

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2024/25

Stabilisation and Recovery Plan

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INTRODUCTION

Budget Consultation 2024/25 – Save our Services

Times have seldom felt so hard.

We know this is the case for many people in the city and the same can be said for our public services. The city has horrendous choices to make as we move towards meeting the legal requirement of setting a balanced budget for 2024-25.

Across the country, local government is at crisis point after years of austerity, the enduring impact of generational events such as COVID and the cost-of-living crisis, and some poor decision making under previous administrations at our local level. At the same time, there is rising demand for services such as social care and support for homelessness coupled with rapidly rising levels of inflation. In all, it's a perfect storm with required expenditure outstripping available resource. As the Council Leader it is my job to fit the jigsaw together.

We have been open and transparent since we took office in last May's local election about the fact that we inherited a legacy of huge budget pressures and predicted overspends. The main local problem is the cost of looking after those children in our city who need local authority care. The demands on this budget continue to grow rapidly, as the numbers of children in care and the associated costs of looking after them just keep rising. There are several factors that have caused this situation including previous local cuts in early help services for families. It is our intention to reduce the number of children in care by securing investment from Government so we can change our systems to better support children to stay at home safely.

The City is in this position principally because of the national situation with local government funding – there are unfair funding arrangements for local councils. Central Government has reduced its contribution over many years and cities like ours end up with less resource than more affluent areas relative to the needs we are having to meet. The impact of this, coupled with having more homes in the lowest council tax band than almost anywhere else in the country, and the impact of high inflation which adds to our costs, is that we have much less money available to deliver services with. The total budget gap we are facing in 2024-25 is £29.5m. As this is written, at least one in five authorities – of all political colours - are facing the prospect of not being able to set a balanced budget in the coming years.

What are we doing about it?

- We are proposing a list of service reductions and council tax increases that are incredibly hard to put forward but would narrow the gap by around £16m
- We have introduced very tight controls on council spend. These measures are working and will continue to have a positive impact.
- We are asking the Government for an extra financial support package of up to £44.7m over two years. This will allow us to change the way children's services operate and generate better outcomes for children, families and for the budget.

We don't want to cut our services or put council tax up. But these steps are the only way we can balance our budget, which we legally have to do by early March, and protect the city's future.


So, we are asking you for help and support. Only by pulling together can we get through this crisis. The council tax increase we are proposing at this stage would cost the majority of our households 99p per week. This would help us to preserve essential services and keep the city running.

If we don't get a deal with the Government, we will still be legally obliged to set a balanced budget. This exercise will require further cuts and see many of our essential valued services diminish further. Failing to balance the books probably results in Government commissioners running the city council. You may have heard that councils like Thurrock, Northampton, Birmingham and Nottingham are in this position already. In that scenario, commissioners would probably require radical steps like closing leisure centres and museums, stopping street cleaning and grass cutting, doing much less highway maintenance, taking away the enforcement services that prevent illegal dumping, and emptying bins less often. We don't want any of that to happen; we want to save our services, and save our city.

We are working really hard to navigate through this uncertain and critical period. At the same time, we are continuing to get a grip on other long running issues that are making life difficult for our residents. We're not afraid to tackle the challenges that have been neglected for years. By changing the way the Council does things we have cleaned up the city, without spending a lot of extra cash that we can't afford, and are continuing to issue fines to people who don't toe the line.

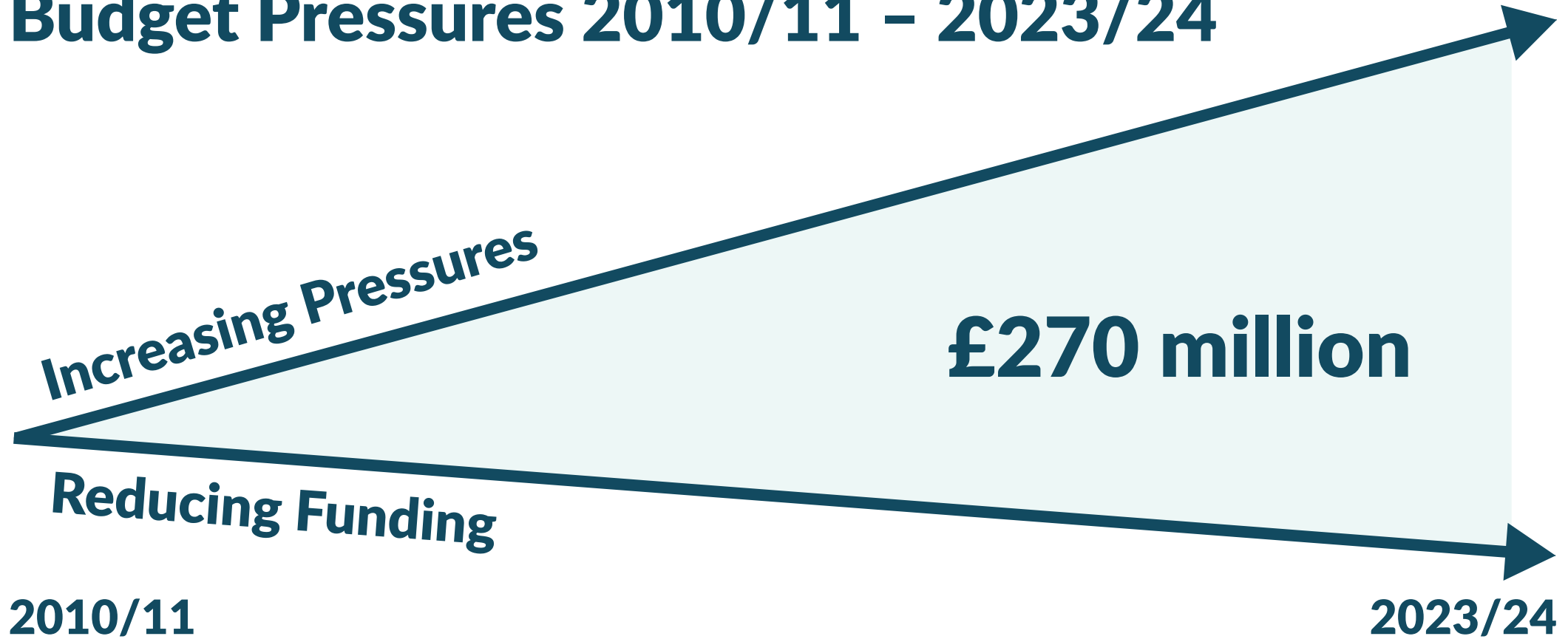
We have launched a major campaign to tackle damp and mould in people's homes and continue to invest in adult social care at record levels. We are proposing to prioritise saving our libraries, leisure centres and museums.

