

Taxpayers against MPs deciding spending cuts

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Taxpayers do not want national politicians to make decisions about cuts to public spending in their local area, a new survey reveals today.

The survey of 2053 people by ComRes for the Local Government Association, a cross-party organisation representing over 350 local councils, reveals the areas of public spending people think should be protected, those they think should be cut and who they want to decide on cuts to local services. It reveals that two thirds of people (65 per cent) want local councillors to make decisions about cuts in their area and only one in ten (11 per cent) want MPs to make those decisions. Just three per cent would prefer officials in quangos to decide. The survey also reveals that people would rather see care for the elderly protected from potential cuts than money for GPs. Almost one in three wants to see money for elderly care preserved (30 per cent) but less than one in five (19 per cent) want to see money for GPs protected.

The top areas people want to see protected from cuts are:

- ♣ Frontline hospital staff (33 per cent)
- ♣ **Fire service (32 per cent)**
- ♣ Police (32 per cent)
- ♣ Care for the elderly by social services (30 per cent)

In addition the survey shows that:

- ♣ Almost one in four (22 per cent) people think money for rubbish collections should be protected
- ♣ One in five (21 per cent) also want to see funding for child protection being preserved
- ♣ Almost one in five people (18 per cent) want to see money for social services to help disabled people being maintained

Cllr Margaret Eaton, chairman of the Local Government Association, said:

"It is almost universally accepted that public spending is going to have to be cut in coming years. Whether it is care for the elderly, schools or rubbish collections, people are concerned that the standard of the services they use day in day out remains high.

"These figures are a vote of confidence in town halls. People trust their local councillors to make tough decisions about spending in their area more than they trust national politicians. As the democratically elected voice of local people, councils should be at the centre of deciding on spending in their area.

"Town halls are already the most efficient part of the public sector, saving £4.8million every day last year. If savings need to be made, councils have the appetite to do things better and for less.

"Councils know their local areas and they know how to do more with less so that people's quality of life is maintained, even during the tough times."