

Budget 2023/24

The County Council budget for 2023/24 has been considered by the three scrutiny committees and will go onto Cabinet and then Full Council on the 16th February. I attended the full day Corporate Scrutiny Meeting on the 30th January.

Through my reports you will be aware of the financial challenges facing Devon County Council (DCC). The two biggest challenges are inflation and demand for services, particularly within the Integrated Adult Social Care & Childrens & Young Peoples Futures service areas. The table below gives an overview of the service budgets.

The approved service revenue budget targets for the 2023/24 financial year are set out in the table below.

	2022/23 Adjusted Base Budget * £000	Inflation and National Living Wage £000	Other Pressures £000	Savings, alternative funding and additional income £000	2023/24 Target Budget £000	Net change £000	
Integrated Adult Social Care	311,968	29,535	29,999	(32,200)	339,302	27,334	8.8%
Childrens and Young Peoples Futures	176,205	9,585	32,376	(9,563)	208,603	32,398	18.4%
Public Health, Communities & Prosperity	20,308	874	617	(404)	21,395	1,087	5.4%
Corporate Services	42,213	4,470	623	(2,458)	44,848	2,635	6.2%
Climate Change, Environment & Transport	79,117	7,037	214	(4,468)	81,900	2,783	3.5%
Service budgets total	629,811	51,501	63,829	(49,093)	696,048	66,237	10.5%

You will see that the investment required to cover inflation and National Living Wage increase is £51.5 million and a further £63.8 million to cover service demand pressures. All services have found savings or additional income as part of ongoing efforts to control budgets. Overall, the revenue budget will increase by 10.5% with the focus of additional investment for those who need help most, including vulnerable adults and young people.

By way of contrast, the highways capital budget for maintenance & potholes is £52.8 Million, which is part of a 3-year settlement from the Department of Transport ending in 2024/25. This settlement was agreed before inflation took hold, and therefore has not increased to allow for inflation, meaning the council is grappling with meeting rising costs with a fixed income. At the scrutiny meeting I proposed that Government be lobbied to fund DCC more to address the pressures faced with our deteriorating road network. This was agreed unanimously.

Cut price bus fares are being offered to help passengers save money.

Bus passengers in Devon can take advantage of a cap on single bus fares as part of the Department for Transport's new fares initiative, through the Government's Help for Households campaign. Bus users will pay no more than £2 for a single journey when boarding the bus anytime in January, February and March.

With people up and down the country facing the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis, many can save money whilst choosing a more sustainable method of transport. A recent report by Stagecoach found that motorists replacing some journeys by bus and active travel could save up to £6,000 a year. In addition, the report found that having the right measures in place to encourage people to make the switch, including cheaper fares, could help remove one billion miles of car journeys each week and cut CO2 by nearly 400,000 tonnes per week.

A3052 Resurfacing update.

Good progress is being made resurfacing sections of the A3052 between Branscombe Cross and Seaton Tower, with works scheduled to finish a day later than planned on Tuesday 7th February.

Highways update.

As we go about our daily business it is apparent that our highways are taking a severe battering because of recent cold and wet weather. Safety Defects (largely potholes) are being reported at an alarming rate with Highways gangs prioritising A-roads. Some gangs have been redeployed from routine maintenance to dealing with safety defects, and as a result the planned work at Hooperhayne Lane/Downhayne Road Colyton has been postponed. I continue to work closely with the local Highways Officer to ensure reported defects are in the system and dealt with as quickly as possible. As always defects should be reported online [Report a problem - Roads and transport \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/report-a-problem)

Cost of Living Help & Advice.

The number of households in Devon unable to access or afford the food that they need to ensure that they and their families stay healthy has increased by 70 per cent in 18 months. And more than a third of households say that they plan to switch off their heating altogether this winter to help make ends meet.

DCC are working with local partners, including District Councils, the NHS, and the voluntary and community sector, on ways to support communities, and there are a variety of schemes on offer depending on people's circumstances.

We have a dedicated webpage to help navigate the available support: [Cost of living | Help and advice for people in Devon | Devon County Council](https://www.devon.gov.uk/cost-of-living)

Levelling up funding announced for projects in Devon.

Multi-million-pound schemes to improve transport links in Exmouth and Okehampton are among more than 100 projects receiving a share of £2.1 billion through the Government's latest round of Levelling Up funding.

[DCC have been awarded £15.7 million to complete the Dinan Way link in Exmouth](#), and West Devon Borough Council has successfully received £13.4 million to develop a new railway station on the eastern edge of Okehampton.

The funding for the Destination Exmouth project will enable the completion of Dinan Way link road, helping to tackle congestion and remove traffic from the town centre. The project, which is also supported by East Devon District Council, will improve walking and cycling routes as well as enhancing the town's transport hub. The West Devon Transport Hub will build on the successful reinstatement of the Dartmoor Line in November 2021. As well as a new station on the outskirts of Okehampton, the scheme will also include cycle facilities and electric vehicle charging points to promote active travel and green travel.

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