We are also having to do a range of things we do not want to do to. Some of our £16m of proposals are painful. We are only putting them forward to save the city. We've been elected by you to lead and we don't want to relinquish that control to the Government. We are better placed to steer the city through this, and we won't shirk away from difficult choices. We will do everything we can to save our services for our residents.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JAshworth". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with the 'A' and 'h' being particularly prominent.

Councillor Jane Ashworth,
Leader - Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Budget Pressures 2010/11 - 2023/24



Real term cuts in the council's spending power and increasing pressures due to rising costs and demand for services have resulted in us needing to deliver cumulative savings over the last 13 years of **£270 million**

THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

This budget consultation and medium term financial strategy are presented at a time of unprecedented challenge for local government and the wider public sector. Whilst local authorities up and down the country are facing significant financial challenges, due to a number of factors those facing the City Council are both more immediate and more acute than they are for many.

The City Council published a Financial Resilience report in September 2023 that set out this context. The City Council has faced significant financial challenges for a number of years due to the impact of national funding reductions, rapidly increasing levels of demand for services such as social care, and low levels of financial resilience due to a relatively weak council tax base (93% of properties fall within Bands A – C) and low levels of reserves.

Based on recent studies by the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA) it is estimated that the City Council's real terms change in spending power has been a reduction of approximately 26.9% since 2010. Over this period the City Council has worked hard to ensure that it has delivered a balanced budget each year and has developed and maintained a Medium-Term Financial Strategy that delivered the necessary budget reductions or additional income required to address the financial challenges faced and aimed to build on the low levels of financial resilience. For context the City Council has delivered annual average cuts of £25m per year (circa £270m) over the last 13 years.

In addition to these general challenges the City faces significant and unique demand and financial pressures in relation to the provision of Children's Social Care. At the end of December, we had 1,150 children in care. Pro rata this is the highest level of children in care in the country. Due to the level of this demand and the complexity of the support required, the costs of supporting these children has more than doubled between 2016-17 and 2022-23. This is putting huge financial strain on our available resources. We know that we need to reduce the number of children in care in our city and we are setting out plans relating to Early Intervention and Family Support that will work to address this challenge. However, the issue of funding for children's social care is a national one that requires a national solution.

The Autumn Statement was delivered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 22 November 2023. Whilst this statement confirmed that local government funding allocations would remain broadly in line with the criteria set out in previous years, it did not address the level of demand and inflationary pressures. In reality the announcements regarding increases in the National Living Wage, whilst supported by the City Council, will indirectly place further future pressures on council budgets.

The Provisional Finance Settlement was received on 18 December 2023, providing detailed funding allocations for 2024-25. This means that government funding is now confirmed for next year and has allowed future funding forecasts to be updated. This budget consultation revises our resource forecasts using the information available and provides for the increased inflationary pressures and growing demand for city council services.

The City Council continues to build on the work that has been done to stabilise our financial position, secure value for money and build financial resilience, although inflation and demand for services still present huge risks and a number of difficult decisions will have to be taken to enable a balanced budget to be delivered.

In addition to addressing the immediate pressures, the City Council is committed to a continuous transformation programme that will work to improve efficiency year-on-year, as the Council continues this journey further proposals may be brought forward, consulted upon as required and approved separately.

We are developing a medium term financial strategy but due to the hugely uncertain environment in which we are operating and the urgent need for a local government national fair funding review, it is very difficult to forecast accurately the position beyond the 2024-25 financial year. As highlighted in the later tables of this budget book, very significant budget pressures beyond 2024-25 remain. These pressures will need to be addressed over the coming period.

Real term cuts 2010/11 - 2023/24

There was

£97.5m less funding available to invest in services in 2023/24 compared to 2010/11

