Consultation on Hampshire County Council's Budget for 2027-2028

Introduction

This document is an accessible summary of Hampshire County Council's Budget Consultation written in clear, plain English.

It uses simpler language to explain our ideas.

It may not include all of the information, but it covers the main points.

If you would like help reading and understanding the information, you could ask:

- someone in your family or a friend
- a support worker or a carer.

Some words are in **bold.** This means the writing is thicker and darker.

These are words that some people may be less familiar with. When you see a bold word, we will explain it in the next sentence and in the glossary at the end of this document.

Blue and underlined words show links to websites and email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.

If, after reading this, you want more information, you can find further details in the full Information Pack: https://documents.hants.gov.uk/consultation/budget-consultation-27-28-information-pack.pdf

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About this document

This document is about Hampshire County Council's money situation.

We need to make some difficult decisions about how we use our money.

This document explains the different options we could consider.

What Hampshire County Council does

Hampshire County Council provides public **services** for people in Hampshire.

Services include things like schools, libraries, roads, recycling centres, and support for children, families and adults who need help.

What is most important to us

We have 4 things that are most important to us:

1. Helping people stay healthy and independent
2. Helping communities do well by supporting businesses and new ideas, protecting the environment, and helping Hampshire have a good future.
3. Keeping people safe
4. Providing good services that people need

These help us decide what work to do and how to spend money.

About our budget

Every year, we plan how much money we have to spend on services for people in Hampshire.

This year, Hampshire County Council will plan the **budget** for April 2027 to March 2028.

The **budget** is how much money we will have to spend on services.

The law says we must **balance our budget**.

Balance our budget means not spending more money than we have.

Where our money comes from

Providing services costs money

Most of our money comes from Council Tax.

We also get money from:

- the Government,
- business rates, and
- asking people to pay something towards the cost of some services they use.

Since 2022/23, we have not had enough money to cover all our costs.

We have also used our **reserves** to help pay for services.

Reserves are money that we have saved up over the years

How the money is spent

At the moment we spend about:

- £917 million on Adult Health and Care – things like supporting older adults and disabled adults and helping people stay healthy
- £517 million on Children's Services – things like schools, transport and keeping children safe
- £219 million on Universal Services – things like looking after roads, parks and waste recycling centres
- £133 million on Corporate Services – paying for services that support the Council, such as managing money, computers and supporting staff.
- £103 million on Capital financing and other costs – things like paying back money we borrowed for building schools and fixing roads and saving some money to help with unexpected costs

How we manage our money

Hampshire County Council manages its money carefully.

We want to keep providing good services for people.

Over the last 18 years, we have spent less money while continuing to provide important services.

We have done this by:

- Planning ahead.
- Working in better ways.
- Checking carefully how we spend money.
- Making extra money to help pay for services.
- Giving help first to people who need it most.
- Looking at all other options before stopping or reducing a service.
- Learning from what other councils have done to save money.
- Using savings carefully when costs have gone up or more people need support.

Why we need to think about different ways to balance our budget

We are facing some big challenges that make it harder to **balance our budget**:

- More people need care and support.
- The cost of providing services is going up.
- The money we get from the Government has not increased enough to cover these higher costs.
- Our **reserves** are running out.

Because of this, we expect a **funding gap** of £198.9 million in 2027/28.

A **funding gap** means we do not have enough money to pay for all the services people need.

We need to think about different ways to reduce this **funding gap** and **balance our budget.**

We would need to use more than one option.

Ways we could balance our budget

We need to look at different ways to save money or get more money.

This includes:

1. Working differently to save money.
2. Asking Government for more money and changes to the law.
3. Getting more money from selling services or land.
4. Asking people to pay for some services and putting up charges for others (like parking, ceremonies like weddings, or keeping old records and documents).
5. Reviewing how services are provided
6. Reducing or stopping some services.
7. Delaying some of our spending on things like building repairs or staff training.
8. Increasing Council Tax.
9. Using our **reserves.**

   Reserves are money that we have saved up over the years.
10. Applying to the Government for **Exceptional Financial Support.**

    Exceptional Financial Support is special help from the Government for councils that do not have enough money to pay for all their services.

Each of these options is explained below.

1. **Working differently to save money**

We can save some money by changing how we work.

For example:

- checking spending more carefully
- checking contracts to make sure we get good value for money.

£5.5 million of savings was found for 2026/27.

We can keep looking for ways we can save money for 2027/2028, such as using technology.

Most of the big savings have already been made, so it will be harder to save a lot more money this way.

2. Asking Government for more money and changes to the law

Councils get some of their money from the Government.

The Government also makes the laws that councils must follow.

This means there are some things we cannot change ourselves.

We can ask the Government to give us more money so we can keep services running.

We can also ask the Government to change some rules.

Changing some rules could help us:

- get money in new ways.
- manage our money.

This can take a long time.

It may not be successful.

Here are some ideas for what we can ask the Government:

- Work with councils and local leaders to help improve services and make better use of public money.
- Provide reliable long-term funding and clear laws so councils can plan for the future and make improvements with confidence.
- Changing how councils in England are paid for.
- Giving councils more money to pay for care for older people, and other adults who need care.
- Not letting companies charge councils as much money to look after children in care.
- Letting councils decide if other trained staff can do some jobs that a social worker would usually do.
- Letting councils decide their own rules around School Transport, like only giving the service to families without much money.
- Letting people who get care at home delay paying for their care, like people in care homes can.
- Let councils look at people's needs and how much money and support they have when deciding if they need help paying for care.
- Let councils charge a small amount of money for some services, like providing travel for older and disabled people, giving people a bus pass or using the local recycling centre.

- Changing the rules so councils can charge more for some services if needed.
- Giving councils more choice about how much Council Tax they ask people to pay.

3. Getting more money from selling services or land

The County Council can get money to pay for services and cover some costs by:

- selling services to businesses or schools.
- renting out buildings we are not using.
- selling land or buildings we no longer need.

This money helps reduce the amount of money we need to save.

We can look at ways to do more of this, but it would not balance our budget by itself

4. Asking people to pay for some services and putting up charges for others

We could ask people to pay a small amount to use some services.

For example, we could:

- Put up the cost of parking at countryside sites.
- Put up prices at country parks.
- Put up charges for weddings and other ceremonies.
- Put up charges for some care services.
- Introduce new parking charges for parking on streets or outside homes.
- Introduce charges for looking after old records and documents.
- Introduce small charges for recycling centres.
- Introduce small charges for bus passes and concessionary travel.

Some of these changes would need the Government to change the law first.

5. Reviewing how services are provided

We regularly check our services to make sure they work well and give good value for money.

Sometimes we find that a different organisation could provide a service that works just as well but costs less.

We also look at how technology can help services work better and save money.

6. Reducing or stopping some services

Some services must be provided by law.

Other services do not have to be provided by law.

We could save money by reducing or stopping some services.

However:

- The amount of money we could save is now smaller than in the past.
- This would not save enough money on its own.
- Changes could have a big impact on residents.

We prefer to find other ways to save money if possible.

If we choose to reduce or stop a service, we would ask people what they think before making a decision.

We would still provide the services we must provide by law.

7. Delaying some of our spending

There are some things we could choose not to spend money on now.

For example, we could choose not to spend money now on:

- Repairing council buildings.
- Staff training.
- Replacing computers and other IT equipment.

We would still need to pay for these things in the future.

There could be problems later on if we delay some of this spending, such as:

- Buildings getting worse.
- Staff may not have the skills they need.
- Services not working properly.

8. Increasing Council Tax

Most of the money we spend comes from Council Tax.

Hampshire has one of the lowest Council Tax of any County Councils in England.

We are allowed to increase Council Tax by up to 4.99% per year.

If we increased Council Tax by less than 4.99% this would raise less money and make the budget gap bigger.

If we increased Council Tax by 4.99% it would help, but we would still not have enough money to balance our budget.

We could ask the Government if we could increase Council Tax by more than 4.99%.

To do this, we would need:

- permission from the Government, or
- a public vote of residents (called a **referendum**).

This would let us pay for more services.

Any increase in Council Tax would mean households in Hampshire have to pay more.

How much is a 4.99% Council Tax rise?

The amount of Council Tax you pay depends on your home's Council Tax band.

All homes have a Council Tax band from A to H. People in Band A pay the least. People in Band H pay the most.

Examples of how much Council Tax would go up by for a Band D home

The information below shows how much extra Council Tax a Band D household may have to pay if Council Tax goes up by 4.99%, 7.49%, 9.99%, 14.99%, 19.99% and 24.99%:

- A rise of 4.99% would mean an increase of £84.33 for a Council Tax Band D home
- A rise of 7.49% would mean an increase of £126.59 per year for a Council Tax Band D home.
- A rise of 9.99% would mean an increase of £168.84 per year for a Council Tax Band D home
- A rise of 14.99% would mean an increase of £253.35 per year for a Council Tax Band D home.

- A rise of 19.99% would mean an increase of £337.85 per year for a Council Tax Band D home.
- A rise of 24.99% would mean an increase of £422.36 per year for a Council Tax Band D home.

9. Using our reserves

We have some **reserves**.

Reserves is money that we have saved up over the years.

Most of this money needs to be used for other things in the future, like building new schools or roads.

Some of the money is saved for emergencies.

We do not have much money in our reserves that we could use.

It would not be enough to balance our budget.

We could spend some of these reserves, but this would mean:

- Some improvements to buildings or services would be delayed
- We may have to borrow more money in the future

10. Apply for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS)

Exceptional Financial Support is special help from the Government for councils that do not have enough money to pay for all their services.

This could allow us to:

- Borrow money.
- Use money from selling land or buildings to pay for services.

This could help in the short term and give us more time to make changes.

However:

- The Government might not agree to let us have it
- It could mean more costs in the future

How to tell us what you think

Please answer the questions about our ideas in the online Response Form:

https://hampshirecc.welcomesyourfeedback.net/2026-budget-consultation

Alternatively, you can tell us what you think by:

- emailing **insight@hants.gov.uk,** or
- writing to **Freepost HAMPSHIRE**. Please write Budget Consultation, B026R on the back of the envelope. You do not need to use a stamp.

Please send us your answers before Sunday 13 December 2026.

Glossary

- **Services** include things like schools, libraries, roads, recycling centres, and support for children, families and adults who need help.
- The **budget** is how much money we will have to spend on services
- **Balance our budget** means not spending more money than we have.
- **Reserves** are money that we have saved up over the years.
- **A funding gap** means we do not have enough money to pay for all the services people need.
- **Exceptional Financial Support** is special help from the Government for councils that do not have enough money to pay for all their services
- A **referendum** is a public vote of residents