

Introduction

Like councils up and down the country, Shropshire Council faces a very tough financial position and we need your help in shaping some difficult decisions that lie ahead.

The latest reporting shows that we are 80% of the way towards our £51.4m spending reductions target for this financial year, with five months left to report on. [Our plan](#) is to build on these strong foundations to overcome the challenges that still lie ahead into the next financial year and beyond.

Our biggest pressure is that the funding we have to deliver our services hasn't kept pace with the increasing demand that we are seeing, especially in adults' and children's social care, which makes up nearly 80% of the council budget.

Just as an example, the number of children in care in Shropshire has nearly doubled since 2018 and 30% of our residents are now over 60, with a growing number who need support. The cost of delivering this support is also higher than ever, due to stubbornly high rates of inflation.

Essentially, we are having to do much more with less so we can carry on supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities. To keep doing this, we will have to make some difficult decisions.

We will need to change the way we deliver some services, whilst others may need to stop altogether.

We want to understand your priorities, as residents, businesses, employees or stakeholders, so that any future decisions are made with these in mind.

This budget consultation is an opportunity for you to share your thoughts on how we can achieve the £50m spending reductions that we must make before 2025, which includes the 4.99% council tax increase that the Government allocation assumes we will make.

The themes include demand management, increasing efficiency, increasing income, reducing third-party spending and making sure that we are the right size as an organisation.

The survey is based on the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Please be sure to read the full introduction and check out the related documents [on the Consultation page](#) before taking the survey.

The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. We appreciate you sharing your thoughts.

Council Tax

In its funding calculations for Shropshire Council, the Government assumes that we will increase council tax next year by 4.99%. This is made up of a 2% adult social care precept to support the growing costs of adult social care and 2.99% to support all other council services. In its funding calculations for councils, the Government assumes that Shropshire Council will increase council tax by this amount. Increasing council tax by 4.99% raises £10m for Shropshire Council. Not increasing council tax by this amount would add to the £50m spending reductions the council must find.

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)? This is equivalent to an extra £1.57 a week for a band D property.

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

If allowed by Government, please indicate whether you would agree or disagree with applying council tax increases at a higher level?

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

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

Prioritisation

The Council's approach to prioritising spending reductions across Council services is outlined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy as below. Do you agree with this approach to prioritisation with number 1 being our most preferred approach, and 4 is the least preferred approach:

1. Reducing costs and improving efficiency
2. Increasing income raised
3. Reducing spend on suppliers and third parties
4. Reviewing staffing levels

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

Please add anything else you would like to about this approach to prioritisation

Which service areas, if any, should be protected from spending reductions?

Please rank the list below with 1= Most protected service and 16= Least protected service

- Adult Social Care
- Benefits and Welfare (e.g. Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit that the council administers)
- Children and Families, Early Help services and Youth Services
- Children's Social Care
- Economic Growth
- Education, Schools and Home to School Transport
- Highways, Transport, Car Parking and Environmental Maintenance
- Housing Services
- Leisure and outdoor spaces
- Libraries
- Council running costs and support services
- Planning Services
- Public Health Services including drug and alcohol, sexual health and health visiting, school nursing
- Regulatory services, including health protection, environmental health, trading standards and licencing
- Theatre, Arts, Museums and Archives
- Waste and Recycling

Managing Demand Pressures

Do you have any comments to make about the ways Shropshire Council can reduce demand and service pressure (this is not designed to withdraw support from people who need our services)?