This is a

26.9% real terms cut and equals a reduction of

£823.85 per dwelling



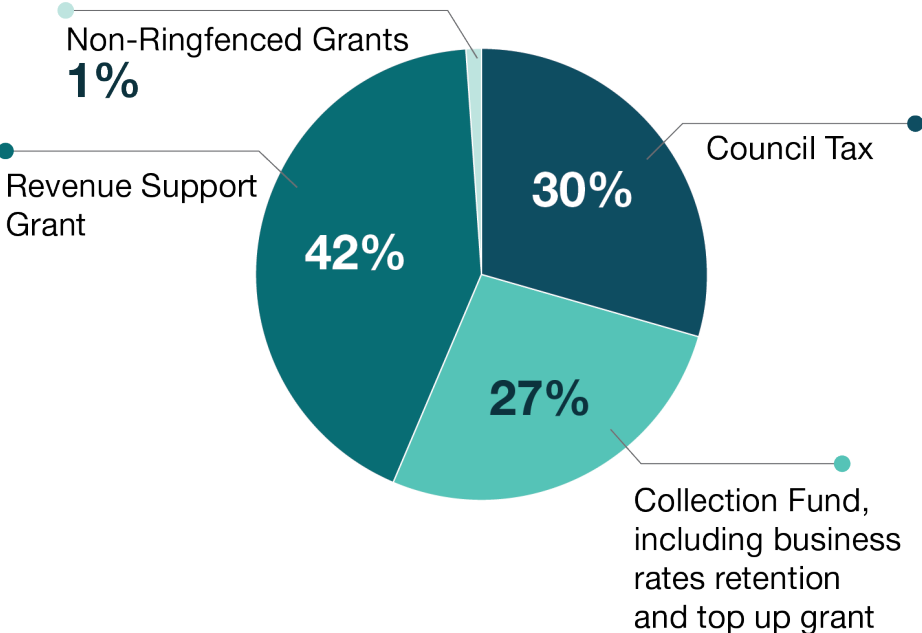
HOW WE ARE FUNDED AND WHY THIS MATTERS

Local Government Funding

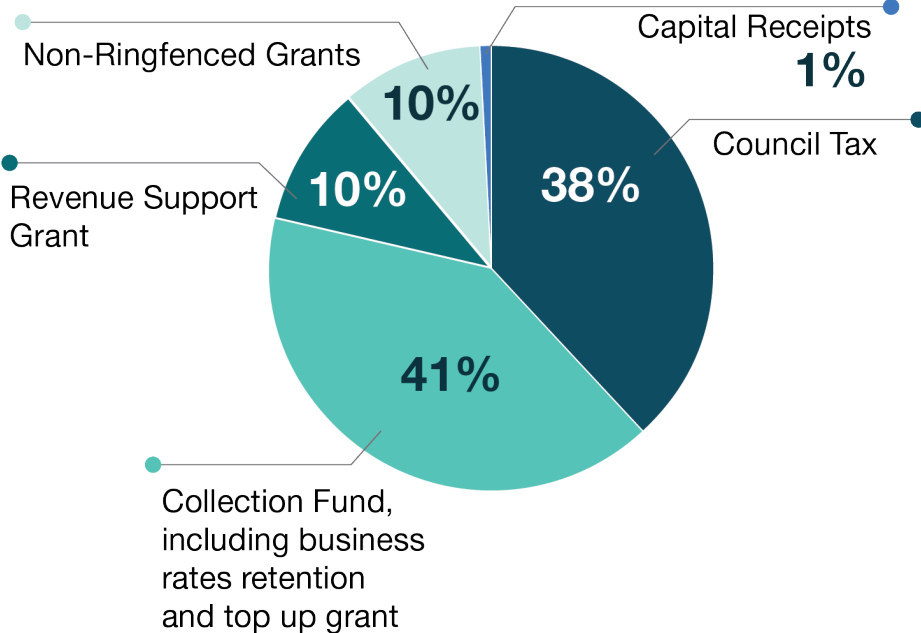
The way in which Local Government funding is allocated has changed over the years. Historically local government received a much larger proportion of its funding from central government grants but there has been a steady move towards a much greater proportion of funding being raised locally through Council Tax and Business Rates.

The pie charts below show the estimated proportions of funding generated from the different sources in comparative years. This highlights that there has been a significant reduction in the proportion of funding received directly from government grant and an increase in the funding generated locally through council tax and business rates.

2013/14



2023/24



This change is important because we now have to raise more of our funding locally. To have sufficient resources to provide the services residents need we must increase council tax and the social care precept by the maximum levels permitted by government.

As set out in this document, the £16m of budget proposals include an assumed social care precept increase of 2% and a council tax increase of 2.99%. This is a difficult decision when we know our residents face the challenges of the cost-of-living crisis. For the majority of our residents this would equate to an increase of 99p per week. We understand the vast majority of councils across the country will be implementing these increases.

In addition to a low council tax base (93% Bands A to C) within the city, the levels of council tax paid by residents is also low in comparison to both statistical and geographical neighbours. This is in part due to not having increased council tax by the maximum amounts permitted nationally between 2016-17 and 2019-20 and accepting the council tax freeze grants in the years prior to this.

Comparative figures for the majority of our residents show they currently pay £1,079 compared to statistical neighbours £1,230, geographical neighbours £1,162, and all unitary authorities £1,209 (based on Band A property, including social care precept, excluding the police and fire precepts, and assuming all council's increase by 4.99% in 2024-25). This means that even with a proposed increase of 4.99% in 2024-25 the majority of local residents would be paying circa £130 less than the average resident in other unitary authorities.

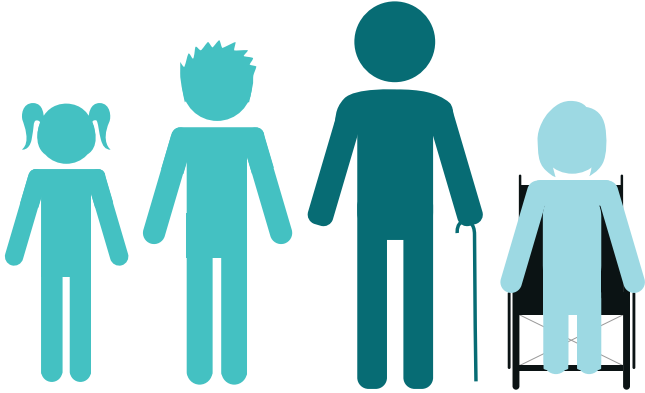
Budget Pressures and Our Response

The total revenue pressures faced are £29.5m. If capital financing charges of £4.4m are included, this increases to £33.9m. The budget pressures are made up of a combination of increasing demand for the statutory services we have to provide such as social care, inflationary pressures such as pay, contractual inflation and the costs of goods and services all of which are critical in terms of delivering services to our residents.

Capital financing charges relate to the infrastructure we build in our city or the assets we use to provide services. We will always be prudent with our capital investment; however, an element of capital expenditure will always be necessary to ensure we support our city to grow, ensure we can deliver services appropriately, and aim to make our city a better place to live, work and enjoy.

