

Bristol's Budget 2024/25

1: Information guide

Bristol City Council is consulting on the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept for next year (2024/25). We have included information about our proposals for other ways we can spend less and raise more income to address the budget gap over the next five years. We also invite your suggestions for ways we can balance the council's budget.

You can complete the survey online at:
www.ask.bristol.gov.uk/budget-2024-25

Or return the accompanying paper version of the survey using the Freepost envelope supplied with this booklet. Please give us your views by Thursday **21 December 2023**.



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If you need this consultation survey as a paper version, or Easy Read, Braille, large print, British Sign Language, or in another language, or other alternative format, you can request this by emailing consultation@bristol.gov.uk or calling **0117 922 2848**.

1 Our Budget 2024/25 consultation

1.1 Overview

Every year, the council must agree a legal and balanced budget that sets out how much we intend to spend in the coming year and how we propose to raise the necessary income to meet these spending plans. Last year's budget set out our plans to start the process of making the council more focused whilst improving efficiency.

This year's proposed budget aims to continue this work and ensure the council can adapt to meet the change happening around us both nationally and locally.

Over the past 13 years, the amount of money available to the council has fallen in real terms. This is a situation that is being seen across the country and has led to councils facing a cost of operating crisis, with financial pressures like never before.

The main sources of income for any council continue to be from Council Tax, Business Rates and government grants. How much Bristol can expect to receive in government funding for council services next year and beyond is very uncertain. The Chancellor's Autumn Statement at the end of November 2023, will provide an overview for local government as a whole; however given the national context, we do not expect that the council will receive any significant additional funding. The UK's economic outlook remains challenging as the economy continues to be affected by global events, as well as the ongoing national cost of living crisis. This makes forecasting our future finances difficult and requires us to prepare for multiple situations.

During the past year, demand on our services has continued to increase as the city's population has grown, and there have been challenges to the viability of providers of our essential services, as well as increased complexity and cost of care and support packages.



Just like all other organisations and households in Bristol, we also face the impacts of ongoing high inflation, interest rates at a 15-year high, pay pressures and a global energy crisis pushing up bills. All of which are contributing to higher costs of delivering many of our core services. Prices remain high for goods, services and utilities, meaning that in many cases, the cost of delivering services next year will be significantly more expensive than it was in recent years.

In the face of these challenges, our commitment to careful and prudent management of our finances continues to be a priority for the council. The proposals contained within this consultation reflect the aims of our Corporate Strategy¹. These aims are to drive an inclusive, sustainable, and healthy city of hope and aspiration where everyone can share the city's success. To do this, we must respond by doing things differently, prioritise our shrinking resources on areas where we can generate the most positive impact for our city and our citizens, and work with residents and partners across the voluntary, private and public services to find ways to make services better and more efficient.

This consultation seeks your views on the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept for the coming year (2024/25) and sets out the proposed approach we would take to continue making the council a more focused and efficient organisation. We have described our proposals to change how the council operates, either to reduce costs or increase income. We do not think that they are likely to mean major changes to services the council provides, so we have not included questions about each proposal. However, you can tell us your suggestions on how we might find further savings in the survey. We will undertake further public consultation if this is needed on the specific details of these proposals, and you will have the opportunity to provide your feedback.

1.2 The budget challenge

The Local Government Association reported earlier this year that government funding for councils (the money that councils have available to spend on delivering core services), fell by 27 per cent in real terms from 2010/11 to 2023/24.

The bulk of cuts happened in the first half of the last decade and the money the council has available to spend was at its lowest in real terms in 2016/17. However, since then there has been no marked recovery, and our budget has stayed relatively flat.

In Bristol, we set a balanced budget in February for 2023/24, which was achieved through additional income from Council Tax, identified savings and efficiencies, a requirement for services to carefully manage inflation and also the use of reserves (our savings). The rising costs and demand have resulted in increasing pressures during this year. We are currently forecasting a further £32 million will be needed to continue balancing the budget over the next five years, as the trend of increasing demand and rising costs continue to outstrip the funding available for council spending.

The council spends over £1 billion a year to deliver a wide range of essential services to the city, that most people use every day. These include recycling and waste collections, running our parks and libraries, and maintaining our roads. We also provide services that are less visible, such as public health, providing homeless people with the support to prevent or end their homelessness and specialist care to people of all ages.

By far the largest share of the council's budget is spent on social care services, with over 70 per cent of our service spending on providing support to those who need additional help and the most vulnerable in our city.

¹ www.bristol.gov.uk/council-and-mayor/policies-plans-and-strategies/corporate-strategy

Whether the services we deliver are statutory (the services we must provide) or discretionary (the ones we can choose to provide), all are highly valued by those who use them, and we recognise the important role the council plays in many people's lives. It is with this in mind that we must make some difficult decisions to balance the coming year's budget and ensure we continue to spend what money we have where it makes the greatest impact.

The financial gap we need to close is currently a forecast based on what we estimate our income and expenditure to be in 2024/25 and for the four years following. We continue to wait for the UK Government to announce how much grant funding we can expect next year. This information will be shared with us as part of the annual local government finance settlement in December.

This added layer of uncertainty means we cannot be certain of the final financial gap we need to fill until the amount of government financial support is known. At present, our proposals for the 2024/25 budget do not cover the full estimated gap and there will still be a need to bring forward further proposals for consideration in January 2024, and for all councillors to consider in February 2024 to deliver a balanced budget. We will undertake further public consultation if this is needed on a new proposal, or on specific details of existing proposals, and you will have the opportunity to provide your feedback.

We have already set out our plans to focus our funds on where they are needed most. Our Corporate Strategy sets this approach out and this proposed budget seeks to continue our journey towards meeting this strategy's aims. Over the past year we have seen organisations across the city step up to take on more of the responsibility in facing the challenges we, as a city, continue to experience.

