



# Shropshire Council Budget Consultation 2023/24

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved/budget-consultation-202324/>

We're very aware that services Shropshire Council provides are highly valued by our communities, whether they're statutory (the services we must provide) or discretionary (the ones we can choose to provide). To deliver these services, we spend over £550 million annually.

As in recent years, we know that we'll have to make some difficult decisions setting the 2023/24 budget to ensure that resources continue to be prioritised, and that money is directed to where it's needed most.

Our savings proposals amount to £50m. This is a huge sum. However, we're not proposing to reduce our current service provision by that amount. Rather, we're proposing to reduce the forecast cost of services in next year by that amount. We hope that residents will not see an enormous change in the services we provide, even though how we carry out our services is going to change a lot.

In order to do this, we'll do things differently, and more cheaply, and make those changes very rapidly. Some things will be different, but it won't be worse, and may even be better. This is because we really understand that everyone in Shropshire is currently dealing with a very concerning rise in the cost of living. The impacts of rising inflation swiftly following the COVID-19 pandemic is also presenting Shropshire Council with significant financial challenges.

The council must set a balanced budget each year, meaning that we can't spend more than our income. To achieve this, we're proposing a transformation and efficiency programme that will enable delivery of the Shropshire Plan and bring our budget into balance. As part of the budget process, we want your views on our budget plans to help inform councillors to agree a final budget for 2023/24.

The approach to planning our budget for 2023/24 has been guided by a number of key principles

- Putting services first; these proposals are guided by the best way to deliver services and our Shropshire Plan priorities
- Seeking to increase overall efficiency and effectiveness of council services significantly as our response to rising costs, rather than simply 'cutting' services back
- Planning to make significant changes rapidly so that we can secure a sustainable financial base for the coming years
- Taking difficult decisions and planning to deliver those.

The background to our financial situation is set out in the update to our financial strategy. This financial strategy also includes details of our operational savings and income generation proposals. These savings proposals are also attached to this webpage. We've expanded the descriptions of the proposals to provide a clearer sense of what we propose to change and the expected impact (but the reference numbers remain the same).

We're launching this consultation ahead of the Christmas break as we know that some residents will be able to respond during their break, and others may prefer to wait until the

new year. The responses received will be summarised and reported back to our councillors, alongside the budget proposals.

## **Council's priorities and planned spend for 2023/24**

### Our priorities

The council's Shropshire Plan sets out our vision and priorities for the next three years. We want to see Shropshire living the best life. It focuses on having healthy people, a healthy environment and a healthy economy, with a healthy council to make this happen.

Within the budget proposals for next year and the medium-term financial strategy over the next five years, we're starting to link the Shropshire Plan priorities to specific service objectives. This will look at how we can do things more efficiently and with better outcomes, getting 'from A to B' in the shortest, quickest way we can.

There are some simple, overarching principles (not a detailed plan) as to how we'll do this. These principles reflect the Shropshire Plan objectives and help guide how we can look again at how we provide services such as social care for older adults, highways maintenance, support for young people, waste collection, support to schools, and planning. Many of these proposals focus on improving outcomes for people, thus helping to increase efficiency overall. These proposals feature in the budget because they help to reduce our future costs.

The key is to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of all of our activities – seeking to reduce costs where possible, use new technology to help make tasks simpler (for example by analysing data in a new way, or automating routine tasks where possible), and looking all the time at the outcomes we're trying to achieve, and whether they're being achieved in practice, to improve our effectiveness.

As such, these budget proposals aim to build on what we all learnt during the pandemic, especially how agile we can be, to be more confident in how we approach future challenges, and to ensure that our estimated future costs are contained within what we can afford. Some of the proposals already being developed include:

- Reducing our use of bed and breakfast for people in need of temporary accommodation.
  - This was a necessity during the pandemic to help keep people safe, but is not a good outcome for the individuals affected. For example, it's not very easy for a family to live in B&B accommodation for several weeks or more. It's also costly to the council.
  - So, we're trying to reduce use of B&B by finding better alternatives that are more comfortable for those people who need temporary accommodation. This is also less costly for the council. If we can reduce B&B use to almost nil, this will save us around £2m.
- A project called 'Stepping Stones' was already in place, but because of its success we want to expand it further.
  - It involves looking at the care needs of vulnerable children and how we can best meet these. Often, when children are first in contact with social services, they have higher needs (which cost more for us to meet). Over time, often those needs reduce.

