

Cambridgeshire County Council Report

February 2023

Because Cambridgeshire County Council is holding their Budget meeting on the same day as the Town Council, some information below may change

A proposal to set a balanced budget for Cambridgeshire County Council in 2023-24

A proposal to set a balanced budget for Cambridgeshire County Council in 2023-24 after what Council Leader Lucy Nethsingha called an 'extraordinary year ', and in the face of a national funding settlement which takes no account of the County's population growth, was recommended to Full Council by a majority of Members at its Strategy and Resources committee yesterday (Jan 26th).

Members discussed 'growing concerns' caused by the Government's decision to move its fair funding review back for a further two years, leaving Cambridgeshire with a formula which takes no account of recent population growth, and in some cases bases funding on population figures which are more than 20 years old.

This issue continues to be raised at the highest levels of Government by the council – and a further letter signed by all political group leaders was also due to be sent to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up this week.

In the report considered by Members, Stephen Moir the Council's Chief Executive and Tom Kelly, its Service Director for Finance and Procurement, confirmed that the Government's provisional Local Government Funding settlement in December, already assumed the council would raise council tax by the maximum allowed without a referendum

The proposed budget which will now be put to all Members to consider at **Full Council on February 7th**, seeks to bridge a potential funding gap for the coming year of £21.4m, even after finding more than £10m of additional savings or income, in the

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face of levels of inflation not seen for 40 years plus rising costs for energy and essential services.

The proposed budget also outlines how the Council plans to spend more than £15m in one-off funds from reserves next year including

- £1m to continue free school meal vouchers for eligible children,
- £1m into highways schemes including rural roads drainage,
- £1m investment into flood mitigation,
- more than £1.3m into libraries,
- £380k investment in community services.

The proposal which will be put to Full Council is to set a balanced budget for 2023/24 through a mix of savings, use of one-off reserves, and the generation of additional income including a **council tax rise for the coming year to 4.99%**, the maximum allowed by Government before triggering a local council tax referendum, which includes a **2% precept for adult social care**. **This would see band D properties in the county paying an additional £73 per year**, although more than half (64%) of county lives in homes rated band C or below and would see rises of between £49 and £65 per year.

In total this would raise £17.8m towards setting a legally balanced budget for 2023/4 – and would help to mitigate the additional costs of demand for, and inflation related to, adult social care costs forecast by the council in the year ahead.

Pothole facts:

- We fixed more than 45,000 last year. Last week our dragon patchers repaired 700 defects in three days
- In general terms, if a pothole is large and deep, we will fix it within five days. If it is smaller and less of a hazard, we will fix it within 21 days
- We mark up the potholes in different ways, those repaired in five days are not marked as our repair is immediate, yellow

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means we will repair it in 21 days. We always aim to fix potholes within five and 21 days

- We aim to fix emergency faults as soon as possible, always within five days
- We always aim to repair potholes with a permanent fix first time, however, in the winter this can be difficult due to the weather and numbers of potholes. At this time of year, we sometimes have to make temporary fixes to keep people safe, to keep up with the numbers and because road conditions are too wet for permanent repairs. Permanent fixes will then be programmed in and delivered when the weather allows
- The total amount of money we have specifically to fix potholes is £2.2m – this is part of a larger highway maintenance budget (which includes planned maintenance, patching, drain clearing etc) which is around £30million per year for maintenance of 4,500km of road. The average cost of fixing a pothole is £42.

Update on the legal challenge from Transport Action Network: A428

Construction on the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet has not started as initially planned as we were still waiting to hear back from the High Court.

A judge at the High Court has now reviewed the application and has refused permission for a judicial review on all three grounds.

While this is positive news, the legal process is not complete as Transport Action Network has now requested, its application for permission be heard at a High Court oral hearing.

The High Court does not publish timescales and are awaiting a date for the oral hearing. It is important we respect the ongoing legal process.

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