

BUDGET CONSULTATION

Stabilisation and Recovery Plan – Next Steps



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INTRODUCTION

As we enter our centenary year celebrations, we will be reflecting on how far we have come as a city, the challenges we have faced and the important contribution we can continue to make to the UK and the wider world – we are, after all, a World Craft City. The council and community organisations are developing a packed programme of culture, creativity and festivities to mark this historic milestone. But as well as celebrating our illustrious past, we are looking to the future.

We have ambitious new plans to grow our economy and improve the financial outlook of the city and her residents. Our aim is to create an economy that works for all, where everyone can participate and where the benefits of increased wealth and productivity are shared more equally. Achieving this won't be easy, but we are determined to seize this chance to secure a better, more prosperous future for our historic city. Our priorities will be supporting business expansion and job creation, improving education and skills, breathing life back into struggling town centres, investing in better transport services, unleashing the potential of green energy innovation and rebuilding the fabric of our most deprived neighbourhoods.

All our ambitions require partnerships between the council, business, the community and national government. And they require investment. Sadly, we do not have enough money to do everything we need to do. This is not because of anything we have done, but

because of something that was done to us by national government. Fourteen years of austerity cuts – which fell disproportionately hard on areas with high levels of deprivation - reduced this council's spending power by 25%.

The city was on the edge of bankruptcy when we were elected to run the council in May 2023. We were in a pack with dozens of local authorities that didn't know if there was sufficient money to deliver basic services. Despite desperate pleas for more help from government, some of these local authorities didn't manage to pull themselves out of the fire. There was a spate of councils 'going bankrupt' by issuing Section 114 notices. Fortunately, we were not one of them. We avoided this by acting quickly and decisively. We had done our homework and had a viable plan which made a compelling case to the government for time and funds.

We hoped the previous government would provide additional short-term grant funding. Instead we were offered a loan – borrowing which we would have to repay, at a premium interest rate. But a loan was definitely better than nothing.

Now, in year two, our financial position has improved but we're not there yet. We are steadying the ship but the financial position remains serious. More difficult decisions and challenges lie ahead.

Aside from the challenge we faced in children's social care numbers and the fact that two thirds of the council tax pound is spent across children's and adults' social care, 14 years of austerity have undermined us in the background.

In 2013-14 the Revenue Support Grant from Government was £95m. By 2023-24, it had been reduced to £27m. Deprived areas like ours have faced larger reductions in funding and higher levels of demand than more affluent areas, and cuts to preventative services – which can avert a growing problem in social care later down the line – were made.

It is not possible to undo a decade of austerity in one settlement. The public finances remain hugely challenging. We are pleased, however, that there are signs of a rebalance in funding which addresses unfairness. The Local Government Financial Settlement for 2025-26 provides targeted funding based on deprivation, from which we have benefited. The government has also committed to a full review of local government funding for 2026-27 onwards. This is the long awaited 'fair funding review', which we hope and expect will provide a fairer, more sustainable future for cities like ours.

We will engage fully with the national fair funding consultation and advocate strongly for our residents and the city to ensure future funding regimes provide a fair deal for our communities.

In the meantime, we will continue to invest what we have in the things that matter to the fabric of our city and work to spend each pound soundly.

Our approach will continue to be based on partnership working, early intervention and prevention – to tackle problems at their root and deliver better, more sustainable results.

We are already seeing evidence that this can work. This year, we have not only stopped the seemingly relentless rise in children in care over recent years, but achieved sustained reductions. Also, in adult social care, we cleared the waiting list for 'unmet hours' – meaning everyone assessed as needing care is getting it.

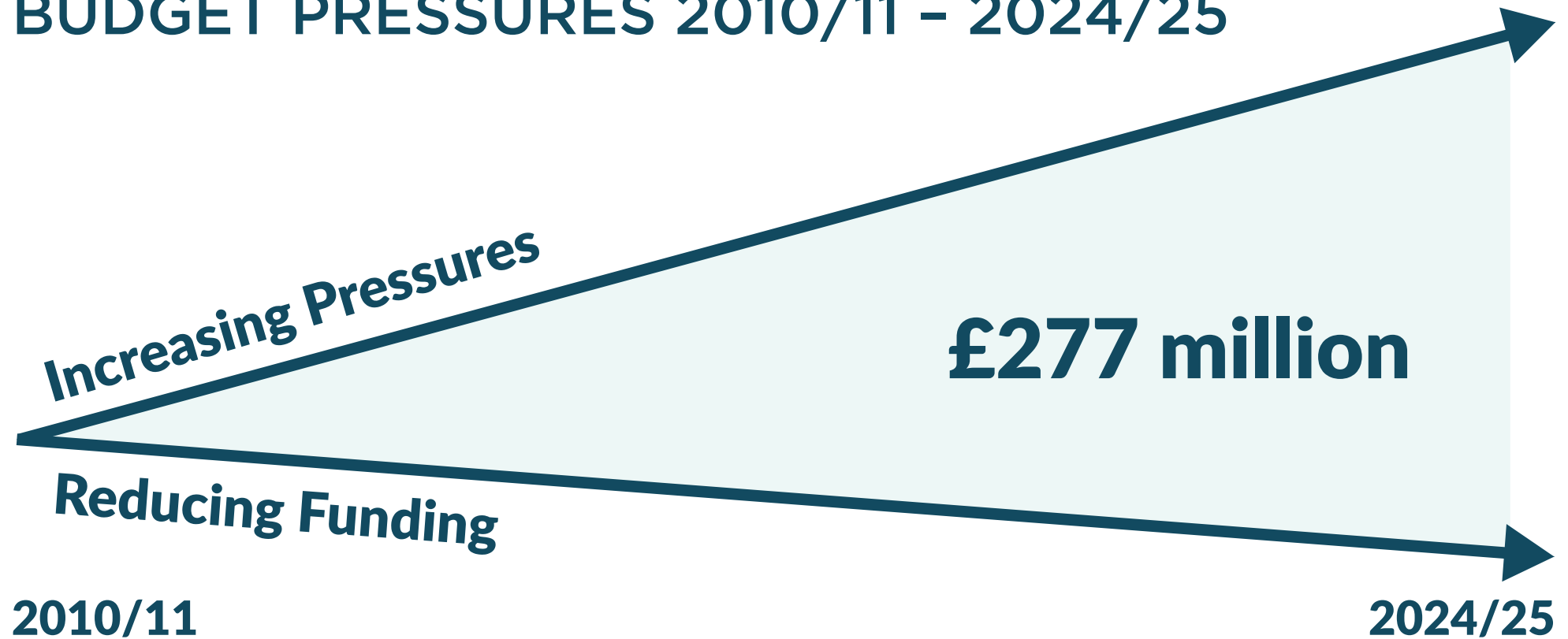
These are serious achievements that give us confidence that our approach is the right one for the people of Stoke-on-Trent.