Investment in Social Care 2013/14 to 2023/24

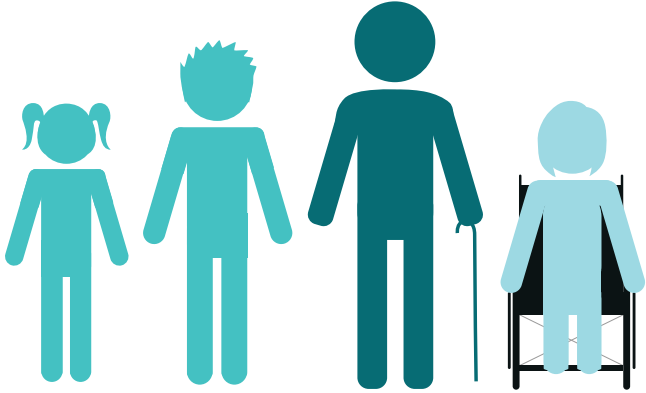
2013/14



48%

of the council's budget was spent on social care services in 2013/14

2023/24



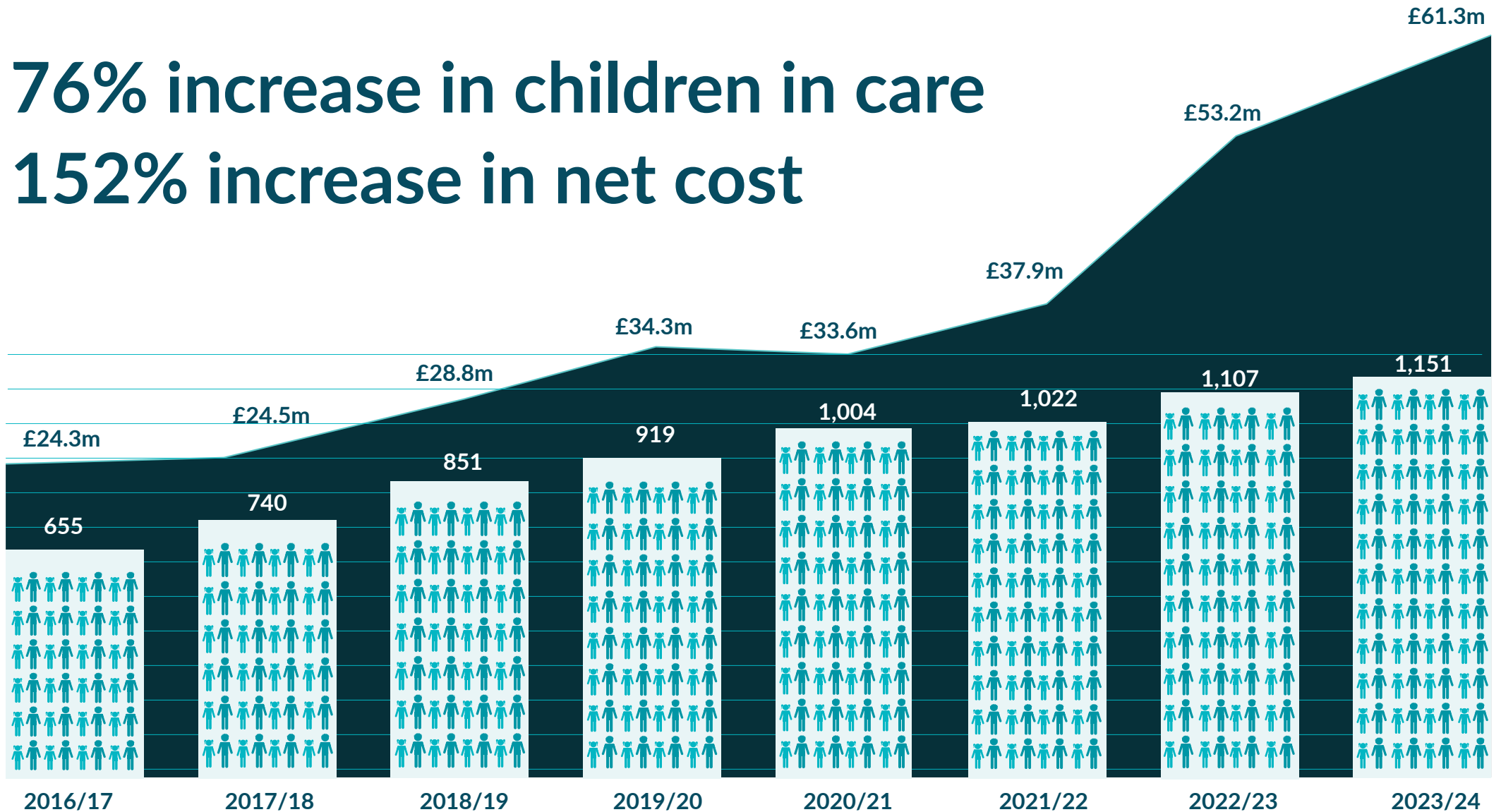
59%

of the council's budget is forecast to be spent on social care services in 2023/24

Children in care

76% increase in children in care

152% increase in net cost



REDUCING BUDGET PRESSURES

The Council is finding ways to overcome all of its budget pressures other than those pertaining to children's social care for which it is seeking exceptional financial support from Government. Since the summer we have been hard at work, taking important actions to reduce and mitigate these pressures:

- a line-by-line review of the financial ledger has identified avoidable expenditure and opportunities to reduce, or tighten control of, a number of smaller budgets, including putting in place strict expenditure controls and approval processes
- through our new procurement strategy and buying model, we expect to save £0.8m from existing contracts and contract renewals in the next twelve months
- through more effective asset management, we expect to reduce pressures on commercial income, for example reviewing our management approach to assets such as Smithfield Multi Storey Car Park and the wider property portfolio
- through effective procurement and improved energy management, we now expect our energy costs for 2024-25 to be £2.1m less than previously expected
- we are able to reduce our forward investment into the pension fund, saving £4m in 2023-24
- our new dynamic purchasing system for SEN transport has reduced the size of the budget pressure in this area by £0.6m
- reducing the pay bill by allowing targeted voluntary redundancies, enabling other staff to reduce their hours, and reaching a deal with the trade unions to reduce the overtime bill
- providing a range of services to enable more people with disabilities, and older people, to live independently in the community
- increasing payments for foster carers so that more of them feel able to care for multiple children, thus saving on expensive residential placement costs.

