

Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

Press Release

For immediate use

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Share your views on Royal Borough's proposed 2024/25 budget

Residents, community groups and businesses are invited to take part in a public consultation on the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead's draft budget proposals, which runs from today (Friday 15 December) until Monday 22 January 2024.

The draft budget was discussed at Cabinet on Wednesday, and at this stage, the budget proposals provisionally set out a balanced position for 2024/25. The final funding position from government will not be known until later this month, and work will continue ahead of the final budget being presented to Full Council in February.

The council has taken swift and decisive action to address the serious financial challenges it faces, and presenting a balanced budget marks an important step forwards. However, the council remains in a weak and serious financial position which will take time to turn around, and achieving financial stability will need to be the overarching priority for the council for some time to come.

To help achieve a balanced budget, the draft budget proposes a 4.99% increase in council tax for 2024/25, which includes an increase of 2% in the adult social care precept. This level of increase is being proposed by most councils, but our low council tax base means that, even at the maximum increase allowed, in pounds and pence this is still a lower increase than in other areas. The alternative would be significant further reductions to services and would risk the quality of care provided.

Some tough decisions are needed to bring costs down and increase income. However, the draft budget provides for investment and increased spending in a number of priority areas, such as new homelessness accommodation. It proposes additional staff to address capacity gaps in areas such as procurement, to promote better value for money and better outcomes from our contracted services. Funding for transformation is prioritised where possible, including a new case management system for children's services, which will reduce the amount of time staff spend on administration.

The proposals set out over £13m of capital investment in the borough's critical infrastructure, including to resurface highways and fix potholes, maintain the borough's schools, improve energy efficiency and protect the environment. The council is determined to avoid increasing levels of debt and interest payments. The capital programme has been re-prioritised, and the vast majority of new investment is funded by external grants or CIL and Section 106 infrastructure funding.

The council remains ambitious for the borough and is spending almost £100m next year on delivering services. Of this, around three quarters (£74m) is spent on adults and children's services. These services deliver high quality care and support for the most vulnerable people in the borough. A further £23m is spent on services within neighbourhoods and town centres, including parks, waste collection, roads, leisure, and on libraries and customer services.

The budget includes proposed increased spending on:

- **Adults social care - £5.7m additional spending** to meet the rising costs of care and to ensure that the budget is based on the numbers of adults requiring support. This is alongside transformation of the service.
- **Additional investment into children's services** to meet rising demand, costs of care and legal fees.
- **£400,000 additional funding for temporary accommodation** to meet rising demand and costs.

The consultation runs from today until Monday 22 January. Public feedback will help inform discussions when the draft budget is debated at Full Council in February 2024. To take part visit

<https://rbwmtogether.rbwm.gov.uk/budget-consultation-2024-25> Paper copies of consultation documents are also available in all borough libraries upon request.

Councillor Lynne Jones, Cabinet Member for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Council, said: "It has been a challenge to produce a draft budget for public consultation and we encourage residents, businesses and community organisations to have your say through the consultation.

"We are presenting a balanced budget, which is an important step forwards. But the situation remains serious and will require hard work and continued focus, to get the council onto a secure financial footing for the future. Without stable finances, we are unable to invest in making the improvements and change that we want to see in the borough.

"We remain committed to providing high quality services and support for our residents and to championing the needs and priorities of our communities."

ENDS

Kind regards,

Will

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