**It is only the start of the journey –
but we are charting the right course.**

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

BUDGET PRESSURES 2010/11 - 2024/25

BUDGET PRESSURES 2010/11 - 2024/25



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 14 years of **£277 million**

THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The financial challenges facing local authorities like the City of Stoke-on-Trent over the last decade are well documented and are due to the impact of national funding reductions, rapidly increasing levels of demand for services such as social care, high levels of deprivation, low levels of financial resilience due to a relatively weak council tax base (93% of properties fall within Bands A-C within Stoke-on-Trent) and low levels of reserves. Based on 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 25.1% since 2010. For context the city council has delivered annual average cuts of £20m per year (circa £277m) over the last 14 years.

This budget consultation and medium term financial strategy are therefore presented at a time of continued and unprecedented challenge for local government and the wider public sector. The city council, along with the rest of the local government sector, continues to experience significant financial pressures due to high demand for essential services such as care for the elderly and placements for children in care and the enduring impact of the high inflation levels over recent years. The city council set a balanced budget for 2024-25 in February 2024 based on the estimated levels of demand available at the time and only with the assistance of Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) - a form of government loan.

A major challenge facing the city council over recent years has been the unique demand and the financial pressures relating to the provision of children's social care within the city. Alongside our

Exceptional Financial Support application last year, we set out a Children's Services Improvement and Delivery Plan which is pivotal in driving the change in demand for children's placements, aiming to reduce the number of children in care over the medium-term, as well as managing the unit cost of placements through robust and effective commissioning. As set out below, and later in this document, the green shoots of this plan are starting to emerge with the number of children in care reducing to 1,091 at December 2024. In addition to this, the council completed its Financial Improvement and Productivity Plan which set out its transformation and efficiency plans and provides assurance to government on how the city council will address the financial pressures ahead. Tight financial controls remain in place and we will continue to build on the work that has been done over the last year to stabilise our financial position, secure value for money and build financial resilience.

On 30 October 2024, the Chancellor delivered an Autumn Statement which provided some headline funding announcements for local government for 2025-26. A policy statement was published on 28 November 2024 that provided some further details including an increase to the Social Care Grant of £680 million (now £880 million following receipt of the Provisional Finance Settlement), and a new £600 million Recovery Grant targeted towards those councils with greater need and demand for services and less ability to raise income locally. The policy statement also set out plans for funding reforms for 2026-27, using an up-to-date assessment of need and local resources to direct funding where it is most needed to move gradually towards an updated system.

This additional distribution of funding is welcome and provides a start to correcting the current, outdated funding formula which allocates funding to local government based on spending needs from 2013-14. The pressures, however, remain high, with the Chancellor setting 5% efficiency saving targets for all government departments, meaning that the transformation journey must continue to address the challenges ahead and prudently manage the financial position accordingly.

The Provisional Finance Settlement was received on 18 December 2024, providing detailed funding allocations for 2025-26, including an improvement in the Social Care Grant funding total, taking the increase in this grant to £880 million. This means that government funding is now confirmed for next year and has allowed future funding forecasts to be updated. The additional funding allocation for social care, and the specific funding for the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping, will enable the city council to provide much-needed support for our most vulnerable residents. The city will also benefit from its share of nearly £1.6 billion in capital funding for local highways maintenance in England for the financial year 2025-26, including £500 million additional funding to fix pot-holes and improve local roads.

Whilst this provides us with some cautious optimism, significant uncertainty remains and we are developing a medium term financial strategy in a hugely uncertain environment. This, alongside the pending local government national fair funding review, makes it very difficult to forecast accurately the position beyond the 2025-26 financial year. As highlighted in the later tables of this budget book, very significant budget pressures beyond 2025-26 remain. These pressures will need to be addressed over the coming period.