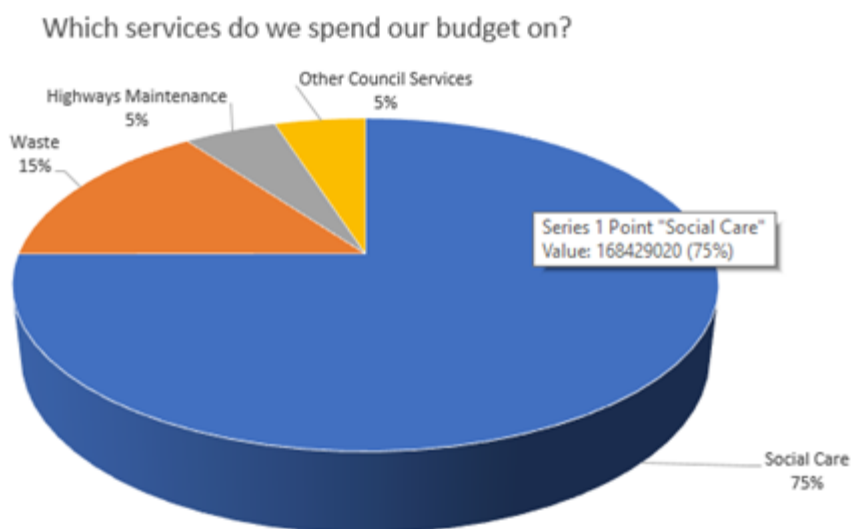
- The Stepping Stones project is a way in which we can ensure that each child has the support that gives them the best chance to flourish – this reduces their needs, improves their outcomes, and reduces overall costs.
- More opportunities to develop these sorts of improvements have been identified, and some of our proposals involve working these up into more detailed proposals, to help improve outcomes and reduce costs.

#### Funding to support the council

Since the government has reduced the level of funding available to local authorities through the general government grants, we've become increasingly reliant on the level of council tax and income from fees and charges that we can generate to deliver our statutory services.

As new houses are developed in Shropshire, and residents pay council tax, this increases the income due to the council. However, with an increased population this also increases the demand and the overall cost of services.

Currently the bulk of our expenditure relates to adult and children's social care, as shown in the chart below. This crucial and statutory service incurs 75% of the total net budget of the council, with 15% spent on waste and recycling services, and 5% on highways maintenance. This then leaves only 5% of the net budget to deliver all the other services that the council provides.



In 2022/23 the council, like all residents in Shropshire grappling with the cost of living crisis, is experiencing inflationary pressures and so needs to find ways of either generating additional income to offset these cost increases, or reducing expenditure. During the current financial year we're projecting an £11m overspend, resulting mainly from increased cost pressures in adults and children's social care where the cost of care has grown significantly. Mitigating action across all services will continue over the last few months of the year to try and achieve an overall balanced position without the need to use reserves.

We're still awaiting details of government funding for 2023/24 which are expected to be announced in December 2022. However, best estimates of funding likely to be received have already been anticipated in the budget proposals.

## Survey Introduction

This survey will take you through the key information that the council has used in formulating its budget plans for 2023/24. Within this document you will see questions where we require your opinion on our proposals.

If you need help in navigating the document please call in at one of our Shropshire Local sites, or call us on 0345 678 9077 and we'll be happy to assist you.

You can also respond to this engagement survey in writing:

**Email:** [TellUs@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:TellUs@shropshire.gov.uk)

**Post:** Feedback and Insight Team, Shropshire Council, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shropshire SY2 6ND

If you'd like the survey in an alternative format, please email [TellUs@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:TellUs@shropshire.gov.uk) and describe the support you need to allow you to respond.

Please note that only one response per device will be possible, so if more than one person in your household wishes to respond, please use different devices to do so, or if you have only one device available please submit any additional responses using one of the methods above.

Your views will form part of a report which will be considered by full council when they discuss and agree on the final budget.

## Survey

In the Autumn Statement, the government allowed local authorities to increase council tax by a maximum of 2.99% and to add a further adult social care precept of up to 2%, and has built this into its assumptions about our funding. The government assumes that we will make use of this as it allocates other funding to us (so, we won't receive more in grant if we charge less in council tax).

Given the level of inflationary pressures that the council is facing to deliver its statutory services, it plans to increase council tax by a total of 4.99% (a council tax increase of 2.99% and an increase in the adult social care precept of 2%) which is an additional £1.38 per week on a Band C property, the most common banding of property in Shropshire.

