

Update from Hampshire County Council

March 2023

2023/24 budget approved

Hampshire County Council's £2.6bn spending plans for 2023/24 have been approved. Its council tax precept for the financial year beginning 1 April 2023, will increase by a total of 4.99%, of which 2% will go specifically towards adults' social care, in line with Government policy. This equates to an annual charge of £1,460.25 for a Band D property – an increase of £69.45 per year or approximately £1.34 a week.

Capital budget projects totaling £645.3m over the next three years include:

- £175m investment in new and extended school buildings to provide school places for children in Hampshire, giving a total of 18,874 new school places by September 2025.
- £142m for structural maintenance and improvement of roads and bridges.
- £103m of Integrated Transport Plan schemes including £58m of schemes focused on walking and cycling improvements.
- £0.3m funding towards the County Council's Flood Risk and Coastal Defence Programme as part of our response to the challenge of climate change.

Leader of the County Council, Councillor Rob Humby, said: *"Each year, the County Council is tested to the limits in continuing to deliver a balanced budget, which is required by law. Planning for this upcoming financial year has been no different, and we have had to navigate further intense pressures resulting from the cost-of-living crisis, inflation and workforce pressures which are pushing up costs, and growing demand in key areas such as social care for the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities – which far outweighs available Government funding."*

"We are also acutely aware of the very difficult decisions Hampshire residents face in their own household budgets to make ends meet, but reluctantly, in order to help deliver a balanced budget for 2023/24, we have no other choice but to increase the council tax precept. This is a decision we have not taken lightly. But even after this increase, we are still left with a £50.8 million shortfall in our revenue budget which we will have to fill using our reserves – built to buffer this and next year's anticipated budget shortfalls.

The increase will generate £37m of vital extra income towards the delivery of crucial, high performing services to the people of Hampshire in 2023/24, and still means that Hampshire has one of the lowest council tax precepts of any county in England.

Schools

More than 97 per cent of parents in Hampshire have been offered a place for their child at one of their three preferences for a secondary school in September 2023, with 90 per cent offered a place at their first preference school. The County Council received 15,400 on-time applications this year – an increase of 418 applications compared to the number received for places in September 2022 (14,982).

Parents and carers who have not secured a place at one of their preferred secondary schools this year are urged to please visit HCC's [website](#) for advice and guidance on their options. The Admissions Team is busy processing primary school applications with school place offers due to go out to parents on 17 April 2023.

An interesting point to note - at the time of the implementation of the SEN Reforms in 2014, Hampshire County Council was supporting around 5,000 children with special educational needs. Since the reforms,

this figure has risen to over 15,000 children. Such increases do place significant pressure on local authorities' ability to provide support.

Parish lengthsman scheme

The County Council's parish lengthsman scheme has been maintained for the coming financial year. The term 'lengthsman' dates back to the 1800s, referring to workers who were responsible for keeping a particular length of road neat and tidy. The modern role of Parish Lengthsman was reintroduced in Hampshire in 2010, in order to give communities more say in how their local area is maintained.

The scheme funds a local 'lengthsman' to carry out straightforward and low risk maintenance activities on footways, highways, and rights of way. The work mainly involves jobs that can have a big impact, such as ditch clearing, hedge cutting and sign cleaning. The scheme has since been successful in giving 186 local parish and town councils an opportunity to prioritise and deliver their own small scale highway maintenance works that will be of high value locally.

Grants to fight rural crime

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Donna Jones, has announced a fund to award grants to help tackle rural crime, supporting initiatives to reduce rural crime or support victims. The application window closes at 2pm on Friday 21 April 2023 and successful applications will be announced in mid to late May 2023. Applications can be made at <https://www.hampshire-pcc.gov.uk/safer-together/funding/apply-for-funding>.

Donna Jones has presented her budget plan for the years 2023-24. She had previously pledged to increase police numbers by 600 and is on track to recruit these by the end of March. Her new budget has added an additional 50 officers to these numbers, to be funded through the police precept of council tax.

She has also announced that the Police station will return to Petersfield Square.

Consultation on post-16 transport policy

The County Council has launched its annual consultation on the Post-16 Transport Policy. This policy outlines the provision of transport for young people over the age of 16 with special needs or disabilities, who require additional support to access education or training suitable to their needs.

The consultation includes an opportunity to comment on the proposed increase in the parental contribution by 27.1%, in line with the increased costs of running the service. This increase is being driven by national driver shortages, a limited number of transport operators on the market, and an increase in fuel prices. Families in receipt of income-based free school meals and certain means-tested benefits will not be required to pay an annual charge.

The consultation will run for a period of six weeks until 11:59pm on Sunday 2 April, please visit the [Hampshire County Council website](#) for details.

1. Coronation grants

A new grant window for Hampshire County Councillors will open from 1st to 21st April. 'Member's Grants for the Coronation' will offer grants up to £1k to support local events.

You can see details at <https://www.hants.gov.uk/community/grants/grants-list/county-councillor>

2. Traffic Management

From 1st April 2023 the county council will take back traffic management and on-street parking functions from the District/Borough Councils. On street parking functions within the City of Winchester will revert to the county on 1st October and off-street parking will remain the responsibility of the District/Boroughs.

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