- reduced flytipping to improve the cleanliness of the city through a judicious approach to related fines.
- in addition, we are making corporate savings and reducing corporate contingency budgets totalling £5.2m in 2024-25 to protect services whilst, this presents some risk to our financial resilience it is necessary based on the circumstances we face.

Without these measures the budget gap would have been significantly higher. Despite this hard work the external factors that are driving demand for services and inflation are outstripping these gains and difficult decisions still need to be made to enable us to set a balanced budget which is our legal duty.

Our reserves position

In addition to the above it is also important to state that our available reserves are already at minimum levels. The table overleaf sets out the forecast position for all reserves as at 1 April 2024 and assumes the council receives Exceptional Financial Support to mitigate the need to draw down any General Reserve in 2023-24.

As a measure of financial resilience as well as a guide, national commentators recommend that councils hold General Fund Reserve balances of at least 5% of Net Service Revenue Expenditure, which for Stoke-on-Trent City Council is forecast to be at 4% as at 1 April 2024. This demonstrates that Unearmarked General Fund Reserves are already at an absolute minimum level.

Detail	Forecast Balance as at 1 April 2024 £m
General Fund Reserve	11.9
Earmarked Reserves	33.0
Total	44.9

(NB. Excludes ringfenced accounts such as Housing Revenue Account, Dedicated Schools Grant and Public Health. Earmarked reserves include PFI and Insurance)

Proposed Budget Reductions

As set out in the table below we are therefore proposing total budget reductions of £8.0m. These reductions, some of which are direct cuts to services, are difficult and come off the back of budget cuts of circa £270m in previous years. We are therefore limited in terms of the savings options we can make as the cupboard is bare. Of these budget cuts, £3.4m require public consultation as they impact on frontline services that are delivered to our residents. Individual proposals are included later in this consultation document and detailed business cases and equality impact assessments are available on the council's website.

In addition to the budget reductions that require public consultation we are proposing further cuts and efficiencies of £4.6m across the council. Whilst these proposals do not require public consultation they are no less difficult to deliver and will reduce support services and other back office functions as well as reducing staffing levels.

2024-25 Budget Detail	£m
Budget Pressures and Total Savings Requirement	29.5
Capital Financing Charges	4.4
Corporate Budget Amendments	(5.2)
Council Tax and Business Rates Growth	(1.4)
Adult Social Care Precept 2%	(2.1)
Increase in Council Tax 2.99%	(3.2)
Savings not requiring public consultation	(4.6)
Savings requiring public consultation	(3.4)
Total Savings and Additional Income	(15.5)
Remaining Budget Gap	14.0
Request for Government Support	(14.0)

Due to the severity of the financial challenges faced, these increases to council tax and proposed budget savings and cuts would not be sufficient to close the budget gap. We are therefore seeking financial support from government that would allow us to use the sale of capital assets to finance the specific challenge we face with respect to the costs of children's social care.

In addition to the proposed reductions outlined within this document it is important to note that the City Council has also looked to significantly reduce staffing numbers over recent months as part of the financial controls that have been implemented and the budget proposals that have been put forward as part of this consultation. This has included deleting around 65 vacant posts, agreeing 30 voluntary redundancies and the likely need to propose further reductions in the near future (of which we are currently ready to consult formally on 16 posts). In all instances we have worked hard, and will continue to work hard, to avoid compulsory redundancies and will consult properly at the appropriate time.

OUR RESOURCE REQUEST OF GOVERNMENT

Despite significantly increasing key budget allocations in recent years to support areas such as social care, implementing a full range of financial controls and savings programmes, and commissioning a range of external financial reviews from national professional bodies, due to the demand and inflationary pressures faced, the City Council is currently projecting a £10m overspend in 2023-24. This position is set against unearmarked general reserves of £11.9m, representing an unsustainable financial position.

As outlined elsewhere in this document the estimated budget gap for 2024-25 rises to £29.5m. Savings options and council tax increases of circa £16m are included within this consultation. This currently leaves a budget shortfall of £14m for 2024-25. These shortfalls relate directly to the increasing cost pressures the City Council is facing in relation to the demand, complexity and rising cost of Children's Social Care placements. These pressures come off the back of a prolonged period of austerity during which the City Council has delivered budget cuts of over £270m and as outlined earlier, recent studies by the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA) indicate that the City Council's real terms change in spending power has been a reduction of approximately 26.9% since 2010.

To address this budget gap the City Council is seeking "Exceptional Financial Support" from central government. The government has previously allowed several councils to access Exceptional Financial Support by allowing them to capitalise revenue costs which enable them to get to a sustainable position. A capitalisation directive allows councils to fund revenue expenditure via capital financing methods such as capital receipts from the disposal of assets or through borrowing. This essentially means that the council would be allowed to sell buildings, land or assets and use this to finance the financial pressures it faces.

It is important to note that whilst central government would be granting special permissions through a capitalisation directive the City Council is still essentially using its own resources to address the challenge it faces through the sale of such assets.

The total request of government will be £44.7m over the 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial years. This includes £24m to support social care placements, £11.2m to support investment in Early Help Intervention and wider transformation and £9.5m for financial resilience including funding for redundancy and related interest costs. This request is supported by a credible resource plan that will look to reduce costs within Children's Social Care over the coming 4-year period.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE CANNOT REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH GOVERNMENT

Failure to agree an Exceptional Financial Support package with central government would result in an emergency consultation about additional cuts. These additional service reductions would be incredibly difficult and painful and would hurt civic life. This is not a scenario we want. If we cannot reach an agreement then we are looking at having to cut pretty much everything that we are not legally obliged to provide, and inevitably include measures such as:

- Closing leisure centres
- Closing museums
- Closing libraries
- Stopping street cleaning and grass cutting
- Ending school crossing patrols
- Switching off the CCTV system
- Ending non-statutory homelessness support
- Reducing highway maintenance
- Reducing enforcement services that prevent illegal dumping
- Reducing customer contact support and other back office support
- Ending all remaining 3rd sector and community support
- Reducing social care provision
- Further reducing overall staffing numbers

What this list reflects is that there are no simple options left. Like many local authorities, particularly those in deprived urban areas, we are down to the bare bones.

