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| NEWS RELEASE  | # |

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| 18 January 2024  |
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| **Budget 2024/25: thank you for your input as council budget plans progress**  |
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|  55749_31.10.23Thank you to everyone who gave us their views on Our Council Plan and proposals for the 2024/25 budget.The county council remains committed to doing all we can to protect and invest in vital services across West Sussex. This can be seen in the budget papers which describe the significant levels of funding being committed to the critical services the County Council continues to provide to meet the priorities in the Council Plan.We asked for views on our priorities, the services we deliver and where you would prefer us to invest money, and how best to achieve a balanced budget.* More than 3,300 residents, staff and partners responded.
* 68.2% of respondents agreed with [Our Council Plan](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/policies-and-reports/corporate-policy-and-reports/our-council-plan/) priorities for keeping people safe from vulnerable situations, a sustainable and prosperous economy, helping people and communities fulfil their potential and making best use of resources underpinned by the cross-cutting theme of protecting the environment.
* 37% of respondents disagreed with the where the council spends its money, compared to 28% who agreed, 32% neither agreed or disagreed.
* The service area most commonly selected across all respondents for increased funding was highways and transport. More on our [Better Roads](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/maintaining-roads-verges-and-pavements/road-maintenance/better-roads/) programme.
* The service area most commonly selected to decrease funding was finance and property, followed by adults’ social care (including Public Health).
* Highways and transport, and fire and rescue and community support (including libraries) were areas least selected to decrease spending on.
* The services used the most by respondents over the last 12 months were waste services, such as household waste and recycling centres, followed by rights of way, footpaths, cycleways or country parks and libraries and archive services.

Council Leader Councillor Paul Marshall said:“Thank you to everyone who’s taken the time to have their say in our consultation on Our Council Plan and budget proposals.“WSCC spends over £2bn per annum to ensure our residents, communities and businesses receive the services and support they need and deserve. Our budget proposals show once again how committed the County Council is to the funding and delivery of services that are so important for the residents and businesses across the County. I hope that everyone takes the opportunity to look at where council tax money is being spent and to see also how we are making sure it is spent where it is most needed and can make most difference for our communities."We want to be able to continue to do this but must ensure we receive the funding necessary to deliver our services. We will continue to ensure we receive what the people of West Sussex deserve.“In the context of the cost pressures we’re facing, not least in adults’ and children’s services, we are currently doing well to balance our overall budget while retaining our focus on services that support vulnerable people and investment in areas that help us to deliver the priorities in Our Council Plan.“Our current financial position is challenging but, we have been able to put forward proposals which will achieve a balanced budget for the year ahead while we protect frontline services and rise to the need to fund the additional demands they face.“Following the news from Government’s announcement about local government funding in late December, the Cabinet will be recommending a 4.99% Council Tax increase to ensure it can continue to deliver its vital services“We have outlined this position to our MPs in West Sussex, something our survey showed our residents wanted us to do.“Backed by your response to our consultation, we are calling on our representatives at Westminster to lobby the government to provide additional funding to address the pressures we are facing for 2025/26 and onwards.”Cllr Jeremy Hunt, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property added: “Despite robust financial management over many years, ensuring that  we have a financially sound and balanced budget in place is getting ever more challenging, which is why we are needing to increase Council Tax as well as dipping into our reserves. Despite these challenges we are still proposing a budget that continues to deliver for the residents, businesses and communities of West Sussex, but we need support from our local MPs to ensure that Government listens to the needs of our county if those services are to be sustainable.”**Next steps**:The county council’s [Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee](https://westsussex.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=165&MId=3527) will consider the proposals and consultation responses at its meeting on Wednesday 24 January.The committee will provide its comments to [Cabinet](https://westsussex.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=3340) ahead of its meeting on Tuesday 30 January. Cabinet will review the refreshed Council Plan, 2024/25 revenue budget and capital programme to approve them for recommendation to [Full Council](https://westsussex.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=136) on Friday 16 February.At Full Council, the proposals and any amendments proposed by other political groups will be presented and debated, followed by a vote.You can find agendas for each meeting, watch the meeting webcast live or watch again at a later date via the links above.For latest news and information on our budget visit <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/Budget>.**ENDS** **For further information please contact the news desk on 0330 222 8090 or email** **pressoffice@westsussex.gov.uk****. For urgent out-of-hours enquiries please call 07767 098415.** Facebook  Twitter |

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