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, including stricter controls in the way we purchase goods and services; tighter spending controls and measures on recruitment, agency and overtime spend; and a continual freeze on non-essential spend. However, 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.

COUNCIL TAX, BUDGET REDUCTIONS AND EXCEPTIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Despite the green shoots outlined above, the city council still faces a significant budget gap that needs to be addressed to fulfil its legal obligation to set a balanced budget each financial year. The financial gap for 2025-26 needs to be addressed through a combination of budget savings, council tax increases and further exceptional financial support.

Council Tax

To have sufficient resources to provide the services residents need we must increase council tax by the maximum levels permitted by government. As set out in this document, the budget proposals include an assumed council tax increase of 4.99% (which includes the previous social care precept increases of 2%). This is again a difficult decision when we know our residents face challenges relating to the cost of living. However, to ensure we can deliver the services needed, this increase is critical. For the majority of our residents this would equate to an increase of £1.04 per week. We understand the vast majority of councils across the country will be implementing similar increases.

Budget Reductions

As set out later in this document, we are proposing total budget reductions of £7.5 million, including £1.1 million of savings requiring public consultation. These savings are low in value because the majority of front-line services have already been reduced in previous budget cycles and the transformation of these services means that efficiency savings are already being made. 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 £6.4 million 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. In addition to addressing the immediate pressures, the city council is committed to a continuous transformation programme that will improve efficiency year-on-year. As the council continues this journey further proposals may be brought forward, consulted upon as required, and approved separately.

Exceptional Financial Support

Exceptional Financial Support is a capitalisation direction that allows councils to fund revenue expenditure via capital financing methods such as capital receipts from the disposal of assets, or through borrowing. This means that councils are allowed to sell buildings, land or assets and use the receipts to finance the pressures they face. It is important to note that whilst central government is granting special permissions through a capitalisation direction, individual councils in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support are still using their own resources to address the challenges they face through the sale of such assets.

Whilst the increases in Local Government Settlement are welcomed, due to the severity of the financial challenges faced over a sustained period these increases, alongside the proposed council tax levels and proposed budget savings and cuts, will still not be sufficient to close the overall budget gap. We are therefore seeking further Exceptional 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.

The Exceptional Financial Support request to government consists of £11.0 million for the 2025-26 financial year to support children's social care placements. An additional £2.8 million is requested to offset related interest costs and £3.0 million is requested for investment into transforming services. This total of £16.8 million is an improvement on the £21.8 million we projected would be required for 2025-26 when we set out our plan to government last year as part of our original application for Exceptional Financial Support.

The city council has always said that the financial position would be stabilised over the medium term through a five-year recovery plan, and that further financial support from government would be required in respect of early intervention and early help, in line with the Children's Improvement Plan. We are on track to deliver this plan.

REAL TERM CUTS 2010/11 - 2024/25

There was **£97m** less funding available to invest in services in 2024/25 compared to 2010/11

