlets and reducing the costs associated with running the markets.
- Deliver a series of regeneration initiatives to attract visitors and employment to the borough.
- Establish a multi-agency task group to co-ordinate and develop initiatives to assist those people and businesses affected by the current economic climate.
- Sustainable development which protects the countryside, open spaces and historic buildings.
- Support the development of a commuter rail link to Manchester from Rawtenstall.
- Extend CCTV development to deter anti-social behaviour and crime.
- Develop active and effective business forums in our town centres to ensure that local businesses receive advisory services to influence the development of economic and tourism initiatives.
- Improve our Homelessness service, including ensuring that appropriate advice and care is available when needed.
- Secure external funding to deliver new affordable housing units through external partners such as registered social landlords, private developers and the Homes and Community Agency.
- Deliver proactive measures to ensure that more empty homes are being reoccupied and implement a mortgage rescue scheme to provide help for people at risk of losing their home.
- Deliver environmental improvements and 'face-lifting' to over 140 properties.
- Promote the Equity Loans Scheme to help homeowners to improve their homes.



Pride in Rossendale 2010/11

Budget Consultation

Keeping our Borough clean, green and safe

Local people want a clean and safe environment. As a Council we are working to achieve this now and for the future.

Outcomes:

- 3.1 People feel safer in their communities.
- 3.2 A better environment for all.

Key Actions:

- Develop a Public Convenience Strategy, incorporating a Community Toilet Scheme, in order to ensure access to facilities that are clean and safe within the community.
- Re-organise grounds maintenance to ensure parks and open spaces are tidier.
- Revision of our Street Cleansing routes to increase the cleanliness in towns and outlying areas.
- Implement Phase One of the Footpath Improvement Works to ensure safe and accessible footpaths in the borough.
- As part of the national Tackling Drugs Week we will work with partners to offer information and advice.
- Visit ten Primary schools and two High schools as part of the Pride in Rossendale Programme, to promote to young people clean streets, recycling and safe places to play.
- Delivery of at least four community initiatives in consultation with the community during 2010/11 as part of the Pride in Rossendale programme.
- Increase the amount of recycling we collect and encourage more recycling within in the community.
- Adopt more “Eco-Friendly” practices using peat free composts, organic fertilizers, ‘green’ fuels and reducing carbon emissions to ensure environmentally friendly operations.
- Implement the borough’s Environmental Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan.



Pride in Rossendale 2010/11

Budget Consultation

Promoting the Borough

We are promoting the Borough as a place to live, work and invest.

Outcomes:

- 4.1. More people satisfied with Rossendale as a place to live.
- 4.2. A thriving visitor economy.
- 4.3. An improved understanding of the Council, its success and how to influence decision making.

Key Actions:

- Continue to lobby for a new Bus Terminal in Rawtenstall and work with other Councils and agencies to improve transport connectivity.
- Work with partners to deliver the development of a commuter rail link to Manchester
- Encourage local newspapers to publish more promotional good news.
- Support active Tourism Working Groups in Rossendale.
- Improve the 'Visit Rossendale' website to provide a more user-friendly and interactive site with a multi-search function so that users can find out more easily what they can see and do in Rossendale. This will build upon the new Visitor Guide launched in 2009/10.
- Establish priorities for leisure and cultural provision, and develop sustainable leisure attractions which encourage people to visit.
- Support the Pennine Lancashire Festival of Food and Culture.
- Develop a new Communications Strategy for the Council.
- Encourage more people to become involved in local democracy.
- Improve awareness of Council services by producing a revised edition of the A to Z of Council services, involving residents in the style of the publication



Encouraging healthy and respectful communities

Too many people in Rossendale suffer from poor health which has a big impact on the quality of their life. Respecting our bodies, as well as respecting other people in our community, is an important part of having strong and healthy communities.

Outcomes:

- 5.1 People living longer.
- 5.2 Increased physical activity.
- 5.3 Respectful communities that get on well together.