If the City Council does not or cannot balance the budget through cuts like these, a legal mechanism, called a Section 114 Notice kicks in. A s114 report under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 is issued when the Chief Finance Officer determines that the expenditure proposed to be incurred exceeds the resources likely to be available, with the consequence that no new expenditure is permitted other than that funding statutory services and honouring existing commitments and contracts.

In reality this would be little more than a technical step to abide by the law as the Cabinet and senior officers are already working together to consider all options and there is already a tight grip on expenditure, as confirmed by the recent independent review by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). It is possible that at this stage the Government may send in Commissioners to enforce cuts in services.

However, we would want to stress that discussions with Government have to date been constructive and positive and that is why the budget forecasts included within this document are predicated on the City Council being able to reach an agreement with Government to access Exceptional Financial Support.

WHY IS THE CITY FACING SUCH A MASSIVE FINANCIAL CHALLENGE?

- ✓ **Reductions in national funding allocations**
Our spending power has reduced by £97.525m since 2010/11 which is a reduction of approximately 26.9%.
- ✓ **Significant increases in the demand and cost of providing Social Care (particularly Children's Social Care)**
The cost of providing social care has increased from 48% of the council's budget to 59% of the council's budget between 2013-14 and 2023-24
- ✓ **Rising inflation and cost of living pressures that impact the cost of delivering services**
The estimated impact of inflation in 2022-23 was £13.1m and in 2023-24 the figure was estimated at £26.0m. This includes employee related increases and other inflation in respect of contracts.
- ✓ **The size of our council tax base**
The council raises the 8th lowest proportion of its income from council tax, and has the 7th lowest Band D council tax compared to metropolitan and unitary councils, and 93% of our properties are in Bands A-C
- ✓ **Lack of sustained investment in prevention and early help services for families**
Some local authorities with similar demography to Stoke-on-Trent are doing better financially because they have been able to constrain rising demand for children's social care services by supporting families effectively before they hit crisis. This is an issue not just for the City Council but local NHS and police partners as well. Previous cuts in early help services have put huge pressures on the statutory social care system.

It is not because...

- X Children are being removed unnecessarily from their families into the care of the State**
This has been tested multiple times, including by OFSTED and the reality is that the children we bring into care are in real danger. What is true though is that in a significant number of these cases, earlier help for these families could have prevented what followed.
- X The council staff are paid too much**
Our council employees earn an average salary of £26,000 and we employ a relatively small senior team compared to many other councils with the same functions. We have also reduced the number of higher paid interim staff since taking office.
- X Councillors are paid too much**
There has been no increase in Councillors' allowances since 2012.
- X The Council wastes too much money on consultants**
The large majority of the money the Council spends on consultants goes on surveyors, project managers, commercial advisers, architects and similar, working on big capital projects. Since taking office, the Administration clamped down heavily on the use of management consultants and we have more than halved our spend to just 0.3% of our net budget on management consultancy.
- X Poor financial and corporate management**
External reviews, most recently in the last six weeks through the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), have found that the City Council is generally well managed. There is, of course, scope for further improvement, for example, in more timely use of data to identify and address adverse trends.

REVENUE CHANGES FROM LAST YEAR

Taking account of the growth, investments, and saving proposals from last year, and the additional proposals within the document, the financial challenge and proposed solution to delivering a balanced budget is shown in the table below.

Detail	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Financial challenge					
Employee related increases and other inflation in respect of contracts	21.0	25.1	32.2	42.0	48.4
Revenue investments to meet demand for services, changes in income and other adjustments	15.0	20.9	21.2	20.2	18.8
Funding Adjustments	(6.5)	(9.6)	(12.3)	(15.2)	(17.9)
Initial Savings Requirement	29.5	36.4	41.1	47.0	49.3
Capital Financing Costs	4.4	8.5	10.4	10.7	10.4
Corporate Budget Amendments	(5.2)	(5.4)	(1.3)	(1.3)	(1.3)
Growth Strategy - Business Rates growth	(0.3)	(0.5)	(0.8)	(1.1)	(1.4)
Growth Strategy - additional houses	(1.1)	(1.9)	(2.7)	(3.4)	(4.2)
Adult Social Care Precept (2%)	(2.1)	(4.4)	(6.8)	(9.3)	(12.0)
Increase in Council Tax (2.99%)	(3.2)	(6.5)	(10.1)	(13.9)	(17.9)
Savings Required	22.0	26.2	29.8	28.7	22.9
Savings not requiring consultation	(4.6)	(4.5)	(4.5)	(4.5)	(4.5)
Savings to be consulted on	(3.4)	(3.8)	(3.8)	(3.8)	(3.8)
	14.0	17.9	21.5	20.4	14.6
Government Support / Further saving proposals	(14.0)	-	-	-	-
Estimated Gap (subject to future financial settlements and transformation programme savings)	-	17.9	21.5	20.4	14.6

The initial savings requirement for 2024-25 of £29.5 million includes employee related increases and inflation in respect of contracts, investment in services re demand etc, and funding adjustments. This is adjusted for the cost of capital financing charges and is then reduced by corporate budget amendments, business and housing growth, and the council tax increase of 4.99%. This results in £22 million savings being required. There are £4.6 million of savings that do not require consultation, and £3.4 million of savings that require consultation and are detailed in this document. We are seeking financial support from the government to address the remaining budget shortfall of £14 million.