These include a national cost of living crisis, the pressures facing children's social care services, a growing and ageing population, a housing crisis that is impacting a large proportion of residents, and the twin threats of climate and ecological emergencies.

During that time, we have listened to your feedback and strived to protect and improve the services you have said are most important to you. Whilst we will continue to prioritise our efforts on meeting the challenges our city faces, we have a legal duty to set a balanced budget and we must continue to distribute our finances accordingly to ensure we continue to deliver essential services.

1.3 Why are we consulting?

We are seeking your views on our approach to setting a balanced and legal budget, as we continue to deliver much needed services and take the action needed to tackle the issues facing the city.

Council Tax and Social Care Precept

We are consulting you on options for the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept for next year (2024/25). The Social Care Precept is an additional charge that councils, including Bristol, may be permitted to add on top of the Council Tax increase to help pay for social care. The government decides each year how much, if any, Social Care Precept councils can levy.

We consider increasing Council Tax and Social Care Precept to be a last resort after we have exhausted other options. The options we are considering first are saving money wherever we can. This includes considering how we organise ourselves, conduct our business and raise income; reviewing the council estate to ensure we have the right buildings in the right place to deliver and achieve our goals; accelerating our drive to use digital technology so we are more cost-effective and flexible in everything we do; and continuing to make our case for fair funding from the government.

Our assumptions include a Council Tax increase of 3 per cent and Social Care Precept at 2 per cent, as other options are not currently enough to manage the funding gap without this. If these levels are not progressed, then the funding gap for our services will be greater than the £32 million discussed throughout this consultation, and further reductions and savings proposals will be needed to set a balanced budget. The levels of Council Tax and Social Care Precept will be decided by Full Council in February 2024.

Our proposals reduce costs and generate more income

We provide you below with our proposals to change how the council operates, either to reduce costs or increase income. We are not consulting you on these proposals this year because we do not think that they are likely to mean major changes to services the council provides. Should this change at a future date, we will consult you then.

The proposals in total would be a saving of £23.4 million over the next five years with a cost to deliver of £1.7 million, resulting in a net saving of £21.7 million over the five-year period. The financial challenge we face is significant; currently the budget gap is estimated to be up to £32 million, so we have a remaining gap of around £10 million to close over the coming months. This means we are likely to need to make some more challenging decisions in February 2024 for 2024/25 and beyond to bridge the remaining gap. We may need to propose and consult on further savings, and we will publicise this if that happens.

1.4 Have your say

The consultation is open from Thursday 9 November and will close at midnight on Thursday 21 December. Please read the information below, provide answers to the questions that you would like to respond to and submit by Thursday 21 December 2023 to make sure your views are considered.

If you need this consultation survey as a paper version, or Easy Read, Braille, large print, or in another language, or other alternative format, you can request this by emailing the Consultation and Engagement Team at consultation@bristol.gov.uk or by calling **0117 922 2848**.

At the end of this survey, you can sign up to receive fortnightly email updates about council consultations and engagement.

1.5 What happens next?

All responses to this consultation will be analysed and the feedback will help us develop final proposals for the level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept. The council's Cabinet will consider these proposals on 23 January 2024 and agree a recommended budget for all councillors to consider. The final decisions about the 2024/25 budget will be taken by Full Council at its budget setting meeting on 20 February 2024. Both Cabinet and Full Council will take responses to the consultation into consideration when making their decisions.

2 Our budget: how it works

Every year, we agree on a budget for the following year which shows how much money we will be able to spend on services we provide.

2.1 How we are funded

The money the council has available to spend on delivering day-to-day services to citizens is called the revenue budget or the General Fund. The table below shows the different sources of income our 2023/24 revenue budget is funded from.

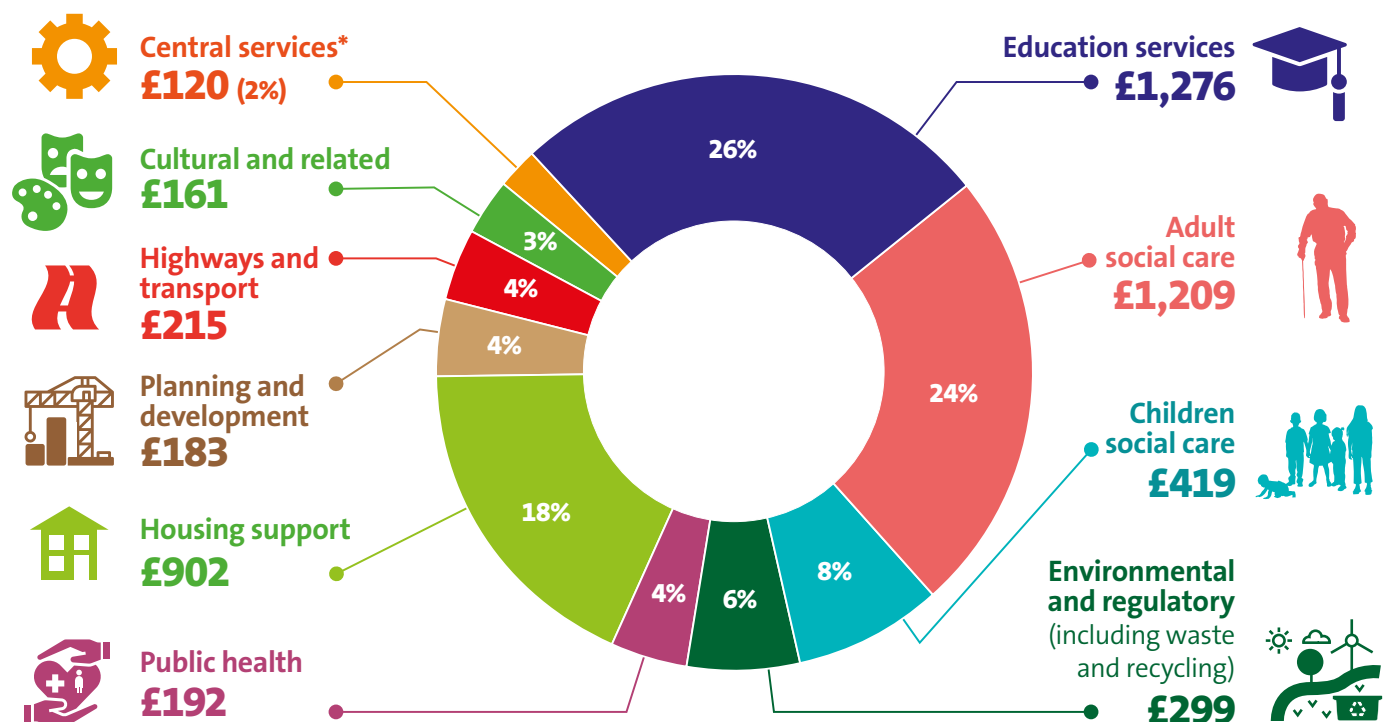
Funding (2023/24 budget)	Amount £million	Percentage
Council Tax	£263	25%
Business Rates	£154	15%
Income from service users	£137	13%
Grants (total)	£451	43%
Contributions from other organisations	£41	4%
Investment income	£5	Less than 1%
Total:	£1,051	100%