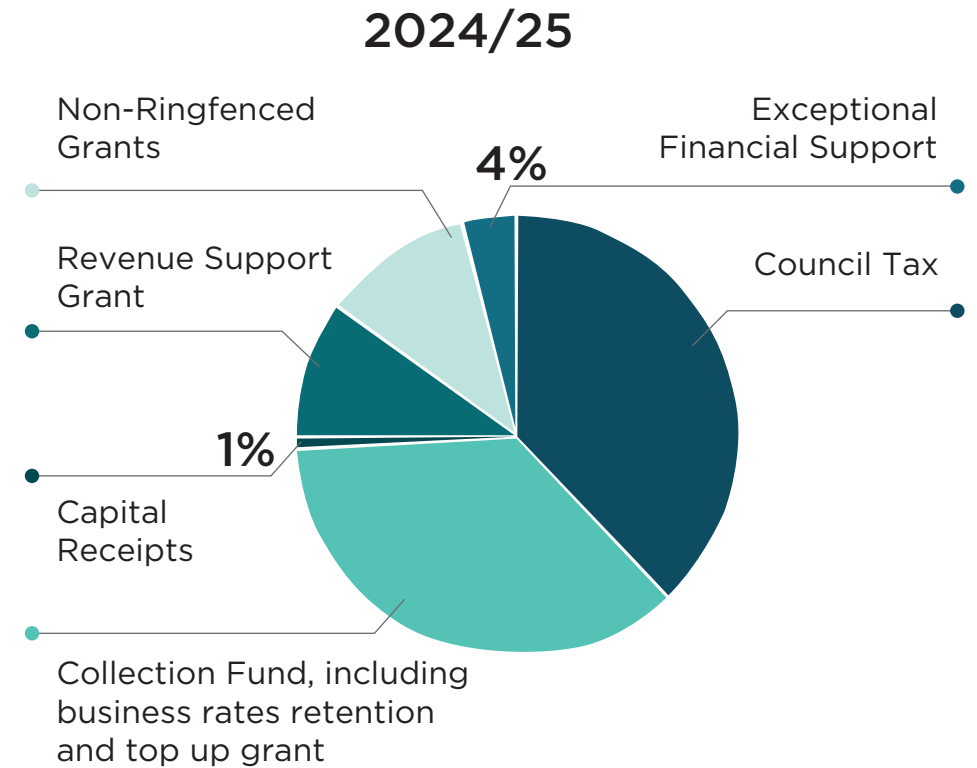
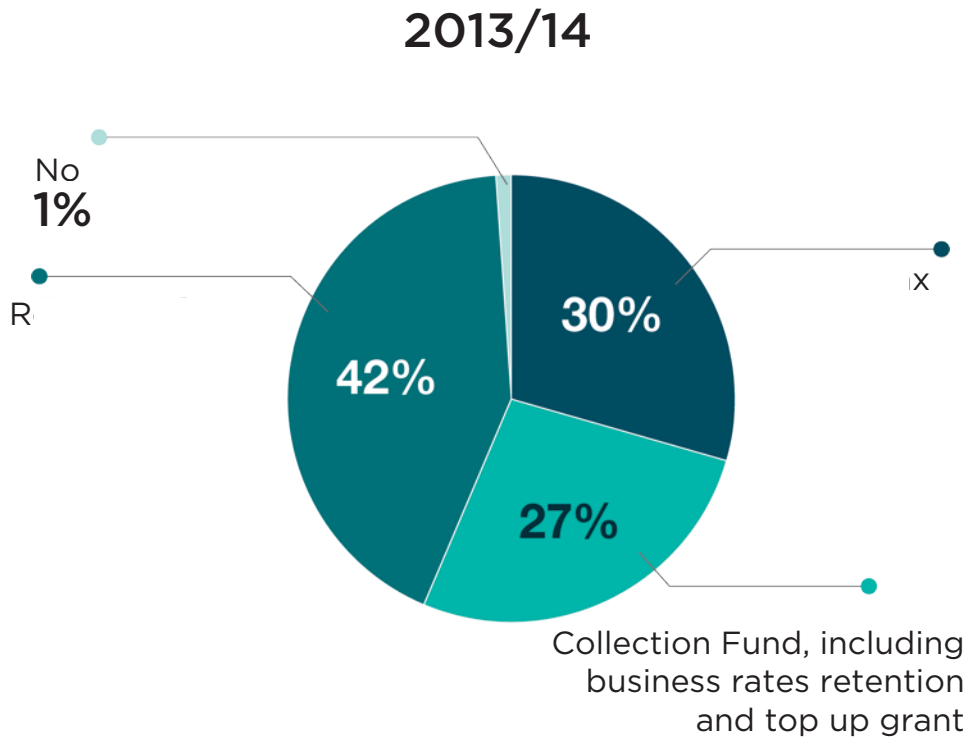
This is a **25.1%** real terms cut and equals a reduction of

£817.80
per dwelling

this puts our local council tax pound under pressure



HOW WE ARE FUNDED



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 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. The government has recognised the challenges that authorities like the city council are facing, with the Financial Settlement for 2025-26 allocating an element of targeted funding based on deprivation, and has committed to a full fair funding review for 2026-27 onwards. The additional funding is welcomed and these early signs indicate that the government recognises the need for change.

WHY THE LONG-TERM FALL IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING MATTERS

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 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 challenges caused by the cost-of-living crisis. For the majority of our residents this would equate to an increase of £1.04 per week. We understand the vast majority of councils across the country will be implementing similar increases.

In addition to a low council tax base within the city, with 93% of properties in Bands A-C, 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 the council having not increased council tax by the maximum amounts permitted nationally between 2016-17 and 2019-20 and accepting council tax freeze grants in the years prior to this. Under our proposals for council tax in 2025/26, the majority of our residents would pay £1,133 per year. This compares to £1,268 for statistical neighbours (councils of a similar size and type to Stoke-on-Trent) £1,218 for geographical neighbours, and £1,270 for all unitary authorities (these figures are based on Band A property bills, including social care precepts but excluding police and fire precepts. They assume all councils levy a 4.99% rise in 2025-26).

