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| **news release** **14 February 2025** **County council agrees a balanced budget without cuts to services** [WS33612 Budget Campaign_social media banners_youtube](https://dmscdn.vuelio.co.uk/publicitem/b57fb99f-bedf-4b23-ba33-7b8383606fae)              A balanced budget for the year ahead which will provide support for the most vulnerable, without cuts to front-line services, has been agreed by West Sussex County Council. The spending and investment plans for 2025/26 were confirmed at a meeting of the Full Council at County Hall, Chichester, today (Friday 14 February).In the coming year, the county council will spend more than £2.2 billion on vital services, including:* £1,284 million for schools, education, and children’s social care
* £553 million to care for adults and keep people healthy
* £98 million to protect the environment, recycling and waste disposal
* £87 million to maintain roads and provide transport
* £65 million for Fire and Rescue services and support for communities
* £5 million to support the local economy

The county council reported in July last year it was facing a budget gap of £60 million amid increasing demand pressures and the rising cost of services, particularly in social care, special educational needs and disabilities, and home to school transport.The pressures facing the county council outweigh the funding received from government, and a balanced budget has been achieved with spending reductions of £12.3 million, and an increase in council tax of 4.99% (2% for adults’ social care and 2.99% for general fund services). The increase in council tax for a Band D property is £85.59 per year or approximately £1.65 per week.Cllr Jeremy Hunt, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property, said: “We have allocated an additional £47.4 million for service demand pressures along with a further £22.9 for pay and price inflation, giving a gross total of just over £70m, in the budget as well as continued additional investment in our roads.“This means we will continue to be there for our most vulnerable residents and at the same time we’re able to invest in and maintain essential infrastructure such as our highways.“We appreciate an increase in tax is not ideal. But unfortunately, when government calculates how much money we should receive, it always assumes we will increase council tax. To not do this would leave us out of pocket and could ultimately mean we would be forced to cut services instead.”The agreed budget plans support the county council’s priorities, set out in its Council Plan, which are: * Keeping people safe in vulnerable situations
* A sustainable and prosperous economy
* Helping people and communities fulfil their potential
* Making best use of resources

The priorities are underpinned by a cross-cutting theme of 'protecting the environment'.Cllr Paul Marshall, Leader of West Sussex County Council, said: “We were pleased to see in our recent public consultation that 75% of respondents agreed with our priorities. We are facing extremely challenging times in terms of local government finances, particularly around social care, but we are confident that the funds we do have are being spent in the best possible way.“Unfortunately, despite the proposals to deliver a balanced budget for the coming year, there remains a budget gap of between £50 million and £191 million for the following four years depending on the level of council tax increase. “We have balanced our budget for 2025/26 but the challenges we face continue and the impact on our suppliers through NI increase can not be underestimated. Whilst we have balanced the budget for this year, we will still be facing increasing financial challenges in the years to come, and we will continue to call for an increase in government funding.“The future of local government in West Sussex, and Sussex more widely, will be determined by plans for devolution and the re-organisation of councils into unitary authorities. The details of these are yet to be determined, and in the meantime, we will continue to lobby ministers on the need for a national funding solution to meet the local needs for social care, SEND provision, and home-to-school transport for our communities.” Alongside the day-to-day revenue budget, a five-year capital programme has also been agreed, which will see investments of £118.6 million in 2025/26 and £739.9 million across the five-year period to 2029/30. The main areas of capital investment for 2025/26 are:* £50 million in maintaining roads and providing transport, including an annual highway works programme, major A roads investment, bus services, and street lighting.
* £25.8 million in managing schools and education, children's social care and support, including adaptions in mainstream schools to accommodate a wider variety of needs and work to increase the number of specialist school places to enhance the choices for children with special educational needs.
* £2.3 million to protect the environment, focussed on investment into renewable energy, work to lower the carbon footprint of county council buildings, and changes needed to waste disposal.

Find out more about the county council [2025-2026 Budget](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/campaigns/budget-2025-2026/). **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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