



news release

29 January 2025

Proposed County Council budget to go to Full Council for final decision

West Sussex County Council's Cabinet today (Wednesday 29 January) endorsed proposals to deliver a balanced budget for the year ahead and provide support for the most vulnerable in line with its Council Plan priorities.

The decision means the proposed budget for 2025/26 and Council Plan will now go before Full Council on Friday 14 February for a final decision. Members of the public are invited to attend the meeting at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester, or follow online via a [webcast](#).

The council's priorities, which are underpinned by a cross-cutting theme of 'protecting the environment', are:

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1. Keeping people safe in vulnerable situations
2. A sustainable and prosperous economy
3. Helping people and communities fulfil their potential
4. Making best use of resources

To meet increasing demand pressures and cost of services, particularly in social care, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and home to school transport, the County Council is proposing to spend more than £2.2 billion in 2025/26 on vital services, such as:

- Caring for adults and keeping people healthy - £553m
- Managing schools and education, children's social care and support - £1,283m

- Fire and Rescue services and supporting communities - £65m
- Protecting the environment, recycling and waste disposal - £98m
- Maintaining our roads and providing transport - £87m

An additional £47.4m is allocated in the proposed budget this year for service demand pressures and continued additional investment in the county's roads.

The pressures facing the County Council outweigh the funding received from government and a balanced budget is proposed by increasing council tax by 4.99% (2% for adults' social care and 2.99% for general fund services), and spending reductions of £12.3m.

A public consultation was held at the end of last year to ask residents for their views on how county council finances and services are prioritised. 75% of respondents said they generally agreed with the County Council's priorities. Overall, responses showed a desire for the council to prioritise essential services, community infrastructure, safety, and have clear accountability in financial management.

Almost two thirds of respondents thought more should be spent on maintaining the county's 4,000km of roads and providing transport. A further £1m of revenue funding has been included for highways, in addition to £4m added last year. This coupled with an extra £10m of investment through the capital programme will enable us to be more proactive in maintaining our highways infrastructure.

The consultation results show a clear preference for the option to lobby the government for more long-term sufficient funding, which the council is committed to continue to do. Increasing council tax was the least favoured option.

Cllr Jeremy Hunt, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property, said: "The pressures facing local government finances have been on-going for several years and show no signs of abating. We understand why our residents are not keen to see council tax increase. We share this view. However, government funding continues to be insufficient to meet the growing needs of our residents, which means the only alternative would be to cut front-line services. We are determined to protect these vital services and continue to be there for vulnerable residents who rely on us, so, reluctantly we are proposing this increase."

Despite the proposals to deliver a balanced budget for the coming year, there remains a budget gap of between £50m and £191m between 2026/27 and 2029/30 depending on the level of council tax increase in these years.

Cllr Paul Marshall, Leader of West Sussex County Council, said: "We are particularly concerned about the growing population and rising complexity of needs which are increasing demand for adult social care as well as making it more expensive to meet care needs.

"The adult social care sector is facing serious challenges which is why, together with the Cabinet Member for Adults Services, I have written to government to raise serious concerns over growing pressures in the sector, particularly the challenges faced by care providers.

"We will continue to lobby government for adequate long-term funding to provide the financial resources we need to deliver on the priorities set out in our Council Plan."

Ends

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