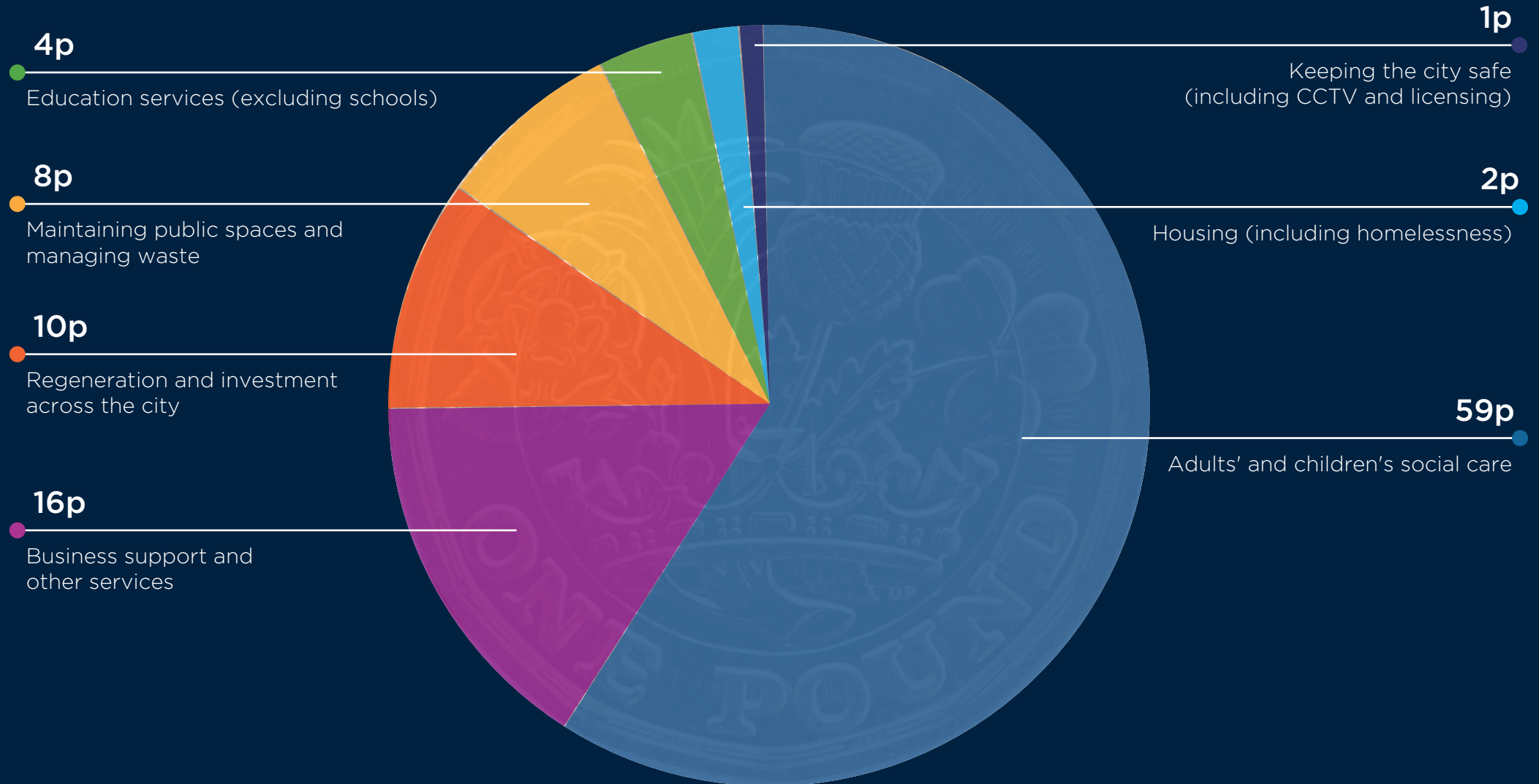
This means that even with a proposed increase of 4.99% in 2025-26 the majority of local residents would be paying circa £140 less than the average resident in other unitary authorities.

Budget Pressures and Our Response

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 and 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, deliver services appropriately, and create a better place to live, work and enjoy.

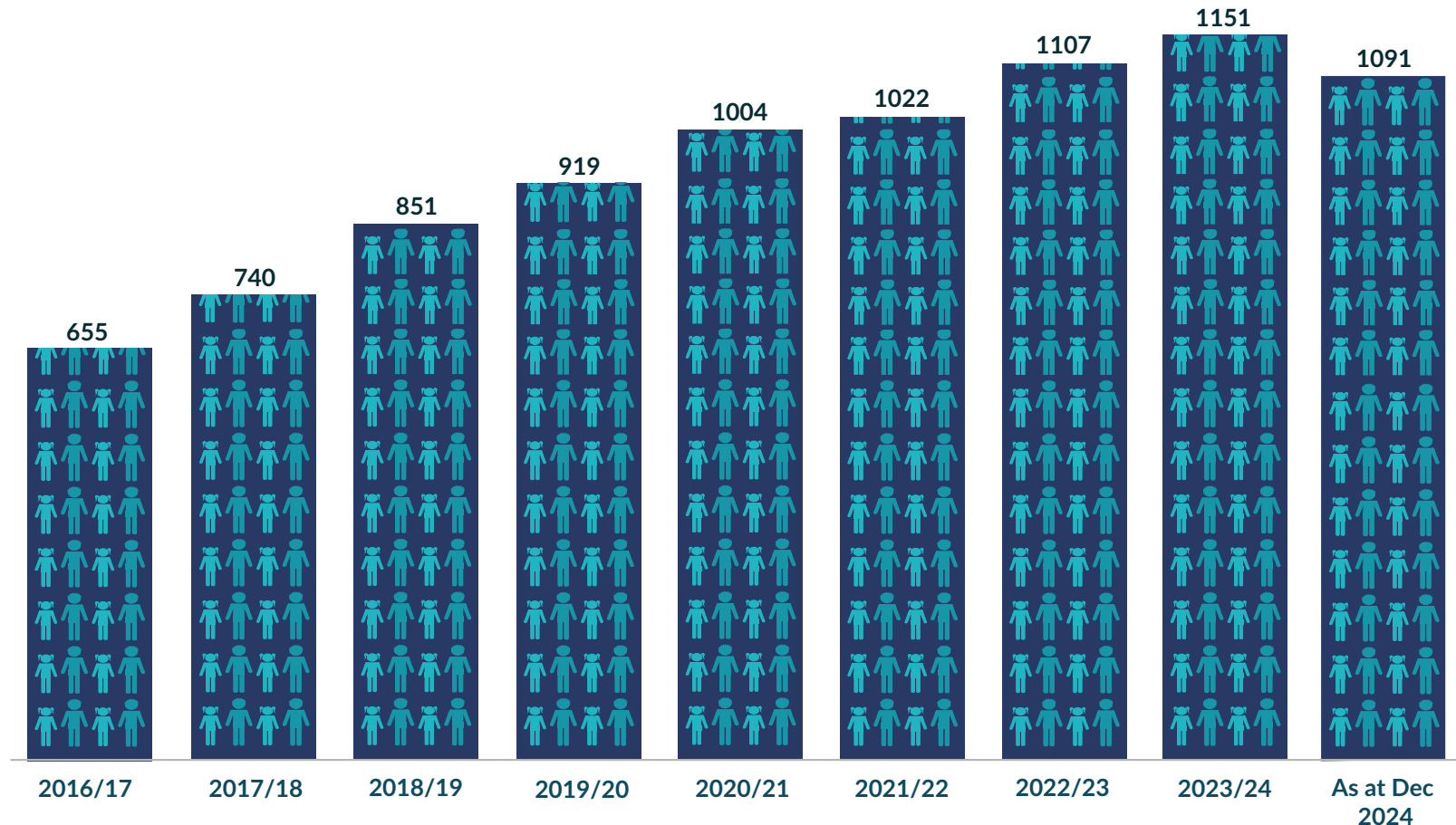
WHERE HAS MY COUNCIL TAX POUND GONE?



