

# Residents' views sought on difficult decisions for balancing the budget

**EMBARGOED UNTIL: 12PM MONDAY 12 JUNE 2023**

12 June 2023

Hampshire County Council is asking people for their views on ways to help the Authority prepare its budgets over the next two years, through to April 2025, as it looks to balance the books in future years in the face of rising costs, higher demand for local services and years of underfunding by central Government.

To date, by planning ahead and using its reserves carefully, the County Council has successfully found ways to deliver services differently and more efficiently, saving £640 million from its budgets since 2008, but how it continues to deliver local services in future is getting harder with much less money available.

Leader of Hampshire County Council, Councillor Rob Humby explained: "Hampshire County Council has a very strong reputation for making the most of taxpayers' money and delivering high performing services to our 1.4 million residents.

"We support over 400 Hampshire schools to deliver a top-class education to pupils, safeguard almost 10,000 vulnerable children and young people across our county at risk of harm and support growing numbers of older people and adults with complex social care needs – around 18,500 individuals – as well as support people's health and wellbeing. On top of all this, we also look after more than 5,000 miles of Hampshire roads, and provide things like household waste recycling centres, streetlights, libraries, and look after the countryside and rights of way, amongst many other things.

"To be able to continue to deliver these services over the last decade, we've taken many steps to ensure the County Council makes best use of every penny – from changing how we work, generating income and sharing resources with other public sector organisations, using technology to work more efficiently, and disposing of land and buildings we no longer need. We have set aside money in reserve to help us bridge funding shortfalls we've faced along the way – giving our budgets a lifeline when there hasn't been enough money to go around. For years, we and other county councils nationally have also been urging Government to fund our councils differently so we can continue to serve residents in future.

"Despite all these measures and having no alternative but to increase council tax to the maximum we're allowed this year – it still won't be enough in the years to come. There will still be a £132 million gap in our budget by 2025/2026, and by law, we must set a balanced budget. This means some really difficult decisions will need to be made, which will impact some of the services the County Council can continue to deliver. We're now consulting on ideas of how we can balance the books and would like to hear people's views for how we can continue to make the most of the public's money."

news release

The budget consultation presents a range of options that could contribute towards balancing the budget. These might involve:

- introducing and increasing charges for some services;
- lobbying central Government for legislative change;
- generating additional income;
- using the County Council's reserves;
- reducing and changing services;
- increasing Council Tax;
- changing local government arrangements in Hampshire.

It also invites feedback about the potential impacts of these options, and alternative proposals for how the required savings can be made. The aim is to establish an 'in principle' approach to balancing the budget.

The consultation runs from **midday on Monday 12 June 2023 to 11:59pm on 23 July 2023**.

Councillor Humby added: "We would like to hear from as many people in Hampshire as possible – from residents, to businesses, schools, universities, community and voluntary groups, and our partners, to help us understand and consider the potential impact of any changes proposed. The views submitted through this consultation will be collated and used to shape savings proposals that will be considered in the autumn. No prior decisions have been made regarding the proposals. Decisions relating to specific services will be subject to further, more detailed, consultation."

People can take part in the consultation from midday on Monday 12 June, via the online response form on the consultation webpage: [www.hants.gov.uk/budgetconsultation](http://www.hants.gov.uk/budgetconsultation).

There is also a full information pack about the proposals in the consultation on this webpage, as well as details of how you can respond, including how to request and return a paper copy.

**ENDS**

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