Reducing Spend and Finding Efficiencies

Shropshire Council must make savings to achieve a balanced budget. Please share your view on these approaches.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Moving services in-house such as council-managed residential care.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Service reviews designed to overcome any process inefficiencies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of new technology including voice automation to request services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Right-sizing staffing levels (staff reductions will be delivered only when necessary and safe to do so - effectively managing risk).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Energy efficiency and carbon reduction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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

Generating Income

Shropshire Council must generate income to minimise any service loss or reduction. Please share your view on these approaches.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Continuing to explore income generation opportunities (e.g. selling services like training).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Charging for services that are currently free (e.g. charging for some waste collections such as green waste).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing the price/charges for services already paid for (to cover costs and maintain services).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seeking opportunities to attract funding and investment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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

Suggested Options (seen elsewhere)

As part of the council's business as usual, in order to balance our budget, we are already:

- Reviewing council buildings and property assets.
- Transforming and streamlining business processes across the council.
- Reviewing contract and commissioning arrangements to deliver best value.
- Making greater use of automation and digitisation to deliver council services.

However, we may need to take additional steps to reduce spend.

Below are examples of options that other authorities have taken to reduce spend. We have made no decisions on these, but they are provided to give you examples of what others have done.

We would like your views on which options are the most acceptable and which are the least acceptable. Below, we ask you to rank some of these options over others.

Please rank which of these very difficult savings you would find most to least acceptable.

1= Most acceptable savings

16= Least acceptable savings

- Reduce spending on waste through a waste minimisation strategy which could include charging for green waste
- Reduced spending on libraries and leisure centres which could include reducing opening times or fewer premises or increased charges
- Reduce road and highways works and repairs
- Increased car parking charges
- Reduce investment in carbon reduction activities
- Reduce support for public transport
- Reducing investment in businesses and town centres
- Reduction in maintenance of and/or access to parks and outdoor spaces
- Reductions in street cleaning
- Reduced spending on heritage, archive and museum services which could include reducing opening times or fewer premises or increased charges
- Reduce home to school transport funding to a statutory minimum
- Reduced spending on day care services in adult social care, which could include reducing opening times or fewer premises or increased charges.
- Reducing services for refugees and rough sleepers
- Reduce non-statutory early help services for families and young people
- Introduce discretionary additional council tax payments if permitted by Government legislation
- Reduce face-to-face customer contact and replace with automation and self-service where possible

Please share any other thoughts on the actions that other councils have taken:

Capital Programme

Alongside an extensive transformation and efficiency programme, the Council is also planning to invest £136m in a capital programme in 2024/25. 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. However we will consider investing in projects that will help deliver the Shropshire Plan priorities and also schemes that may help deliver efficiencies within the revenue budget. A breakdown of the major areas of capital spend as detailed in the Capital Programme for 2024/25 are detailed in the first chart below.

Within the Council's Capital Strategy, the Council also identifies priority capital schemes which are potential schemes that the Council will consider progressing to full business case prior to these being built into the formal capital programme. The Council has currently identified a further £266.25m of priority schemes to be considered for development over the next 5 years, and this will be funded primarily from external grants and contributions, prior to funding through capital receipt generation and borrowing. **The Council always seeks to maximise external contributions and capital receipts to fund capital schemes. This then prevents the council taxpayer from directly funding any costs in relation to capital schemes.**

The outline areas of spend for the priority schemes are as follows and includes schemes such as the Shrewsbury Smithfield Riverside Development, Swimming in Shrewsbury, North West Relief Road, development of Primary and Secondary schools across the county, Bridgnorth Town Centre Traffic works and SpArC Leisure Centre in Bishops Castle. This is detailed in the second chart below.

Overall, on a scale of strongly favour to strongly oppose, how supportive are you of Shropshire Council's plans for investment in capital schemes as outlined for 2024/25?

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

Overall Thoughts

Overall, on a scale of strongly favour to strongly oppose, how supportive are you of Shropshire Council's budget plan and approach outlined for 2024/25?

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

Please share your ideas for how we might make further savings or provide any alternative suggestions to those set out within the proposals (the box below has a 20,000 character limit).

The council will consult further on any 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.

If you would like to sign up to receive notices of future consultations linked to the budget please follow this link to sign up to receive updates:

[Newsletter Signup](#)

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.

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)

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

How old are you?

- Under 16
- 16-20
- 21-30
- 31-54
- 55-69
- 70-79
- 80+
- Prefer not to say

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

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

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)

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

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](#).