You can read more about some of the grants and other income that make up our revenue budget in section **6 Further information**, at the end of this booklet.

2.2 Where the money goes

During the current financial year (2023/24), the council will spend an estimated £1.051 billion on providing a range of services for the people of Bristol. **Figure 1** below sets out how much we are spending this year – including in education, housing and adult social care, and the average spend in pounds per household on each service.

Figure 1: Council average spend on services per household in 2023/24



*Central services include services such as democratic services, electoral registration, coroner services, and Council Tax and Business Rates collection

2.3 Help for low-income households to meet their Council Tax bills

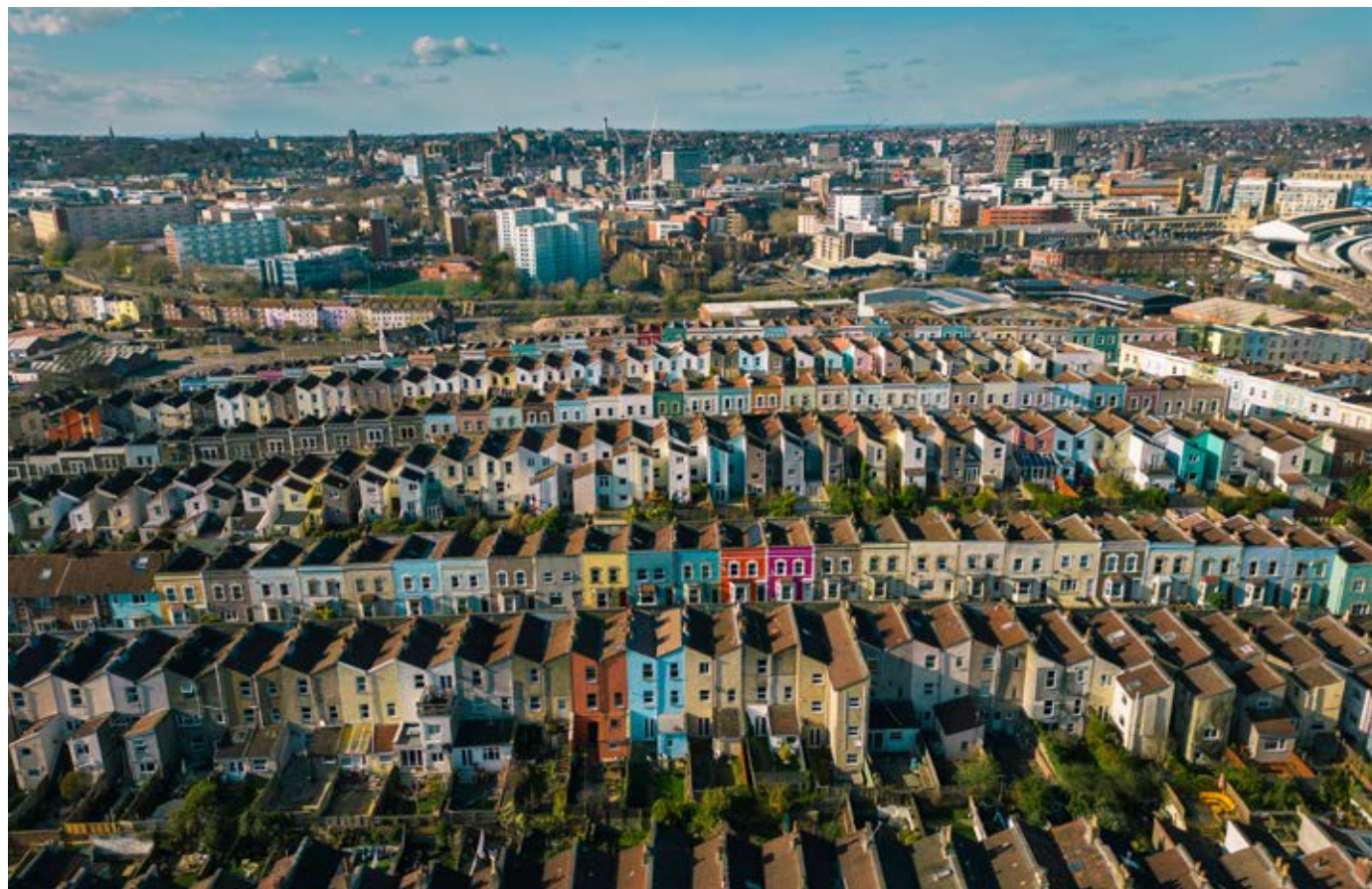
Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Since 2013, councils have designed their own Council Tax Reduction (CTR) schemes. Bristol has been among only a small number of authorities to retain a fully funded CTR scheme for those that need financial support. During this time, we have not reduced the overall level of financial support available to working age households on low incomes to pay their annual Council Tax bill. This has meant that CTR claims could be made for discounts of up to 100 per cent during this period.