WE'VE TURNED THE CORNER ON CHILDREN IN CARE

Graph shows number of children in care in Stoke-on-Trent


The number of children in care started to rise in recent years. This rise continued up to 2023/24, and included a significant increase in young people with complex needs. This put pressure on the children's social care budget. The budget has been severely impacted by increases in placement provision costs beyond the high inflation levels in the general economy. Through a structured reinvestment in prevention, early help and other targeted services, the number of looked after children and complexity of need will decline. This decline, alongside generating more opportunities for those within care, will result in a gradual reduction in the Children's Social Care Placement forecast pressure. A continuation of an in year trend of declining numbers in care, alongside delivering a stretch savings proposal could result in circa £3 million less expenditure in 2025-26 within Placements (compared to 2023-24 actuals).




WHY IS THE CITY FACING SUCH A MASSIVE FINANCIAL CHALLENGE?

-  **Reductions in national funding allocations**
Our spending power has reduced by £97m since 2010/11 which is a reduction of approximately 25.1%.
-  **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 2024-25.
-  **Rising inflation and cost of living pressures that impact the cost of delivering services**
This includes employee related increases and other inflation in respect of contracts.
-  **The size of our council tax base**
The council 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. Cuts in early help services from 2015 have put huge pressures on the statutory social care system.

IT IS NOT BECAUSE...

 **Children are being removed unnecessarily from their families into the care of the state**
This has been tested multiple times, including by OFSTED. 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.

 **The council's staff are paid too much**
Our council employees earn an average salary of £28,000 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.

 **Councillors are paid too much**
There has been no increase in councillors' allowances since 2012.

 **The council wastes too much money on consultants**
Consultants are only used to plug short-term deficits, with the 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.

 **Poor financial and corporate management**
External reviews and independent audits 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	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Budget changes compared to 2024-25 base position					
Employee related increases and other inflation in respect of contracts	14.7	22.6	32.7	39.4	46.1
Revenue investments to meet demand for services, changes in income and other adjustments	4.0	12.1	12.7	10.3	10.7
Capital Financing Costs	6.0	11.9	13.0	13.5	14.0
Corporate Budget Amendments	0.2	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1
Initial Savings Requirement	24.9	49.7	61.5	66.3	73.9
Funding Adjustments	(11.8)	(16.9)	(19.5)	(22.3)	(25.1)
Growth Strategy - Business Rates growth	(0.1)	(0.3)	(0.4)	(0.5)	(0.5)
Growth Strategy - additional houses	(0.4)	(1.3)	(2.4)	(3.3)	(4.3)
Increase in Council Tax (includes Adult Social Care Precept element at 2%)	(5.6)	(11.5)	(17.8)	(24.5)	(31.6)
Savings Required	7.0	19.7	21.4	15.7	12.4
Savings not requiring consultation	(6.4)	(6.4)	(6.3)	(6.9)	(9.1)
Savings to be consulted on	(1.1)	(1.1)	(1.1)	(1.1)	(1.1)
Total budget changes compared to 2024-25 base position (before Exceptional Financial Support)	(0.5)	12.2	14.0	7.7	2.2
Exceptional Financial Support from Government 2024-25 Base Position	(11.5)	(11.5)	(11.5)	(11.5)	(11.5)
Exceptional Financial Support from Government 2025-26 Request*	(11.0)	-	-	-	-
Difference in request for government support compared to 2024-25 base position	0.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5
Estimated Gap (subject to future financial settlements and transformation programme savings)	-	23.7	25.5	19.2	13.7

* Requests for Exceptional Financial Support from government for 2026/27 onwards will be considered if appropriate

The initial savings requirement 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 corporate budget amendments, business and housing growth, and the council tax increase of 4.99%. This results in £7 million savings being required. There are £6.4 million of savings that do not require consultation, and £1.1 million of savings that require consultation and are detailed in this document. We are seeking financial support from the government to address a remaining budget shortfall in 2025-26 of £11.0 million, which is £0.5 million lower than in 2024-25.

