

Ratepayer Response to the Draft Budget 2026/27

As a local ratepayer, I welcome the opportunity to comment on the Council's Draft Budget for 2026/27 and the associated Cabinet reports. My comments focus on transparency, value for money, service impact, and the long-term financial sustainability of the Council.

1. Transparency and Accessibility

The cover report provides a clear outline of the four budget documents being considered. However, as a resident and council taxpayer, I find it difficult to understand the overall financial position without a concise summary of:

- The main pressures facing the Council
- The key assumptions behind the budget
- The headline changes in spending and income

A short, plain-English overview would make the process more accessible to the public and improve confidence in the Council's financial management.

2. Value for Money and Efficiency

As a ratepayer, I expect the Council to demonstrate that it is:

- Reducing avoidable costs
- Improving efficiency
- Protecting frontline services
- Avoiding unnecessary borrowing

I would welcome clearer evidence of:

- What efficiency savings have already been achieved
- What further savings are planned
- How the Council ensures that service reductions are a last resort

Residents need assurance that every pound collected in Council Tax is being used responsibly.

3. Council Tax and Affordability

Any proposed increase in Council Tax must be justified with:

- A clear explanation of why it is necessary
- Evidence that alternative options have been explored

- An assessment of the impact on households already facing cost-of-living pressures

Ratepayers deserve transparency about how much additional revenue the increase will generate and how it will be used.

4. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Rent Setting

For tenants, rent increases must be:

- Fair
- Justified
- Clearly linked to improvements in housing quality

Residents want reassurance that:

- Repairs and maintenance will improve
- Investment in housing stock is being prioritised
- The HRA remains financially sustainable without placing undue burden on tenants

5. Capital Strategy and Borrowing

The Capital Strategy should clearly explain:

- How much the Council plans to borrow
- The risks associated with borrowing
- How the Council will ensure affordability in future years

Ratepayers need confidence that borrowing is being used for essential, value-adding projects rather than discretionary spending.

6. Risks and Financial Resilience

The Council should provide a clear, public-facing explanation of:

- The main financial risks
- How these risks are being managed
- The adequacy of reserves

Residents want assurance that the Council is prepared for unexpected pressures and is not relying on one-off funding to balance the budget.

Conclusion

As a ratepayer, I appreciate the complexity of setting a balanced budget in challenging financial circumstances. However, I believe the Council must strengthen:

- Transparency
- Public communication
- Evidence of value for money
- Long-term financial planning

Resident within North West Leicestershire District Council

Name and address redacted