In February 2023, councillors agreed to review the CTR scheme as part of setting this year's council budget. This review is underway and options for how the scheme could operate from April 2024 are being considered.

Bristol's CTR scheme, as of April 2023, costs £43.4 million, of which the pension age scheme costs £13.4 million and the working age scheme costs £30 million. The proposals being considered include an estimated £3 million contribution associated with the CTR working age scheme. This is for forecasting purposes only and no decision on the future operation of the CTR scheme will be made until December 2023.

We are currently seeking the views of residents on these options through an open consultation that will run until Sunday 26 November 2023. To view this consultation and leave your feedback on the proposed options, please visit www.ask.bristol.gov.uk/council-tax-reduction-scheme-2024-25



Other support funds

During the current financial year (2023/24), we've supported low-income households and those in need through a number of further support funds which include the Local Crisis Prevention Fund (LCPF) and the Household Support Fund (HSF).

The LCPF is a discretionary fund provided by the council to help low-income families or those facing a crisis, to get help to afford basic essentials such as food, gas, electricity or household goods.

The HSF is money from the government that the council uses to help low-income households with food and fuel poverty. Below is a breakdown of how these funds will be spent during the 2023/24 financial year:

Initiative	Funding available £million
Targeted support for young people aged 2 to 16+ who receive free school meal vouchers and/or Pupil Premium over all school holidays in the financial year 2023/24	£3.612
Support to low-income pensioners in receipt of Council Tax Reduction with energy costs	£0.100
Targeted support to assist those with no recourse to public funds including refugees and asylum seekers	£0.200
Targeted support to care leavers and foster children via the relevant council teams	£0.440
Targeted support to pensioners with food and fuel poverty via Age UK	£0.050
Targeted support to assist city-wide households in need with food poverty via a variety of solutions	£1.032
Support to vulnerable low-income households who are negatively impacted by rising energy costs	£0.775
Targeted emergency payments support to low-income families that have been directly financially impacted and may require food or fuel and other financial assistance (the LCPF)	£0.698
Additional support for low-income households who require further assistance to make rent payments	£0.340
Support to disabled low-income households who are negatively impacted by rising energy costs	£0.150
Food and activity packs for free school meal children and young people	£0.095
Grants to the advice services to provide assistance on finance, benefit, and debt issues	£0.404
Support to low-income carer households who are negatively impacted by rising energy costs	£0.078
Net administration	£0.105
Total	£8.079

Protecting vulnerable households remains a priority for the council and we will continue to use our discretionary funds to provide support to those most in need in 2024/25 and help low-income households with food poverty and fuel poverty.

2.4 Capital investment in services

As well as funding day-to-day services from our revenue budget, we need to ensure effective services for the future. Capital expenditure is money we spend to build and maintain physical things (such as housing, schools, roads, and footpaths) and cannot be spent on funding day-to-day services. Capital investment helps us to provide high quality, value-for-money public services, as well as investment in the economy and infrastructure which will be critical to support sustainable economic growth.

Recognising the continuing pressure on our day-to-day revenue budgets, we are exploring early ideas for using capital investment, including using our property and other things the council owns to make the way we run services more efficient, and reduce future running costs. We refer to this as 'investing to save for the long-term'. In section 5 of this document, we have provided details of 11 issues we want to mitigate and our early suggestions for how we might use capital investment to help us do so affordably.

This year (2023/24), we expect to invest over £288.5 million in the city (of which £167.1 million is related to the General Fund). This is shown in the table below. We plan to invest at least a further £458.9 million (of which £189.7 million is related to the General Fund) in the coming year.

Funding method	2023/24 £million	Percentage
Schools and young people	£21.3	13%
Housing (General Fund)	£25.1	15%
Regeneration	£20.9	13%
Transport	£49.2	29%
Leisure (including Bristol Beacon)	£28.9	17%
Miscellaneous property	£8.8	5%
Information Technology (IT)	£6.0	4%
Other	£6.9	4%
Total	£167.1	100%

The figures in this table exclude the Housing Revenue Account, which is a ring-fenced budget.

The plan for how we intend to spend capital funds in the next financial year (2024/25) will be agreed as part of our budget in February 2024.

3 Our proposals for balancing the budget

In the survey, we ask for your views on alternative options for the level of Council Tax for next year (2024/25), to help cover some of the financial pressures the council faces. We also ask you what level of Social Care Precept you think we should apply, in addition to the level of Council Tax, to support the delivery of social care services.

Our preference would be to only consider increasing Council Tax and Social Care Precept, as a last resort, having first looked at other ways to reduce costs and generate more income. However, due to the difficult financial challenge in front of us, it is becoming more difficult to balance the budget without considering increases to these charges.

We have assumed in our forecast of the funding available that there will be increases of 3 per cent for Council Tax and 2 per cent for Social Care Precept. When considering the questions about Council Tax and Social Care Precept, any reduction below these percentages would mean that there is a greater funding gap remaining and even further savings would be required in place of those increases.