DETAIL OF SAVING PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES DIRECTORATE - DETAIL OF SAVING PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION

Reference	Cabinet Member	Detail of Savings Proposal	Business Impact Description	Saving 2024/25 £'000s	Saving 2025/26 £'000s	Saving 2026/27 £'000s	Saving 2027/28 £'000s	Saving 2028/29 £'000s
CAF2425-A	Cllr D Elliott	Deletion of posts that are vacant and posts that are no longer required due to the changing role and responsibility of the Local Authority to co-ordinate youth provision.	This saving marks the move away from directly delivered youth services towards supporting community sector led provision. Shared Prosperity Funding is being made available to improve the co-ordination of voluntary youth provision in the city. This funding will provide additional capacity to support the voluntary and community sector with fundraising and the sourcing of external grants for sports, culture and other opportunities.	159	159	159	159	159
CAF2425-B	Cllr D Elliott	Protect in-post School Crossing Patrols	Existing occupied crossing patrols will not be affected. Removal of vacant posts will create a saving. Road safety will continue to be reviewed as part of the highways service across the city.	56	56	56	56	56

**Children and Family Services Directorate
Total Saving Proposals for Consultation**

215

215

215

215

215

ADULT SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH INTEGRATION AND WELLBEING DIRECTORATE - DETAIL OF SAVING PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION

Reference	Cabinet Member	Detail of Savings Proposal	Business Impact Description	Saving 2024/25 £'000s	Saving 2025/26 £'000s	Saving 2026/27 £'000s	Saving 2027/28 £'000s	Saving 2028/29 £'000s
ASCHIW2425-A	Cllr D Walker	Review the provision of the council's Telecare and community alarm service via redesign and development of alternative offers.	People who currently use the telecare service will have reviews of need completed and where the equipment is not being used / is no longer required to meet a Care Act eligible need, they will be offered a wider range of assistive technology more suited to their needs.	152	452	452	452	452
ASCHIW2425-B	Cllr D Walker	Better Care Fund review of reablement functions across the health and social care system. This will include focussing the reablement team on reablement only and promote uptake to increase numbers of people living independently.	Reablement is a critical part of the assessment function to enable people to meet their full potential and will no longer be providing long term domiciliary care following these changes. There is capacity in the home care market to ensure people with long term care needs are supported.	850	850	850	850	850
ASCHIW2425-C	Cllr D Walker	Review of Support for Working Age Adults.	People with Learning Disabilities and/or Mental Health needs will be supported to be as independent as possible through the reviews of needs.	446	446	446	446	446
ASCHIW2425-D	Cllr D Walker	Removal of 6 carer respite beds due to lack of utilisation.	The beds being decommissioned are not being used but there is no impact to service users, as respite beds are still available in the wider market.	203	203	203	203	203
ASCHIW2425-E	Cllr L Watkins	Removal of Community Development Team posts as part of the shift to a more targeted and locality-based offer through the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector, focused on strengthening community capacity to support prevention and early intervention.	The model will require working with the VCSE sector to become business as usual. Some basic administrative functions that have hitherto been provided by the Council for community organisations will not continue.	82	82	82	82	82

**Adult Social Care, Health Integration and Wellbeing Directorate
Total Saving Proposals for Consultation**

1,733

2,033

2,033

2,033

2,033

HOUSING, DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH DIRECTORATE - DETAIL OF SAVING PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION

Reference	Cabinet Member	Detail of Savings Proposal	Business Impact Description	Saving 2024/25 £'000s	Saving 2025/26 £'000s	Saving 2026/27 £'000s	Saving 2027/28 £'000s	Saving 2028/29 £'000s
HDG2425-A	Cllr A Wazir	Introduce annual charging for brown bins. The proposed price is £40 per annum.	The service will operate fortnightly in conjunction with the current recycling (blue bin) kerbside collection schedule. Savings figures are based on estimated percentage take up of service.	465	465	465	465	465
HDG2425-B	Cllr C Robinson	Housing Related Support including reduced contributions from the General Fund with alternative grant funding sourced and reductions in specific service contracts.	Organisations will be encouraged and supported to review their business models especially around the maximisation of Housing Benefit and accessing other sources of funding.	280	260	260	260	260
HDG2425-C	Cllr C Robinson	Increased enforcement of the private rented sector to improve the lives of residents and generate revenue to reinvest in council services through: a) Fixed penalty fines for contraventions of housing standards b) Licence fees for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)	This will improve the situation for private tenants and good landlords.	25	75	100	100	100
HDG2425-D	Cllr A Wazir	Relocate the 30 minutes free from Longton Exchange car park to Chancery Lane car park, introducing a £1 charge on Longton Exchange.	It is not expected to have a significant detrimental impact due to the low level of the charge and the availability of an alternative car park in Longton that will offer 30 minutes free parking.	180	180	180	180	180
HDG2425-E	Cllr A Wazir	Cease the lease arrangements with Lower Huntbach Street car park.	It is not expected to have a detrimental impact as alternative car parking provision available.	50	74	74	74	74
HDG2425-F	Cllr A Wazir	Restructure of grounds maintenance team to reduce the numbers of seasonal staff.	Services will continue to be delivered as currently except under new staffing structure. Standards will be monitored.	100	100	100	100	100

Housing, Development and Growth Directorate Total Saving Proposals for Consultation	1,100	1,154	1,179	1,179	1,179
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CITY DIRECTOR - DETAIL OF SAVING PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION

Reference	Cabinet Member	Detail of Savings Proposal	Business Impact Description	Saving 2024/25 £'000s	Saving 2025/26 £'000s	Saving 2026/27 £'000s	Saving 2027/28 £'000s	Saving 2028/29 £'000s
CITD2425-A	Cllr J Ashworth	Cessation of Cultural Grants from the General Fund.	A number of organisations that previously received cultural grants have already secured alternative funding, in some cases quite substantial amounts. A small number of organisations may not be able to provide the same level of cultural activity as they have previously if they are not successful in securing alternative funding. This loss will be more than mitigated through the significant new investment of Shared Prosperity funding in cultural activity within the city, totalling £3.4m.	245	245	245	245	245

City Director Total Saving Proposals for Consultation	245	245	245	245	245
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STRATEGY AND RESOURCES DIRECTORATE - DETAIL OF SAVING PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION

Reference	Cabinet Member	Detail of Savings Proposal	Business Impact Description	Saving 2024/25 £'000s	Saving 2025/26 £'000s	Saving 2026/27 £'000s	Saving 2027/28 £'000s	Saving 2028/29 £'000s
STAR2425-A	Cllr A Watson	Reduction in Opening Hours across Library Estate.	All libraries remain open. However, reduced opening hours reflect the financial challenges facing the council and follow voluntary staffing reductions.	184	184	184	184	184

Strategy and Resources Directorate Total Saving Proposals for Consultation	184	184	184	184	184
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INDICATIVE REVENUE BUDGETS

Taking account of the growth, investments, and saving proposals from last year, and the additional proposals within the document, the indicative budgets for general fund services are shown in the table below.

