



Councillor Barbara Cannon  
Executive Member - Financial Planning and Assets  
Cumberland Council  
Allerdale House  
New Bridge Road  
Workington  
CA14 3YJ

Dear Barbara,

You will know, from my campaign and others, the strength of feeling among my constituents about your proposed council tax increases. Harmonisation on day one at an average rate was a kick to hard-working council taxpayers in Allerdale, who have the lowest council tax in Cumbria thanks to fiscally-conservative administrations – albeit interspersed with some who were less prudent, as you will know.

It was even more of a blow when you then took the decision to only consult on the maximum allowable council tax rise of 4.99%, despite your central government funding delivering a healthier settlement than even your most optimistic forecasts.

The decision to harmonise at an average rate yields £2.3m over harmonising at the lowest rate (Allerdale) – just 0.7% of your budget. People will be watching very closely to see where you may have been able to save that 0.7%. *But I have a solution for you.*

I was pleased to see that the Council Tax Base has increased by 1281.19 above the calculations used in your budget consultation, which at the lowest rate *will yield the council* £2.1m. The difference between harmonisation at the lowest rate and at the average rate is £2.3m. It would seem therefore, for the sake of an amount less than the total allowances paid to the Executive alone, that you can no longer justify inflicting such pain on Allerdale council taxpayers in the face of the rising cost of living.

I would ask you to think seriously about your harmonisation plans and open them up to proper consultation wider than a single premeditated option. I also ask that you reconsider your insistence on inflicting upon all Cumberland residents the maximum allowable council tax rise of 4.99. By year 3 your council is expected to deliver savings of between 7 and 11%. Your residents expect from you a smoother transition, and some of those savings on account.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark".

**Mark Jenkinson MP**