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| **news release** **29 October 2024** **Cabinet agrees next steps to set budget for year ahead** Cabinet Members at West Sussex County Council have set out the next steps in setting their budget for the year ahead, as they seek to close a gap of up to £38.5m. The County Council reported in July that it was facing a budget gap of £60m in 2025/26. This figure has now reduced to £38.5m, and projections show the figure could be brought down further to £8.2m if a decision is made to increase council tax. Cabinet Members today (Tuesday 29 October) agreed to launch a public consultation to ask residents for their views on how finances and services are prioritised. Councillors also agreed to continue to lobby government for an increase in their funding allocation. Cllr Paul Marshall, Leader of West Sussex County Council, said: “We again find ourselves in the difficult position of having to make decisions about vital services for our residents, when the funding available to us is not enough to pay for them. “We are doing everything to prioritise essential services, especially to the most vulnerable residents and communities, and we have already made good progress to reduce our budget gap. However, further action is needed between now and February when we will set our final budget.” The local budget update comes as the national government is about to detail its first autumn budget tomorrow (30 October). However, the final level of funding on offer to West Sussex County Council will not be known until the Local Government Financial Settlement is published in December. Cllr Jeremy Hunt, West Sussex Cabinet Member for Finance and Property, said: “We are continuing to see a high demand for our services, in particular social care, and next year we are currently predicting we will need to invest an additional £23.9m in vital services. Also, alongside our normal pressures such as inflation, we have the added challenge in setting our budget for 2025/26 of a new Government, who up until this point have not given us any indication of their proposed funding plans for local authorities. This has made the budget setting process extremely challenging.”The public consultation is due to launch in November. The Cabinet will consider feedback from the public consultation at a meeting in January before recommending budget to Full Council in February for a final decision.**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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