Detail	Budget 2023/24	Change 2024/25	Budget 2024/25	Budget 2025/26	Budget 2026/27	Budget 2027/28	Budget 2028/29
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Children and Family Services	97.0	18.8	115.8	115.4	111.8	112.4	111.2
Adult Social Care, Health Integration and Wellbeing (incl Public Health)	69.0	7.4	76.4	84.4	89.8	95.4	101.0
Housing, Development and Growth	33.6	0.4	34.0	34.8	36.2	37.4	37.4
Strategy and Resources	29.1	6.2	35.3	35.6	37.1	38.9	39.3
City Director	5.7	(0.7)	5.0	5.2	5.6	5.8	6.1
Financing and Non-Departmental Costs	33.5	(4.9)	28.6	33.3	41.7	41.3	40.9
Total	267.9	27.2	295.1	308.7	322.2	331.2	335.9
Funding							
Revenue Support Grant	(27.1)	(1.7)	(28.8)	(29.7)	(30.2)	(30.9)	(31.5)
Collection Fund Forecasts (including Business Rates, compensatory s31 grants, Top Up Grant, and Collection Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	(108.8)	1.9	(106.9)	(113.6)	(116.3)	(118.7)	(121.1)
Non-Ringfenced Grants	(27.7)	(2.8)	(30.5)	(30.1)	(30.1)	(30.1)	(30.1)
Capital Receipts	(1.8)	(2.0)	(3.8)	-	-	-	-
Total	(165.4)	(4.6)	(170.0)	(173.4)	(176.6)	(179.7)	(182.7)
Government Support / Further saving proposals	-	(14.0)	(14.0)	-	-	-	-
Future savings - e.g. transformation programme (subject to future financial settlements, etc)	-	-	-	(17.9)	(21.5)	(20.4)	(14.6)
Council Tax Requirement	102.5	8.6	111.1	117.4	124.1	131.1	138.6

Indicative figures only. Directorate totals are subject to change due to restructures, and funding figures are our best estimates at this time and may change on receipt of the Final Finance Settlement.

COUNCIL TAX

For 2024/25, it is proposed that Council Tax will increase by 4.99% which includes 2% adult social care precept and a 2.99% general increase.

This means an increase of **99p per week for a Band A property**.

Council Tax bills are based upon bands and are charged as a proportion of the Band D, for example a Band A property is 2/3rds of a Band D property. Stoke-on-Trent has a high proportion (**93%**) of properties in Bands A-C which is the **2nd highest** of all billing authorities. Bands A-C residents pay less Council Tax than Band D. This means that the overall tax base in the city is low which restricts our ability to raise funding through Council Tax.

Our **Band D** Council Tax is the **7th lowest** compared to 99 metropolitan and unitary councils, and on average we have the **2nd lowest** average Council Tax per dwelling.

Band	No of properties 2023/24 base	% of properties	Proportion of Band D paid	City council element 2023/24	Proposed city council element 2024/25	Annual Increase	Per Week Increase
				£	£	£	£
A	70,561	59.06%	6/9	1,027.56	1,078.83	51.27	0.99
B	25,316	21.19%	7/9	1,198.81	1,258.64	59.83	1.15
C	15,852	13.27%	8/9	1,370.08	1,438.44	68.36	1.31
D	5,073	4.25%	9/9	1,541.34	1,618.25	76.91	1.48
E	1,917	1.60%	11/9	1,883.87	1,977.86	93.99	1.81
F	526	0.44%	13/9	2,226.38	2,337.47	111.09	2.14
G	197	0.16%	15/9	2,568.90	2,697.08	128.18	2.47
H	40	0.03%	18/9	3,082.68	3,236.50	153.82	2.96
Total	119,482	100.00%					

A number of discounts and exemptions are available to those who are eligible and we will provide support where necessary to help find solutions for those who are struggling to pay. We have a range of weekly and monthly payment options to suit your needs and can also advise if you are entitled to benefits to help you pay. We operate a council tax support scheme which means you may be able to get help towards paying your Council Tax bill depending on your circumstances and those of the people living with you, your income and savings. You may be entitled to help if you are on a low income, even if you own your home or are in work.

KEY DATES

Key Event	Date
Cabinet – approval of consultation timetable	12 December 2023
Consultation Launch	8 January 2024
Overview and Scrutiny Committees	January 2024
Cabinet – HRA Rent Setting Report	16 January 2024
City Council – HRA Rent Setting Report	25 January 2024
Public Consultation Ends	12 February 2024
Cabinet – Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council Tax Setting	13 February 2024
City Council – Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council Tax Setting	22 February 2024

GET IN TOUCH

There are a number of ways that we're engaging with people to get their views on the budget proposals. If you have any other ideas to help us generate income or make savings please contact us via one of the methods shown below.

Briefings with Councillors

There are opportunities throughout to raise questions via our social media channels or via email

Engagement with stakeholders

this includes trade unions, partners, voluntary sector organisations and schools

Engagement with our employees through regular updates

Cabinet and council meetings

You can contact us via:



MyStoke app

Find the MyStoke app on



budgetconsultation@stoke.gov.uk



twitter.com/SoTCityCouncil



facebook.com/sotcitycouncil



stoke.gov.uk/budget2024

Or write to us at

Budget 2024,

c/o Executive Assistant to the Director of Strategy

and Resources,

Civic Centre, Glebe Street,

Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 1HH

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City of
Stoke-on-Trent



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