1. What is your view on Shropshire Council's proposal to increase council tax by 4.99% (2.99% on council tax, 2% on the adult social care precept)?

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion / don't know

2. If you disagree, do you think council tax should be increased above that amount (requiring a local referendum) in order to help prevent cuts in public services?

- Yes
- No

3. Please add any comments below about Shropshire Council's proposal to increase council tax:

4. The council aims to use the Shropshire Plan to help prioritise activities, and stop or reduce work where it does not directly support the objectives of the plan. What are your views on this overarching approach?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know / no opinion

Please add any comments to explain your answer below...

## Savings Proposals

The increase in council tax and other funding sources will not be sufficient to deliver a balanced budget, so in line with the council's approach to only spend on areas that support the council's priorities, it has set out a savings plan. It should be noted that the majority of [the savings proposed](#) are generated through efficiency measures. Where any savings have been identified that will be a change in policy, there will be a further consultation on those specific areas prior to implementation.

The total savings planned by priority area for 2023/24 are as follows:

- Healthy People - £12.4m
- Healthy Economy - £7.2m
- Healthy Environment - £0.1m
- Healthy Organisation - £31.5m

**TOTAL SAVINGS £51.2m**

[The Medium Term Financial Strategy \(MTFS\)](#) presented to cabinet on 14 December 2022 details the individual savings plans (page 25 of the MTFS). However, a brief summary of the most significant savings proposed for each Shropshire Plan Priority are detailed over the following pages for your comment.

## Healthy People savings proposals (2023/24 saving - £12.4m)

The Healthy People proposals include a number of measures that will help us to save money and be more efficient by spotting issues as early as possible, and providing help that reduces the need for expensive care packages later down the line. There are also proposals for managing partnerships, self-responsibility and tackling inequalities.

The specific savings proposals include expanding and enhancing the reablement model to improve outcomes for people and help them to remain independent and living at home as long as possible; reviewing the model for care at home; increasing local foster carers to reduce independent foster care costs; reducing the number of long-term residential childcare placements; and reviewing the supported living model.

5. What are your views on the proposed savings relating to the Healthy People priority?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know / no opinion

Do you have any comments to explain your answer or any other suggestions?

## Healthy Economy savings proposals (2023/24 saving - £7.2m)

The Healthy Economy saving proposals relate to making Shropshire a safe, strong and vibrant destination.

The specific savings proposals include reviewing the waste and adult services private finance initiative (PFI) contract costs to secure greater efficiency; increasing car parking charges specifically in relation to permit schemes and concessions; generating additional income through fees and charges being increased to reflect the impact of inflation on services providing services; reducing the ongoing budgets for running the shopping centre and development sites.

6. What are your views on the proposed savings relating to the Healthy Economy priority?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

No opinion / don't know

Do you have any comments to explain your answer or any other suggestions?

## Healthy Environment (2023/24 saving - £0.1m)

The Healthy Environment saving proposals cover three specific areas, the climate change strategy and actions; natural and historic environment and safe communities.

The specific savings proposals include the implementation of green waste charges from 2024 (saving reduced to reflect costs of implementation in 2023/24); working in more digital ways to reduce uneconomical service delivery; and installing battery units to store electricity from PV installations.

7. What are your views on the proposed savings relating to the Healthy Environment priority?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion / don't know

Do you have any comments to explain your answer or any other suggestions?

## Healthy Organisation (2023/24 saving - £31.5m)

The Healthy Organisation saving proposals focus on how we work as an organisation and how we align our resources to achieve the goals in the Shropshire Plan.

The specific savings proposals include reducing staff budgets across the council through natural wastage through new and more efficient ways of working; allowing for a vacancy factor from staffing budgets; charging relevant implementation costs to transform the council to capital; transformation and efficiency programme; securing better interest

received on cash balances; reviewing client fees for services such as adult social care and ensuring these are in line with national guidance.

8. What are your views on the proposed savings relating to the Healthy Organisation priority?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion / don't know

Do you have any comments to explain your answer or any other suggestions?

## Capital programme

Alongside an extensive transformation and efficiency programme, the council is also planning to invest £114.7m in a capital programme in 2023/24. Capital projects are one off investments typically into buildings or infrastructure or machinery. Capital funding cannot by law be used to meet the day-to-day costs of running council services - for example we cannot move money from a capital scheme to pay for adult social care costs.