Key Actions:

- Deliver a programme of health and wellbeing activities
- Promote a range of summer fun activities, underpinned by health promotion, including providing 2 play coordinators to promote play activities in rural areas.
- Work with partners to deliver targeted and innovative programmes aimed at increasing participation in sport.
- Respond to the recommendations of the Leisure Review.
- Support a range of activities to reduce crime through the Community Safety Plan.
- Deliver the 'Streetwise Project' which engages with primary school pupils on community safety issues.
- Refresh 'COMPACT', Rossendale's agreement between the voluntary, community, faith and public sector partners.

Providing value for money services

The Council is committed to developing high quality value for money services.

Outcomes:

- 6.1 Effective financial management.
- 6.2 Councillors that can respond effectively to their communities.
- 6.3 Value for money and high performing services.

Key Actions:

- Develop a first draft of Rossendale' Cultural Strategy.
- Deliver a revised Accommodation Plan suitable for the Council's needs.
- Ensure that grants to voluntary and community organisations deliver value for money and are effectively performance managed to meet targets and outputs.
- Continue to identify cost savings for major services such as refuse collection.
- Provide further training for Councillors especially on planning and probity issues.
- Promote the service provided by Councillors to residents, including how to contact them, and deliver an annual Consultation Event.
- Investigate the use of mobile technology to improve Licensing & Environmental Health services.
- Lobby the County Council to improve grass cutting, weed clearance and tree maintenance in our role as Community Leader.
- Review and improve the Homelessness service and the Pest Control service.

Financial Context – assumptions made for the year ahead

Local Councillors have previously stated an ambition that the Council Tax bills should rise by no more than 3% for each of the next three years. This amounts to around £164,000 which has been built into the current continuation budget,

The Council receives around 53% of its resources from central government through the Revenue Support Grant, which includes the borough's share of the business rates collected nationally. The year ahead is the last in a three-year settlement period, therefore the Council knows it will receive an extra £31,000, a 0.5% increase for 2010/11.

Levels of central government grant in future years are hard to predict at present given the general election due later in 2010 and the need to balance the nation's budget. Following on from the 0.5% increase in 2010/11, and given the current economic climate, we would expect a minimal increase in central grant resources, or possibly even a reduction, in future years.

General inflation in 2010/11 has been assumed to be 1% and this has been applied to goods and services where the Council is contractually obliged to provide for inflation.

Staff costs have also assumed a 1% increase plus any known contractual scale increments have been included.

However, in many areas costs have been capped at their current cash levels with any inflation being absorbed through efficiency savings. The current budget position for 2010/11 is therefore as follows:

	£000
Budget 2009/10	11,828
Pay Award (1%)	70
Employee increments	132
Other Inflation, savings and changes	(217)
2010/11 Current Requirement	11,813
Current Budget Surplus	108

However, some areas include high risks, if not for 2010/11, then certainly for the years ahead. Areas of income like planning and building control fees have been badly hit by the recession and future income levels remain unpredictable. Costs of fuel for refuse and parks vehicles and energy for buildings are also prone to fluctuations during the year, making budget forecasts hard to predict with any certainty.

Beyond 2010/11 additional specific grant schemes are also likely to be affected in some way as the nation begins to repay the borrowing required during the recent recession.

Options being considered for 2010/11

The Council is considering several options for investment or reduction of resources:

- Investment in leisure facilities.
- Further investment in “Pride in Rossendale” initiatives.
- Improvements to waste collection particularly those involving vehicle access to the many narrow streets within Rossendale.
- Reducing the increase in council tax for 2010/11 to below 3%

In order to finance some of these ambitions, the Council is also considering further saving options to add to the current surplus available of £108,000:

- Reducing staff pay assumptions to below 1%.
Ultimately the level of any pay increase is dictated though a national pay agreement, but the Council is considering reducing the level of increase anticipated. Each ½ % represents £35,000 of saving for the Council.
- Savings during staff turnover occurrences
Assuming savings are achieved through natural changes in staff personnel and the time taken to recruit to vacant positions could save around £40,000.
- Reduce the general contingency
The current level of contingency within the budget is 0.76%, equivalent to £90,000.
- Charging for delivery and replacement of recycling wheelie bins & containers
When residents request replacement bins there is a cost, not only for the bin, but also for the delivery crew and vehicle. At present Rossendale Borough Council does not charge for replacement recycling bins, though it does charge for the replacement of green ‘non-recycling’ bins.
- Economic impact on fee income expectations
Services such as planning and local land charge searches have been affected quite badly by the economic recession. Within the current budget forecasts the level of income in these areas has already been reduced by over £100,000. Depending on expectations for the pace of recovery it may be prudent to anticipate up to a further £35,000 of reduced income.

Investment in Leisure Services

The year-long consultation process on the future of leisure services in Rossendale has returned several recommendations, including some transfer of facility operations and operational efficiencies. In addition, the review has recommended the building of a replacement pool facility in Haslingden adjacent to the current sports centre and other improvements to facilities.

There are several potential ideas and ambitions for a new pool development. Current cost estimates are between £3m and £4m, dependent on the facilities it may contain. The Council currently estimates to have £2.5m of funding available for this scheme, being a mix of available capital funds and estimated efficiencies in running costs. The shortfall could be met by further borrowing over 25 years which would cost the following amounts for each year:

- If the pool costs £3m, then borrowing the shortfall would cost £35,000 each year.
- If the pool costs £3.5m, then borrowing the shortfall would cost £70,000 a year.
- If the pool costs £4m, then borrowing the shortfall would cost £105,000 a year.

Pride in Rossendale

Building upon the achievements of the Pride agenda so far, as stated on page 5, the Council would like to invest further in:

- Extending the improvements to street furniture in communities – bins, benches and notice boards for community events and information.
- Improve celebration events such as the Mela and the fireworks display.
- Encourage more community DIY by supplying grant funding direct to local community groups for projects in their areas.
- We also welcome any other suggestions for Pride in Rossendale investments.

Waste Collection

Due to the number of narrow streets and back alleys in the borough, it is becoming increasingly difficult to reverse large bin lorries in order to collect household waste. These operational challenges now call for a new approach to such areas and the Council is proposing three possible solutions.

- Residents in these areas take their own bins to collective pick-up points, thereby incurring no extra costs.
- The Council employs a new team with a smaller van to specifically handle these areas of the borough. This is expected to cost £55,000 per year.
- Incorporating the first solution into the general operations, with Council staff manually taking all bins to the nearest collection point. This would slow down the current collection rounds to the extent that 2 full extra collection crews would be required, with 2 additional vehicles, which is estimated to cost £105,000 per year.

The current budget assumes a Council Tax increase of 3%, in line with long-term ambitions. However, the Council is very mindful of the effects of the current economic climate on the borough's residents and would like to request views on the acceptable level of Council Tax increase given the level of service our customers expect.

Given that reducing this increase impacts on resources available for the above investments, which option, if any, would you choose?

- Reduce the Council Tax increase to 2% which will save 5p per week on a Band D (average) property and reduce overall resources by £55,000
- Reduce the Council Tax increase to 1% which will save 10p per week on a Band D (average) property and reduce overall resources by £110,000
- Reduce the Council Tax increase completely to 0% which will save 15p per week on a Band D (average) property and reduce overall resources by £164,000

The Council also welcomes any other suggestions during this consultation process.

How to respond

The Council has designed a spreadsheet response form to calculate the budget balance automatically. Entering the cost or saving chosen for each option will update the balance at the bottom of the page. As the instructions on the sheet show – the balance should ideally come to zero. Any surplus would give scope to potentially further reduce the Council Tax. The Council cannot set a budget with a negative balance, ie a deficit.

Ideally the Council would like responses on the spreadsheet version of Appendix 1, which can be downloaded from the website at

<http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/budgetconsultation/documents>

Once completed, please email the spreadsheet to: budget@rossendalebc.gov.uk by the 29th January, 2010 with any other comments.

Alternatively, Appendix 1 on page 15 of this document shows a printable version of the consultation response form if you have any difficulty in returning the electronic spreadsheet version. Please submit the written form to:

Budget Consultation,
Rossendale Borough Council,
The Business Centre (Room 222),
Futures Park,
Bacup, OL13 OBB

The Council welcomes any other comments which should be made in writing to the Head of Finance, at the above address, by the 29th of January, or emailed to: budget@rossendalebc.gov.uk Comments received after this date cannot be guaranteed to influence the final decisions of Council Members. A summary of all comments and option responses will then be included in a report to be considered by Councillors at their meeting on 25th of February, 2010.

Philip Seddon

Head of Financial Services

Appendix 1

Consultation Form 2010/11

Printable version

Please detach the following page and return the completed form to:

Budget Consultation,
Rossendale Borough Council,
The Business Centre (Room 222),
Futures Park,
Bacup, OL13 0BB

Returns should reach the Council by 29th January 2010
(Comments received after this date cannot be guaranteed to influence
the final decisions of Council Members.)

Thank you

The Budget Consultation pack has detailed explanations of the current budget surplus of £108,000 for the continuation of current services. Each of the options below is explained in further detail in the pack for your consideration. Once you have made your choice please enter any savings as positive numbers, and any costs as negative numbers, in the yellow column. Once complete please submit to budget@rossendalebc.gov.uk by 29th January 2010. Responses will be reported to Cabinet on 17th February 2010.		SAVING - ADD to Surplus	COST - DEDUCT from Surplus	Your Views ADD or DEDUCT
1 Overall Savings, Resources Options and potential costs				
Choose any combination or nothing	a Staff pay rise currently assumes 1% - reduce this to ½ %	35		
	b Staff pay rise - reduce assumptions by further ½% to zero	35		
	c Savings during staff turnover occurrences	40		
	d Reduce general contingency - up to £90k potential saving	?		
	e Charging for delivery and replacement cost of wheelie bins	5		
	f Reduce income expectations due to current economic climate		?	
2 Leisure Services Investment Proposals				
Choose one option or nothing - this assumes £2.5 m of capital & borrowing is available	a Cost £3.0m (so net £0.5m to be funded from C Tax)		-35	
	b Cost £3.5m (so net £1.0m to be funded from C Tax)		-70	
	c Cost £4.0m (so net £1.5m to be funded from C Tax)		-105	
3 More Investment in Pride in Rossendale (examples...)				
Choose any option(s) or nothing	a Community street furniture - bins, benches and notice boards		-15	
	b Celebrating Rossendale - Mela and Fireworks display		-15	
	c Community DIY - giving funding direct to community groups		-15	
	d Other Pride in Rossendale.....		?	
4 Waste - operational improvements required to the accessing of narrow streets				
Must choose one option	a Residents take their own bins to collective pick-up points		Nil	
	b New team with a van to handle longer distance collection points		-55	
	c 2 full new collection crews to take all bins to collection points		-105	
5 Increase in Council Tax rates - 3% is currently built into the budget for 2010/11				
Choose any option or nothing to leave at 3% increase	a Reduce the Council Tax increase to 2%, saving 5p per week on a Band D (average) property		-55	
	b Reduce the Council Tax increase to 1%, saving 10p per week on a Band D (average) property		-110	
	c Reduce the Council Tax increase to 0%, saving 15p per week on a Band D (average) property - ie. remain at 2009/10 levels		-164	
	d Other suggestions (Council Tax cannot increase by more than 3% in total)		?	
6 Other initiatives, issues and options - You suggest				
State any other option(s) or nothing	a	?	?	
	b	?	?	
	c	?	?	
	d	?	?	
Subtotal - the financial impacts of your choices above			Sub-total	
Current Budget SURPLUS assuming a 3% Council Tax rise and current service levels				108
This total must be at least zero so that the budget balances. If it remains as a positive surplus, this will give scope for you to make a further Council Tax reduction in 2010/11. This total cannot be negative.			Total	