We have included information about our new ideas to reduce costs and generate more income, which will help us bridge the forecast five-year funding gap and set a balanced and legal budget. If all these savings proposals are made, they would reduce the budget gap by £21.7 million over the next five years. The savings proposals are aimed at targeting our limited resources to support the delivery of our top priorities and ensure our services are sustainable. We are not consulting you on these savings this year because we do not think that they are likely to mean major changes to services the council provides. We are describing the savings here, so you have a full picture of how we propose to balance the budget, when you answer the questions about Council Tax and Social Care Precept.

3.1 Council Tax considerations

We are conscious of the impact of any Council Tax increase on Bristol residents at a time of continuing cost of living pressures. At the same time, people rely on our key services and we need to make sure we have a solution for how they will be provided during this difficult period. We have listened to your feedback in previous consultations and strived to protect and improve the services you've said are most important to you. We continue to work to ensure these services remain sustainable and the most vulnerable citizens are protected. This provides us with a difficult balancing act between considering Council Tax increases, provision of services, and how we can generate more income.

Each year the UK Government sets a maximum limit for Council Tax increases without holding a local referendum (last year this limit was 3 per cent) and confirms whether councils will have flexibility to levy a Social Care Precept (last year this was 2 per cent).

The government has indicated that next year (2024/25), the Council Tax limit will be allowed to increase by up to 3 per cent and Social Care Precept by 2 per cent, compared to the 2023/24 levels. This is yet to be confirmed. Therefore, we are asking you for your views on a range of options (increases of 0%, 1%, 2% or 3% for Council Tax and 0%, 1% or 2% for Social Care Precept) which we think will cover any likely limits the government might set. If the limit is changed, we will need the flexibility to consider setting it at a different percentage.

In choosing your preferred level of Council Tax and Social Care Precept, you might consider if you would prefer more of the budget gap to be met by increasing Council Tax and/or Social Care Precept or by additional savings (changes to services to reduce costs and generate more income). Every 1 per cent increase in Council Tax

or Social Care Precept in 2023/24 would raise £2.7 million that would otherwise need to be found through additional savings or efficiencies.

In forecasting the budget gap, our planning assumed an increase in Council Tax of 3 per cent* and 2 per cent Social Care Precept in 2024/25, recognising that no decision has been taken on the level of Council Tax increase or Social Care Precept (if permitted by government); this will be decided by Full Council for 2024/25 in February 2024. The feedback to this consultation will be considered by Full Council when making this decision.

* The exact figure is 2.99%; we are using 3% as shorthand for 2.99% in this consultation.

3.2 Core Council Tax

The Council Tax options we are consulting on range from making no change to a 3 per cent increase in the amount you pay for general council services. Every 1 per cent increase in the level of Council Tax would add around £15.53 per year (30 pence per week) to the council's element of the bill for a typical band B property. It would also raise around £2.7 million towards meeting the council's rising costs.

This excludes the amount charged or raised by the Fire and Rescue Service and Police and Crime Commissioner, who decide individually on levels of Council Tax precept which are shown on your Council Tax bill.

3.3 Social Care Precept

Bristol is responsible for providing social care services to our most vulnerable residents. We are waiting for the UK Government to confirm how much Social Care Precept councils will be permitted to charge on top of any Council Tax increase to help pay for adult social care in 2024/25. The income generated from this charge is ring-fenced, meaning it can only be used for adult social care services.

We are therefore asking for your views on a range of Social Care Precept options from making no change to a 2 per cent increase, on top of any increase in core Council Tax. An additional 1 per cent Social Care Precept increase would raise an additional £2.7 million to be spent on adult social care services. This would increase the council element for a band B property by a further £15.53 per year (30 pence per week).



3.4 Our other budget proposals

The proposals described below are how we propose to manage our funding pressures until March 2029. In our latest forecasts, we look at a range of scenarios which indicate that we need to bridge a funding gap which could range from £4.7 million to £81.2 million over the five years from 2024/25 to 2028/29. The wide range in these forecasts is due to national economic uncertainties (such as inflation and interest rates) and the council's ability to manage demand and risks, and government funding which is yet to be announced for local councils next year. Our realistic assumption based on best available information is a budget gap of £32 million.

We will need to start making changes next year (over and above those agreed in previous years) to set a balanced and legal budget in 2024/25. Some of the proposals would be implemented over more than one year.

We have four budget approaches to how we can reduce costs and increase our income to help balance the budget. These are:

- **Transforming the way we work** – Making the most of our major transformation programmes designed to make significant changes to the way we work.
- **Income generation** – Focussing on how we can bring in more external funding and improve our use of that funding, and reviewing how we could increase funds from fees, charges, and other sources of income.
- **Targeted cost reviews** – Using information from other councils' experiences to identify areas where we can do things differently, reduce costs, be more efficient, and review the services we provide, including where we might reduce or stop services in future.
- **Investing to save for the long-term** – Using capital funding to improve or repurpose assets, buildings and investments – to support the efficient delivery of essential services and reduce costs for the council.

We have grouped the 25 other budget proposals (in the tables in section 4) under the seven themes in the council's Corporate Strategy 2022 to 2027. For each proposal, we state which budget approach we have used.

These proposals are options for consideration; we may not do all of them. However, we are still waiting for the Local Government Finance Settlement, which may change our assumptions. Therefore, we will need to propose additional savings in February 2024 to balance the budget if the financial situation is in line with our realistic forecast. This will be decided by Full Council in February 2024.

Where further public consultation is needed on a new proposal, or specific details of existing proposals, you will have the opportunity to provide your feedback.

3.5 Equality considerations

We are considering specifically how the proposed changes could affect people differently, because of their background or other circumstances, for example people in our more deprived communities.