The capital programme is aligned to support the Shropshire Plan priorities, and the key schemes with capital investment figures for 2023/24 are provided below:

### Healthy People

Includes disabled facilities grants; Whitchurch Swimming & Leisure Facility; Whitchurch Medical Practice; Greenacres Supported Living Scheme.

Capital investment for 2023/24 - £14.9m

### Healthy Economy

Includes highways, schools and landlord maintenance; Housing Revenue Account New Build and Maintenance Programme; highways developments; Broadband Improvements Programme; Schools Future Place Planning.

Capital investment for 2023/24 - £92.4m

### Healthy Environment

Includes street lighting LED replacements; Maesbury Solar Farm

Capital investment for 2023/24 - £6.4m



## Healthy Organisation

Digital transformation and IT replacement programme

Capital investment for 2023/24 - £1m

### Total capital programme - £114.7m

9. What are your views on the investment plans within the proposed capital programme?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion / don't know

Do you have any comments to explain your answer or any other suggestions?

## Overall thoughts

10. Overall, on a scale of strongly favour to strongly oppose, how supportive are you of Shropshire Council's budget proposals outlined for 2023/24?

- Strongly in favour
- Somewhat favour
- Neutral
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

11. Please share your ideas for how we might make further savings or provide any alternative suggestions to those set out within the proposals.

12. Most of the changes outlined in this document refer to transformational changes rather than specific changes to policy or services. The council will consult further on significant changes to services or policy as it works to implement agreed budget plan.

Although opportunity to comment on more detailed proposals will be provided, Shropshire Council works to meet the Equalities Duty and consider social inclusion and health impact within all policy and service changes. If you have any comments now, about how the budget proposals set out above could impact on different groups of people with different characteristics within the community please provide your feedback below.

## About you

We use this information to make sure that we're engaging with all sections of our community, that responses are representative and to further our understanding of the feedback obtained. You don't have to complete this section if you don't want to. Please answer any questions you feel able to.

13. In what capacity are you completing this survey? Please select all that apply...

- A local resident
- A representative of a local business or commercial organisation
- A member of a local interest or community group
- A representative of a local town, parish or rural parish council
- A Shropshire ward councillor
- A Shropshire Council employee
- A visitor to Shropshire or a member of the public living elsewhere
- None of these
- Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

14. What is your gender?

- Male

- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

15. How old are you?

- Under 16
- 16-20
- 21-30
- 31-54
- 55-69
- 70+
- Prefer not to say

16. Do you have any long-standing illness or disability that limits your daily activity?

- Yes, limited a lot
- Yes, limited a little
- No
- Prefer not to say

17. Are you an informal or unpaid carer to a friend or family member who needs regular care and support?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

18. Are you mainly...

- At school?
- At college/university/in further education?
- Working (employed or self-employed)?
- Unemployed?
- A full-time carer or looking after the home?
- Retired?
- Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

19. What is your ethnic origin?

- White (British; Irish; Welsh)
- White (Gypsy, Roma or Irish traveller)
- Other white background eg Bulgarian, French, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, White South African, etc.
- Asian (Asian British; Bangladeshi Chinese; Indian; Japanese; Pakistani; any other Asian background)
- Black (Black African; black British; black Caribbean; any other black background)
- Mixed (White and Asian; white and black African; white and black Caribbean; any other mixed background)
- Arab
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say or don't know

20. Which Shropshire town is nearest to where you live?

### **How we'll use your information**

This survey is anonymous and we shouldn't be able to identify you from your responses.

The information that you've provided will be used to inform Shropshire Council's work to set the council budget, and more widely to inform strategic planning.

We'll only publish anonymised responses, parts of responses, or a summarised version of responses, and will ensure individual survey respondents can't be identified. We may include quotes or comments to illustrate the feedback we receive. Your response will be stored and kept in line with Shropshire Council's retention schedule.

The survey information may be shared with other Shropshire Council services and those commissioned to deliver services on our behalf. We won't share your information with any other external third parties. Your information will be held securely, and if shared it will be shared securely. We comply with data protection laws concerning the protection of personal information, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). For more information on how information is held by Shropshire Council and your rights to gain access to the information we hold on you, please see [our corporate privacy policy](#).

### **Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.**

Please return by email to [TellUs@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:TellUs@shropshire.gov.uk) or by post to: Tell Us, Shropshire Council, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND.