

Budget consultation 2023/24

WE WANT
YOUR HELP TO SHAPE
OUR BUDGET

On 14 February 2023, Oxfordshire County Council will meet to agree its budget. In this consultation we are asking residents, businesses and others for their views on our budget proposals for 2023/24.

HAVE YOUR SAY AT:

oxfordshire.gov.uk/budgetconsultation



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

INTRODUCTION

We know that households across our county are facing huge financial challenges. Rising prices make this a cost of living emergency. The county council is also facing its most difficult budget pressures for many years.

All local authorities are having to deal with large increases in inflation that are driving up costs and prices for energy, fuel and materials. For 2023/24, we have a significant **funding shortfall of at least £44 million.**

£27 million of this shortfall relates to inflationary costs. We are also estimating around £17m of other demand-led pressures, which include the growing nationwide costs of supporting children and young people; the rising cost of social care and care placements for both children and adults; and a national shortage of social care workers leading to a reliance on agency staff and higher costs. The recent Census also confirms Oxfordshire has a growing and ageing population, which will continue to increase demand on services.

In addition, the financial impact of implementing the government's adult social care reforms is unclear and could add to these pressures. Finally, on top of this, the long-term financial impact of supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities, particularly those with high needs, remains uncertain. The support is managed by the council but is funded separately through the government's dedicated schools grant, which has been consistently less than the sum required in Oxfordshire.

The county council is on the frontline of supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities. We are committed to helping them and their families. Alongside our existing support, we recently provided a further £2 million to help the most vulnerable this winter. We know many residents will still face pressures but, as the cost of providing services rises and government funding fails to keep pace with inflation, we face tough choices.

We will manage the council's finances responsibly and are planning ahead carefully to meet current and future financial challenges. Our budget proposals for 2023/24 include £35 million of savings. This still leaves us with a £9m gap based on the need to plug the funding shortfall of £44m in total.

This position may change after we have worked through the implications of the government's autumn statement announced on 17 November and the local government settlement expected in December. I wrote to Jeremy Hunt, Chancellor of the Exchequer ahead of the autumn statement, to urge him not to levy further spending cuts on local government, but instead help us to support essential local services at a time when our residents need them the most.

None of these choices are easy. We have been listening to you about the big issues that matter most to you and your communities in our recent Oxfordshire Conversation events, as well as gathering your views on the council's strategic priorities and budget challenges in a residents' survey that took place over the summer. We have been guided by what you have told us about your priorities, such as you want to see the health and wellbeing of residents at the top of our list and that you want to see action on the climate emergency.

We now want to hear your views on our budget proposals, which are based on what we know now, as part of our consultation. Together, all this feedback will help inform our decisions during the budget process.

Thank you and best wishes,



Liz Leffman

Cllr Liz Leffman

Leader, Oxfordshire County Council

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

Oxfordshire County Council provides 80 per cent of local government services by expenditure, including adult and children's social care, some education services, fire and rescue, libraries and museums, public health, roads, trading standards, waste disposal and recycling.

Our vision is to lead positive change – working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. We are focused on: tackling inequality and disadvantage; working with our partners locally and nationally;

investing in people; using our resources wisely; speaking up for Oxfordshire; and being inclusive and open.

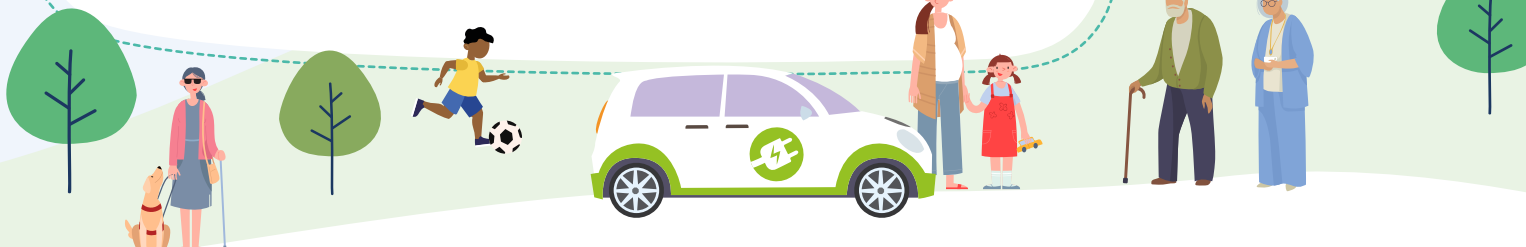
We have nine cross-cutting priorities to achieve our vision.

OUR PRIORITIES ARE:

1. Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work.
2. Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire.
3. Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents.
4. Support carers and the social care system.
5. Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network.
6. Preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces.
7. Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.
8. Play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy.
9. Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit.

OUR VISION:

To lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county.




OUR SERVICES

We are proud to provide and support a huge range of services that enhance and improve the lives of people across our communities.

Here are just a few of the services we provided last year (January - December 2021):



Looked after **850** children in care.



Supported on average **6,258** people daily with ongoing adult social care.



Attracted **2.9 million** physical and virtual visits to the library service.



Managed **301,902** tonnes of household waste, of which 58.7 per cent was recycled, reused or composted.
(April 21 - March 22).



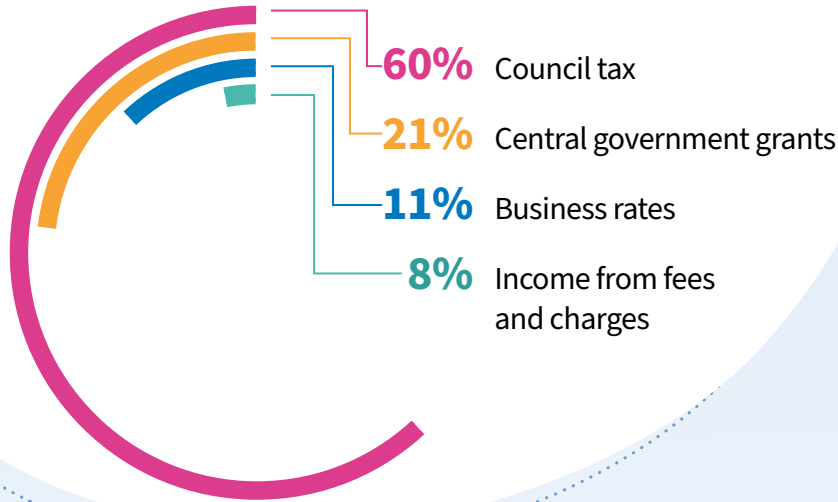
Attended **5,875** fire and rescue service call outs.



Repaired **34,750** potholes.

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

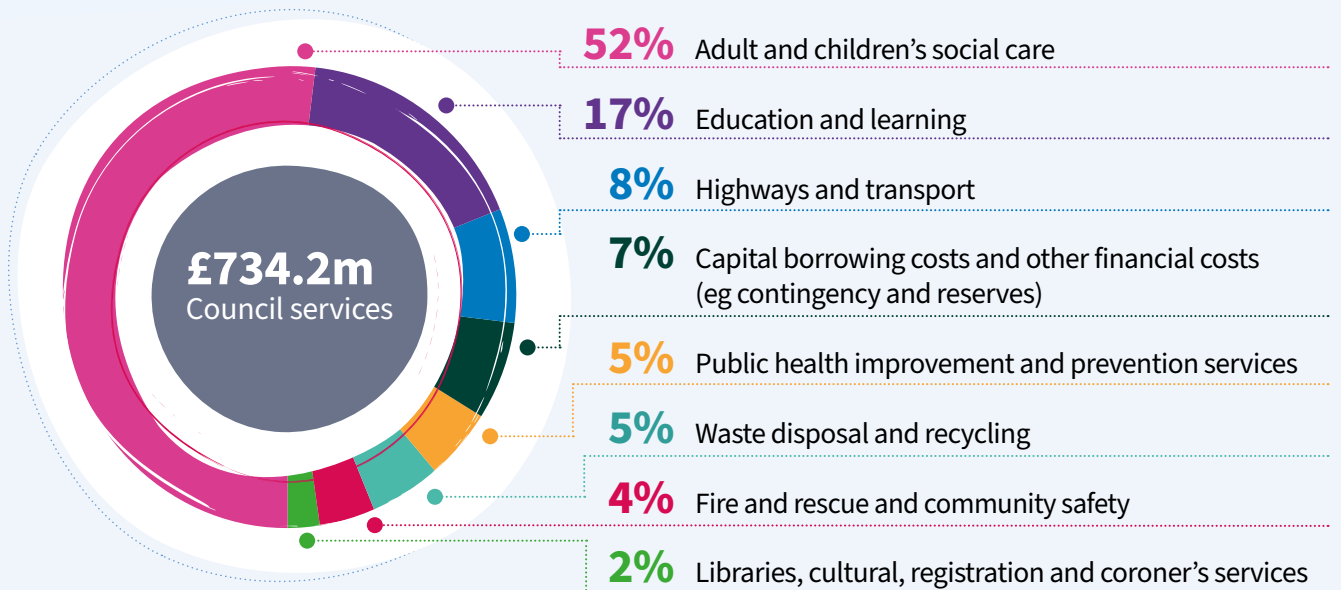
In 2022/23, 60 per cent of the county council’s funding for services will come directly from council tax, with the rest coming from charging for services and government grants.



WHAT WE SPEND ON COUNCIL SERVICES

In 2022/23, the council will spend **£734.2 million** million on services – our gross expenditure budget. In addition, we will also spend **£198.7 million** on maintained schools, which covers teachers and running costs, and comes directly from the government.

The figures below show broadly how we will spend our budget on services in 2022/23.



Our £1.3 billion capital programme includes investing in highway improvements, energy efficient street lighting (over 10 years), new school buildings and other service needs reflecting the council’s priorities. Most of the funding can only be used for the purpose it has been given and cannot be allocated to day to day council spending.

OUR BUDGET CHALLENGES

Cost of living emergency

All local authorities are having to deal with large increases in inflation that are driving up costs and prices for energy, fuel and materials. This year, as the cost of providing services rises and government funding fails to keep pace with inflation, we face tough choices. We have a significant funding shortfall of at least £44 million in 2023/24, of which £27m relates to these inflationary costs. This position may change after we have worked through the implications of the government's autumn statement announced on 17 November and the local government settlement expected in December.

Increasing demand

The council is also estimating around £17 million of other demand-led pressures, which include the growing nationwide costs of supporting children and young people; the rising cost of social care and care placements for both children and adults; and a national shortage of social care workers leading to a reliance on agency staff and higher costs.

The recent Census also confirms Oxfordshire has a growing and ageing population, which will continue to increase demand on services.

Adult social care reforms and children with high needs

In addition, the financial impact of implementing the government's adult social care reforms is unclear and could add to these pressures.

Finally, on top of this, the long-term financial impact of supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities, particularly those with high needs, remains uncertain. The support is managed by the council but is funded separately through the government's dedicated schools grant, which has been consistently less than the sum required in Oxfordshire. In 2022/23, for example, there is a £17.5 million shortfall.



OUR BUDGET PROPOSALS

Savings

In 2023/24, we have a funding shortfall of at least **£44 million**. Our budget proposals total £35m of savings, which still leaves us with a £9m gap. We face uncertainty over government funding and are consulting on what we know now. Proposals are available to view as part of our supporting documentation for our budget consultation at oxfordshire.gov.uk/budgetconsultation.

Proposed council tax increase

Previously, the maximum amount the government would allow us to increase council tax in 2023/24 was 2.99 per cent. This included a one per cent additional charge (called a precept) for adult social care services. So for 2023/24, we have based our budget proposals on this, which is behind inflation of 10 per cent and still leaves us with a £9 million funding gap.

On 17 November, the government announced in its autumn statement that councils may need to raise council tax by up to 4.99 per cent, including a two per cent adult social care precept, to meet rising costs and help support essential service delivery. We will decide on this in the coming weeks as part of the budget setting process.

The county council's share of council tax for a Band D property (the average council tax band) in 2022/23 was £1,651.61 (£31.76 per week). An increase of 2.99 per cent is equal to an additional £49.38 per year or £0.95 per week in council tax on a Band D property, whereas an increase of 4.99 per cent is equal to an additional £82.42 per year or £1.58 per week.

Please note, the overall council tax bill for your property also includes payments to your city or district council, the police and crime commissioner for Thames Valley and possibly a parish or town council. All of these are outside the scope of this consultation.





HAVE YOUR SAY

You can have your say on our budget proposals between **18 November 2022 and 19 December 2022** by visiting oxfordshire.gov.uk/budgetconsultation and completing the online survey.

While we do want to make sure we capture your views through the formal consultation, you can also

➔ email your thoughts to budget@oxfordshire.gov.uk or

➔ engage on  [@OxfordshireCountyCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/OxfordshireCountyCouncil) or  [@OxfordshireCC](https://twitter.com/OxfordshireCC) using [#OCCbudget](https://twitter.com/OxfordshireCC)

The closing date for comments is:
**Monday
19 December 2022**

Consultation feedback

The outcomes of this budget consultation, alongside feedback from our Oxfordshire Conversation events and residents' survey, will be considered by the council's [cabinet](#) on 24 January 2023. Together, this feedback will help inform the decision-making process for the budget.

Once the full [county council](#) decides the budget on 14 February 2023, we will plan any specific service changes that we need to work within our budget.

Petitions

Oxfordshire County Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns or the strength of public feeling. Find out how to submit a petition to the council on our website at oxfordshire.gov.uk/petitions

Alternative formats

If you require this document or a feedback form in an alternative format, ie Easy Read, large text, audio, Braille or a community language please get in touch by:

Email: budget@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Phone: 01865 792422



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oxfordshire.gov.uk/newsletter

