

Support for residents struggling to pay council tax

Help is at hand for [residents in the county needing support to pay council tax](#). We have allocated funding of up to £3 million for the second year running to provide support for households experiencing financial pressures during the pandemic and in the year ahead.



The latest announcement brings the total committed over the last two years to supporting local households up to £6m. An adjustment is being made to the upcoming annual budget proposals to reflect this.

The funds are for additional discretionary relief, administered by District and Borough councils, for working age residents claiming Council Tax reduction relief who can benefit from having their Council Tax bill reduced by up to £150. This is separate from recent announcements national government to support Council Tax payers in Bands A to D which are due to be introduced in the year ahead.

Next Friday (18 February) all West Sussex county councillors will debate the annual budget proposals for 2022/23 which align with the council's corporate strategy 'Our Council Plan'. As part of the annual budget, a Council Tax rise for 2022/23 of 2.99 per cent is proposed, including a 1 per cent rise for adult social care.

Find out more about this year's council budget on the link below where you can also read details about 'Our Council Plan' and how to watch the debate live online.

The Budget Papers are due to be published this week ahead of [Full Council on Friday 18 February](#).

[More info about our budget](#)

Latest local update on Covid-19 and vaccinations

Spring is on its way, so let's do all we can to bring Covid-19 case rates down across West Sussex.

Case rates remain high in the county; there were 10,464 new confirmed cases in the seven days to Thursday 3 February.

There plenty of things we can all do to stay safe and help #KeepWestSussexSafe. Wearing face masks in indoor and crowded spaces, testing regularly and getting vaccinated remain [effective and sensible precautions](#) to help keep yourself and others safe.



Find out the latest Covid-19 rates in your area by visiting our [data dashboard](#).

Vaccinations

[Covid-19 boosters are now available](#) for children aged 12 to 15 if they have a condition that puts them at high risk from Covid-19 or they live with someone who has a weakened immune system, and if they have had two doses of the vaccine at least three months ago.

The boosters are also available to everyone aged 16 and over.

You can still get your first and second doses of the Covid-19 vaccine, [if you are eligible](#). You can visit one of the [walk-in vaccination sessions](#) across West Sussex, or you can book an appointment in advance via the [national booking system](#) or by calling 119. Some children may also be able to get a vaccine at their school.

The vaccination programme in West Sussex has now started to roll out to children aged between 5 and 11 who are considered to be most at risk of Covid-19, or live with someone who is. More information is available on the [Sussex Health & Care Partnership website](#).

You can book [free travel to and from your Covid-19 vaccination appointment](#), if you have no other means to get there, by calling Sussex Health & Care Partnership's travel coordinator on 01444 275008.

Travel

All testing measures for eligible fully vaccinated travellers arriving in the UK will be removed from 4am tomorrow (Thursday 11 February), simplifying the rules ahead of the half term holiday. [More information on the changes here](#).

More local information on Covid-19

Falling in love with our dark skies



Don't close the curtains as night falls, instead make the most of the star-spangled darkness with some stargazing, astrophotography or nightscape walks!

Our Experience West Sussex website has some great ideas to explore West Sussex by both day and night. Click on the button below to discover the magic of the night sky.

And from tomorrow (11 February) you can make even more of the starry, starry night by taking part in the [Dark Skies Festival](#) organised by the South Downs National Park.

[Discover the delights of our dark skies](#)

Spotlight on children's mental health

We're supporting Children's Mental Health Week this week by helping to shine a spotlight on the importance of children's and young people's mental health.

Local school Handcross Primary, in Haywards Heath, sent us wonderful films of children talking about what they're most proud of achieving, what's kept them happy during the pandemic and how they've helped each other.



You can watch the video [here](#).

A huge thank you to the pupils involved and for sharing with us.

Many schools and teams are running wellbeing sessions this week and we hope young people, parents and carers take a moment to reflect on this year's theme of 'Growing Together'.

Our Your Mind Matters website below offers advice, resources and details of free courses and organisations that can help you support your child with their wellbeing and mental health.

[Support and advice at Your Mind Matters](#)

New priorities for adult social care



Your feedback is helping to shape the future of adult social care services across West Sussex until 2025.

'The life you want to lead' is the name of our new strategy which outlines five priorities we will focus on to support residents.

The priorities reflect the responses to our public survey, workshops, group discussions and one-to-one interviews held between September and December last year. They will inform our decision making on adult social care issues.

[More info about the new strategy](#)

Recycle the love this Valentine's Day!

Share your Valentine's Day love with the environment too by recycling your cards and wrapping paper after the big day.

And if you're looking to buy your loved one flowers, try looking out for ones grown in the UK and without plastic wrap. They can be easily composted at home to give a little love back to your garden once the blooms start to fade.



Or why not try something a little less traditional and buy your loved one a houseplant instead? These are great tokens of affection as they carry on for years - when given love!

Remember that by being 'enviromantic' and by helping us to recycle all your cans, tins, paper, cardboard, glass and plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays all year round, you're sharing love with the world by saving our natural resources. Thank you!

[A-Z of Recycling](#)

Rail closure alert in Mid Sussex



Major railway engineering works are taking place between 19 and 27 February which will see rail closures in the Mid Sussex area.

The railway closure will be between Three Bridges and Brighton and Three Bridges and Lewes. There will also be three weekend closures for the works: Saturday 12 to Sunday 13 February, Saturday 5 to Sunday 6 March and

Sunday 3 April.

Replacement bus services will run between the closed stations and there will be an amended service across the wider Southern, Thameslink and Great Northern Network.

[Journey planners](#) now contain alternative routes available during the works, and passengers are advised to plan and recheck their journeys near to their time of travel.

[More info on the engineering works](#)

Love books about love?



With Valentine's Day coming up on Monday, there's no better time to fall in love with West Sussex libraries - and maybe grab a romance book or two!

This is the love themed display at Littlehampton Library, but check out the link below to find where your nearest library is.

[Find your nearest library](#)

More news

- Next month West Sussex residents have an opportunity to meet their local county councillors at the second round of County Local Forum sessions and ask any questions they have on county council-related business. [Click here to see dates and times.](#)
- Further [essential work is ongoing to remove Ash trees which could pose a risk to road users](#) because of Ash Dieback infection and the potential for falling branches.

- An urgent warning has been issued [after hundreds of illegal disposal e-cigarettes were seized from shops in West Sussex.](#)
- Our [West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service](#) has welcomed five new retained (on-call) [firefighters](#) to the service.



You can find all the [school term dates](#) including half term holidays for this year and 2023 on our website?

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