In this budget consultation, we have provided a brief summary of our initial equality considerations for each savings proposal. We will publish full equality impact assessments for all our savings proposals to Cabinet on 23 January 2024, prior to their recommendation of the budget to Full Council for a final decision. This means decision makers will have the information necessary to ensure they can have due regard to the Public Sector Equality duty, particularly in relation to any likely disproportionate or negative impact, and potential mitigations, for citizens, service users and employees on the basis of their protected and other relevant characteristics.

We will also provide a cumulative equalities impact assessment to look at the potential combined equality impacts of all the proposed savings and key budget decisions taken together, to identify any particular compound issues or disparities, and what we can do to mitigate them.

The equality comments provided as part of this consultation do not include our consideration of the potential internal impacts for our workforce. Any specific impacts for staff will be assessed alongside wider consideration of council workforce changes.

3.6 Investing to save for the long-term

Recognising the continuing pressure on our day-to-day revenue budgets, we are exploring early ideas for using capital investment in ways that can support the efficient delivery of essential services and reduce costs for the council. We refer to this as “investing to save for the long-term”. The table in section 5 shows 11 issues we want to solve and our early suggestions for how we might use capital investment to help us do so affordably.

3.7 Other separate consultations that relate to the council's budget

We are currently separately consulting on three proposals that affect aspects of the council's budget. These are:

- **Council Tax Reduction Scheme consultation** is open until Sunday 26 November:
www.ask.bristol.gov.uk/council-tax-reduction-scheme-2024-25
- **Bristol's SEND top-up consultation** is open until 13 December 2023:
www.ask.bristol.gov.uk/send-top-up
- **Fair and Affordable Care Policy consultation** is open until 31 January 2024:
www.ask.bristol.gov.uk/fair-and-affordable-care-policy-consultation
(This affects proposal #GAP018: Ensure all homecare packages provide the right support, which is listed in the following table).

4 Other budget proposals

These proposals are new for the 2024/25 budget. However, we do not think that they are likely to mean major changes to services the council provides, so we are not planning to ask you about them any further. We are describing these here to give a full picture of our savings options.

Where a saving is shown in one year, the budget would stay reduced by that amount in all subsequent years (shown as 0 in subsequent years, indicating no additional saving). Where savings are shown in more than one year, the budget would be reduced by the amount shown in the first year and then further reduced by the amounts shown in subsequent years.

4.1 Children and young people

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	28/29 £000	Total £000	Equalities Impact
GAP033	<p>Foster carer recruitment and retention</p> <p>Increase peer support for foster carers, including regular joint planning, training, and social activities. This is an alternative way of providing foster care, and we know from experience elsewhere that this is successful in attracting prospective carers and retaining our existing experienced carers. This will improve the stability of fostering placements and strengthen the relationships between carers, children and young people, fostering services and birth families.</p> <p>Approach 1: Transforming the way we work Cabinet lead: Cllr Asher Craig Committee: Children and Young People</p>	100	133	33	-	-	266	There is the potential for a positive equality impact on children and young people across the city. Further equality assessment is underway to identify ways in which the proposal can promote equality of opportunity and increase the diversity of foster carers to support a diverse population of children who may have diverse and complex needs.
GAP035	<p>Bristol's children's homes</p> <p>Increase the number of council-run children's homes. This will help us reduce the number of children placed in more expensive placements outside of the city, and make sure children can stay close to local connections, such as school, friends and family.</p> <p>Approach 1: Transforming the way we work Cabinet lead: Cllr Asher Craig Committee: Children and Young People</p>	-597	936	28	-	29	396	There is the potential for a positive impact on children and young people (including future care leavers). Further equality impact assessment is underway to ensure the diverse needs of children in care, situated in council children's homes, continue to be met and that any new locations are accessible.

4.2 Health, care and wellbeing

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	28/29 £000	Total £000	Equalities Impact
GAP018	<p>Ensure all homecare packages provide the right support</p> <p>We would review more people who receive care and support in their home and have not had a social care review within the last year. This would make sure they receive the amount and type of care and support that is appropriate to their needs and can be as independent as possible.</p> <p>For example, by using technology and/or equipment to help people be more independent, we would spend less on direct care and support provided by our teams.</p> <p>Reviews would be based on an individual's personal strengths and their social and community networks, in order to promote their wellbeing and independence.</p> <p>Approach 1: Transforming the way we work Cabinet lead: Cllr Helen Holland Committee: Adult Social Care</p>	600	-	-	-	-	600	Further equality assessment needed to assess the impacts of the review with a key consideration of Disabled people and older people. Any changes to processes should ensure that care provisions continue to meet the needs of diverse service users including inclusive communications.
GAP019	<p>Reduce the number of longer-term care packages by increasing the frequency of reviews following a hospital visit</p> <p>Where people have moved from hospital into residential or nursing care, we would increase the number of reviews carried out at six and 12 weeks following discharge from hospital. This will allow us to revise care packages and/or stop those that are no longer needed. This will make sure people receive care and support that is appropriate to their needs, while their independence continues to be supported and promoted.</p> <p>Approach 1: Transforming the way we work Cabinet lead: Cllr Helen Holland Committee: Adult Social Care</p>	1,500	-	-	-	-	1,500	Further equalities assessment is underway to analyse the impacts on different groups, including older people and Disabled people. Consideration should be taken when communicating changes to individuals who may be affected, ensuring information is accessible for diverse service users.