DETAIL OF SAVING PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND ALL-AGE COMMISSIONING DIRECTORATE

Consultation Reference	Cabinet Member	Detail of Savings Proposal	Impact Description	Saving 2025/26 £'000s	Saving 2026/27 £'000s	Saving 2027/28 £'000s	Saving 2028/29 £'000s	Saving 2029/30 £'000s
ASC2526-A	Cllr D Walker	Annual Administration Charge - Includes an initial setting up fee and an annual charge for Adult Social Care Self Funders	Self-funders who make use of the City Council's Brokerage Service benefit from receiving their care and support from the Councils commissioned providers. This ensures provision from providers who are subject to regular quality assurance, a point of escalation should any issues arise and rates which are often considerably lower than the rates charged by care providers for private clients.	75	75	75	75	75
ASC2526-B	Cllr D Walker	Front Door Strengths - Reduce demand for formal assessments and support plans through front door strengths based approach.	The activity of the Front Door team is meeting our duties under the Care Act 2014, while promoting the independence and strengths of our people within the City. This includes improved advice & guidance, digital solutions and community lounges work. The impact of this will be increased independence for the person, increased capacity in the care market and the financial impact outlined above.	230	230	230	230	230

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND ALL-AGE COMMISSIONING DIRECTORATE

Consultation Reference	Cabinet Member	Detail of Savings Proposal	Impact Description	Saving 2025/26 £'000s	Saving 2026/27 £'000s	Saving 2027/28 £'000s	Saving 2028/29 £'000s	Saving 2029/30 £'000s
ASC2526-C	Cllr D Walker	Extra Care Housing - Accelerate the provision and use of extra care facilities with onsite providers as an alternative to residential care.	This work will make best use of new Extra Care Housing developments as they become available. This in turn will reduce the reliance on residential care and promote independence. These proposals will ensure that current Extra Care Housing care and support provision remains financially viable and a suitable alternative.	220	220	220	220	220

Adult Social Care and All-Age Commissioning Directorate Total Saving Proposals for Consultation	525	525	525	525	525
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PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND WELLBEING DIRECTORATE

Consultation Reference	Cabinet Member	Detail of Savings Proposal	Impact Description	Saving 2025/26 £'000s	Saving 2026/27 £'000s	Saving 2027/28 £'000s	Saving 2028/29 £'000s	Saving 2029/30 £'000s
PHLTH2526-A	Cllr L Watkins	Income Generation across Leisure and Wellbeing Services, and Public Protection	<p>Business Impact - Implications on changing demand for services as a result of price rises is not always clear cut. However, due consideration has been given to competitor pricing, current demand and the commercial environment in which the service operates.</p> <p>Public Impact – In broad terms it is felt that the increases will allow the Council to keep services open and maintain a good standard of leisure offer within the City which is accessible to the majority of our residents, both geographically and economically.</p>	297	297	297	297	297
PHLTH2526-B	Cllr L Watkins	Expenditure savings via transfer of New Horizons Leisure Centre to Ormiston Academy on a long-term lease.	<p>Business Impact – on going annual revenue savings for the City Council. Staff currently employed at the leisure centre will either continue to deliver services from site or relocate to our other centres.</p> <p>Public Impact – importantly the proposal retains the facilities for community use, under the terms of the agreement. This includes a community swimming offer as well as allowing the Council to maintain the school swimming service offered to local schools and private swimming lessons.</p>	69	69	69	69	69

PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND WELLBEING DIRECTORATE

Consultation Reference	Cabinet Member	Detail of Savings Proposal	Impact Description	Saving 2025/26 £'000s	Saving 2026/27 £'000s	Saving 2027/28 £'000s	Saving 2028/29 £'000s	Saving 2029/30 £'000s
PHLTH2526-C	Cllr L Watkins	New Service. Development of a Pet Garden of Remembrance and sale of pet memorialisation items for the garden and the home.	<p>Business Impact - Benchmarking with other authorities providing a similar service demonstrates a low but steady level of demand.</p> <p>Public Impact – The area will be developed at Carmountside Cemetery in a segregated area of the site which is unsuitable for the burial of human remains.</p>	3	3	3	3	3

Public Health, Protection and Wellbeing Directorate Total Saving Proposals for Consultation	369	369	369	369	369
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HOUSING, REGENERATION AND OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE

Consultation Reference	Cabinet Member	Detail of Savings Proposal	Impact Description	Saving 2025/26 £'000s	Saving 2026/27 £'000s	Saving 2027/28 £'000s	Saving 2028/29 £'000s	Saving 2029/30 £'000s
HRO2526-A	Cllr C Robinson / Cllr F Gordon- McCusker	Review and optimise indoor market provision to stimulate economic growth	The experience of the public using the markets will improve. This will result in a more flexible facilities management approach within markets provision.	35	35	35	35	35
HRO2526-B	Cllr A Wazir	Deliver Differently - Partnership working with local charities to improve recycling rates.	This will increase the amount of recycling and reduce the amount of waste. Furniture collections can be diverted to a local charity to collect whilst the Council maintains the current service provision for all other items.	20	20	20	20	20
HRO2526-C	Cllr A Wazir	Deliver Differently - Weedkilling to be delivered to the current service level agreement as part of the Greenspace Team	The service level agreement currently in place for weedkilling across the City will be maintained.	40	40	40	40	40