Health, care and wellbeing – continued

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	28/29 £000	Total £000	Equalities Impact
GAP020	<p>Review contract management with residential and nursing care providers</p> <p>We would improve the way we pay external organisations to provide residential and nursing care services on our behalf, to ensure the services we provide are funded fairly, are affordable and represent good value. This better management of contracts and expenditure will enable us to spend less while providing the same level and quality of service to people who need residential or nursing care services.</p> <p>Approach 1: Transforming the way we work Cabinet lead: Cllr Helen Holland Committee: Adult Social Care</p>	675	-	-	-	-	675	No significant equality impact has been identified at this stage. Any changes to contracts should ensure the quality of care provisions are not impacted and continue to meet the needs of diverse service users.
GAP021	<p>Review contract management with providers of care and support to young people transitioning from children's services</p> <p>We would improve the way we pay external organisations to provide care and support to young people who have transitioned from children's services, to make sure the services we provide are funded fairly, are affordable, and represent good value. This better management of contracts and spending will help us to get better value while providing the same level and quality of service to people who need care and support to access employment, independent living, community and wellbeing services.</p> <p>Approach 1: Transforming the way we work Cabinet lead: Cllr Helen Holland Committee: Adult Social Care</p>	1,148	383	-	-	-	1,530	Further equalities assessment is underway to assess the impact on Disabled people and young people. Any changes to contracts should ensure the quality of care provisions are not impacted and continue to meet the needs of diverse service users.

Health, care and wellbeing – continued

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	28/29 £000	Total £000	Equalities Impact
GAP022	<p>Review housing related support Review how we would provide the support which helps people stay living independently in their homes. By undertaking Care Act eligibility assessments for people who receive this service, we would ensure that we maintain support for those who are eligible in line with the Care Act 2014.</p> <p>Approach 1: Transforming the way we work Cabinet lead: Cllr Helen Holland Committee: Adult Social Care</p>	1,785	-	-	-	-	1,785	Further equalities assessment is underway to analyse the impacts on different groups who are eligible for housing related support, including older people, people with mental health problems and others. The assessment will ensure consideration has been given to the specific needs of diverse users and identify any mitigations.
GAP024	<p>Increase reviews of care and support plans Increase the number of care and support plans which have been reviewed by a social care practitioner within the last year. This will be achieved by improving systems to identify and complete timely reviews, and where possible, support approaches which focus on an individual's personal strengths including social and community networks, in order to promote their wellbeing and independence.</p> <p>Approach 1: Transforming the way we work Cabinet lead: Cllr Helen Holland Committee: Adult Social Care</p>	630	210	-	-	-	840	Further equalities assessment is needed to assess the impact of the activities on service users. Consideration will be taken to ensure that plans account for the diverse needs of service users and are applied evenly and consistently. Consideration should be taken when communicating any changes to services users to ensure an inclusive approach. Any impacts on changing ways of working should consider accessibility needs of staff members.

Health, care and wellbeing – continued

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	28/29 £000	Total £000	Equalities Impact
GAP025	<p>Improve Reablement We would improve the way reablement teams work so that more people would be able to receive reablement. This would mean that more people go on to achieve improved independence, resulting in the need for less care and therefore reduced costs. Reablement helps individuals to learn or re-learn the skills necessary to be able to engage in activities or occupations that are important to them. Approach 1: Transforming the way we work Cabinet lead: Cllr Helen Holland Committee: Adult Social Care</p>	938	313	-	-	-	1,250	Further equalities assessment is needed to understand the impact of the activities on service users. Protected characteristics should be considered when improving the service, for example, any adjustments or specific needs for Disabled service users and in ensuring equal access for different groups such as Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. Consideration should be taken when communicating any changes to service users to ensure an inclusive approach.
GAP026	<p>Increase reviews of those receiving Section 117 aftercare More people who receive Section 117 Mental Health aftercare services (free help and support provided to those after they leave hospital having been detained there under the Mental Health Act) are reviewed within one year of them leaving hospital. This would support and improve independence, resulting in the need for less care and therefore reduced costs. Approach 1: Transforming the way we work Cabinet lead: Cllr Helen Holland Committee: Adult Social Care</p>	1,350	450	-	-	-	1,800	The review could potentially have a positive impact on people who experience mental health problems by ensuring that they receive sufficient and more timely support. Further equality impact assessment is underway to ensure that the diverse needs of service users continue to be met.

Health, care and wellbeing – continued

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	28/29 £000	Total £000	Equalities Impact
GAP046	<p>Communities programme This budget supports the capacity of the city council’s community development team. To make this saving we would not deliver any new community development programmes in 2024/25 (subject to consultation where required). Current ongoing initiatives will continue.</p> <p>Approach 3: Targeted cost reviews Cabinet lead: Cllr Ellie King Committee: Public Health and Communities</p>	75	-	-	-	-	75	The community development team often works with under-represented groups and in areas of high deprivation to foster good relations (Equality Act, 2010) and to empower different groups to engage with community work and council services. Although existing work will continue, there would be no further capacity to deliver new, additional, targeted work for different groups who experience barriers to accessing support. Further equalities assessment is needed to assess the potential impact of this on addressing existing disparities and to identify any mitigations.

4.3 Homes and communities

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	28/29 £000	Total £000	Equalities Impact
GAP048	<p>Increase direct lets with private sector landlords for temporary accommodation</p> <p>We would reduce our reliance on our most expensive privately managed temporary accommodation, by renting properties direct from landlords. This would reduce costs associated with providing temporary accommodation.</p> <p>The council has a statutory duty to provide accommodation to people who are homeless, and either reach our vulnerability thresholds, or have dependent children, and where it hasn't been possible to prevent homelessness.</p> <p>Approach 1: Transforming the way we work Cabinet lead: Cllr Tom Renhard Committee: Homes and Housing Delivery</p>	405	810	810	810	810	3,645	Minoritised ethnic communities, single households and younger people are over-represented in temporary accommodation. Further equalities assessment is needed to ensure that accommodation meets these diverse needs, with a sufficient range of properties to meet differing needs including for larger families. Out of area placements may mean that service users are less able to access support networks.
GAP006	<p>Create two new property licensing schemes</p> <p>If new property licensing schemes are introduced following the recent consultation (www.ask.bristol.gov.uk/property-licensing-2023), the additional revenue from the new schemes would be used to expand the council's Private Housing team and cover the costs of running the service.</p> <p>Approach 2: Income generation Cabinet lead: Cllr Tom Renhard Committee: Homes and Housing Delivery</p>	330	330	-	-	-	660	There is the potential for a positive impact on tenants through improved living conditions, especially for young people who are over-represented in tenancies. Further equality analysis is underway to ensure that the property licensing schemes have made full consideration of different protected characteristics and socio-economic status. Further analysis will identify mitigations for both landlords and tenants with diverse needs, for example, by making translation services available.