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE

Consultation Reference	Cabinet Member	Detail of Savings Proposal	Impact Description	Saving 2025/26 £'000s	Saving 2026/27 £'000s	Saving 2027/28 £'000s	Saving 2028/29 £'000s	Saving 2029/30 £'000s
HRO2526-D	Cllr A Wazir	Smart Streets – a model of responsive streetlighting provision. Dimming of streetlights where it is practical and safe to do so.	Dimming of streetlights would take place with community safety and community needs in mind. Where selected, groups of streetlights can be dimmed overnight delivering energy savings. Similar initiatives have been successfully implemented in other areas, with longer term benefits of reducing carbon emissions and extending the lifespan of lighting infrastructure.	100	100	100	100	100

**Housing, Regeneration and Operations Directorate
Total Saving Proposals for Consultation**

195	195	195	195	195
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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 2024/25	Change 2025/26	Budget 2025/26	Budget 2026/27	Budget 2027/28	Budget 2028/29	Budget 2029/30
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Children and Families	115.6	2.1	117.7	117.8	120.0	117.6	117.9
Adult Social Care and All-Age Commissioning	77.4	7.8	85.2	90.4	95.7	101.2	102.3
Public Health, Protection and Wellbeing	(0.6)	(0.4)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(0.7)	(0.4)	(0.1)
Housing, Regeneration and Operations	34.4	(4.6)	29.8	35.0	36.0	36.0	37.3
Resources	35.4	(0.1)	35.3	37.3	39.7	39.6	41.2
Chief Executive's	5.3	0.3	5.6	5.8	6.1	6.4	6.8
Financing and Non-Departmental Costs	28.5	12.4	40.9	52.8	53.3	53.8	54.4
Total	296.0	17.5	313.5	338.1	350.1	354.2	359.8
Funding							
Revenue Support Grant	(28.8)	(0.7)	(29.5)	(30.1)	(30.7)	(31.3)	(31.9)
Collection Fund Forecasts (including Business Rates, compensatory s31 grants, Top Up Grant, and Collection Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	(106.8)	(1.8)	(108.6)	(113.5)	(115.9)	(118.2)	(120.8)
Non-Ringfenced Grants	(34.0)	(13.4)	(47.4)	(47.2)	(47.2)	(47.2)	(47.2)
Capital Receipts	(3.8)	3.8	-	-	-	-	-
Total	(173.4)	(12.1)	(185.5)	(190.8)	(193.8)	(196.7)	(199.9)
Exceptional Financial Support from Government*	(11.5)	0.5	(11.0)	-	-	-	-
Further saving proposals or Management Actions (subject to future financial settlements, etc)"	-	-	-	(23.7)	(25.5)	(19.2)	(13.7)
Council Tax Requirement	111.1	5.9	117.0	123.6	130.8	138.3	146.2

* Requests for Exceptional Financial Support from government for 2026/27 onwards will be considered if appropriate

Due to the pending Fair Funding Review it is difficult to forecast forward likely grants, inflation and the requirement for Exceptional Financial Support. The table above is therefore currently based on gross estimates and is subject to change. Also note that directorate totals are subject to change due to restructures and so are indicative figures only.

COUNCIL TAX

For 2025/26, 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 £1.04 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 out of 99 metropolitan and unitary councils, and on average we have the 3rd lowest average council tax per dwelling.

Band	No of properties 2024/25 base	% of properties	Proportion of Band D paid	City council element 2024/25	Proposed city council element 2025/26	Annual Increase	Per Week Increase
A	70,866	59.03%	6/9	£1,078.83	£1,132.67	£53.84	£1.04
B	25,444	21.19%	7/9	£1,258.63	£1,321.44	£62.81	£1.21
C	15,901	13.24%	8/9	£1,438.45	£1,510.22	£71.77	£1.38
D	5,133	4.28%	9/9	£1,618.25	£1,699.00	£80.75	£1.55
E	1,940	1.62%	11/9	£1,977.87	£2,076.56	£98.69	£1.90
F	529	0.44%	13/9	£2,337.47	£2,454.11	£116.64	£2.22
G	199	0.17%	15/9	£2,697.08	£2,831.67	£134.59	£2.59
H	40	0.03%	18/9	£3,236.50	£3,398.00	£161.50	£3.11
Total	120,052	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. There are a range of weekly and monthly payment options to suit your needs and the city council can also advise if you are entitled to benefits to help you pay. The city council operates 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	10 December 2024
Consultation Launch	6 January 2025
Overview and Scrutiny Committees	January 2025
Cabinet - HRA Rent Setting Report	14 January 2025
City Council - HRA Rent Setting Report	23 January 2025
Public Consultation Ends	10 February 2025
Cabinet - Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council Tax Setting	18 February 2025
City Council - Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council Tax Setting	27 February 2025

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



x.com/SoTCityCouncil



facebook.com/sotcitycouncil



stoke.gov.uk/budget2025

Or write to us at

Budget 2025, c/o
Executive Assistant to the Corporate Director of Resources,
Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 1HH