Homes and communities – continued

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	28/29 £000	Total £000	Equalities Impact
GAP005	<p>Fund the Head of Housing Delivery role differently The Head of Housing Delivery is currently funded by the general fund (the council's main revenue account). Due to the nature of the work, we would seek to fund 50 per cent of this position through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA is funded by tenants' rents and leasehold service charges, and funds can only be used for services to tenants and leaseholders and the delivery of new homes. Given that the Head of Housing Delivery will oversee the planned increase in housing delivery it is appropriate that this role be part funded by the HRA.</p> <p>Approach 3: Targeted cost reviews Cabinet lead: Cllr Tom Renhard Committee: Homes and Housing Delivery</p>	52	-	-	-	-	52	No significant equality impact has been identified at this stage.

4.4 Transport and connectivity

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	28/29 £000	Total £000	Equalities Impact
GAP001	<p>Keep more of the administration fee from the Community Infrastructure Levy The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is money collected from new developments, which is used to fund local infrastructure. 5 per cent of this levy can be allocated to administration. We would use this to replace money from the general fund (the council's main revenue account) to fund staff time spent supporting CIL work.</p> <p>Approach 2: Income generation Cabinet lead: Cllr Nicola Beech Committee: Economy and Skills</p>	150	-50	-50	-	-	50	No significant equality impact has been identified at this stage.

Transport and connectivity – continued

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25						Total	Equalities Impact
		£000	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	£000		
GAP002	<p>Charge more for City Transport work We would use income from externally funded projects, where appropriate, to charge for staff time, and replace income from the general fund (the council's main revenue account). We would make sure all charges for work are accurately recorded and job vacancies are filled.</p> <p>Approach 2: Income generation Cabinet lead: Cllr Don Alexander Committee: Transport and Connectivity</p>	250	-	-	-	-	-	250	No significant equality impact has been identified at this stage.
GAP003	<p>Use e-scooter payments for highway maintenance Use new income from e-scooter operator payments to fund highway maintenance. This new income could also be used to support the use of bikes and e-scooters in the city.</p> <p>Approach 2: Income generation Cabinet lead: Cllr Don Alexander Committee: Transport and Connectivity</p>	500	-	-	-	-	-	500	No significant equality impact has been identified at this stage. Further equalities assessment is underway and will consider the safe, secure storage of e-scooters and bikes to ensure they do not impact accessibility and safety.
GAP004	<p>Reduce spend on Bristol Legible City We would spend less money on the Bristol Legible City project. This means signage and wayfinding information that help people navigate the city would be updated less frequently and may not always have the latest information about new developments or transport. This may impact residents and visitors accessing the city centre.</p> <p>Approach 2: Income generation Cabinet lead: Cllr Craig Cheney Committee: Economy and Skills</p>	60	-	-	-	-	-	60	Further equalities assessment is underway to understand the frequency with which signage would be updated and to understand the impact this may have on different groups, for example, service users that may not read English. There is likely to be a disproportionate impact on Disabled people who may be more reliant on updated signage or different means of communication such as printed versions.

Transport and connectivity – continued

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	28/29 £000	Total £000	Equalities Impact
GAP043	<p>Alternative investment in sustainable transport We would use net proceeds from Clean Air Zone charges to contribute to the amount of money we pay to the West of England Combined Authority for the annual Transport Levy, which supports the Local Transport Plan, funding concessionary fares and other public transport related services. Approach 2: Income generation Cabinet lead: Cllr Don Alexander Committee: Transport and Connectivity</p>	6,300	-	-	-	-	6,300	No significant equality impact has been identified at this stage.
GAP044	<p>Local transport schemes We would use net proceeds from Clean Air Zone charges to cover the costs of local transport schemes which support the Local Transport Plan such as yellow lines, crossings, dropped kerbs including staff costs. Approach 2: Income generation Cabinet lead: Cllr Don Alexander Committee: Transport and Connectivity</p>	350	-	-	-	-	350	No significant equality impact has been identified at this stage. The development of local transport schemes is likely to have a positive equalities impact. Further analysis will consider ensuring transport schemes are accessible for all service users.

Transport and connectivity – continued

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	28/29 £000	Total £000	Equalities Impact
GAP057	<p>Use Clean Air Zone funds to maintain and improve the highways network</p> <p>We would use net proceeds from Clean Air Zone charges to carry out repairs and improvement works on the city's roads and footpaths. These works would support the Local Transport Plan by keeping our roads and footpaths safe for all users, encouraging walking and cycling and reducing traffic congestion.</p> <p>Approach 2: Income generation Cabinet lead: Cllr Don Alexander Committee: Transport and Connectivity</p>	2,311	-1,148	-	-	-1,163	-	There is the potential for a positive impact across a range of protected characteristics by making streets safer with improved lighting quality, by making public rights of way clearer and safer to use, and by making streets safer with reduced traffic congestion. Further equalities assessment will ensure routes maximise on accessibility whilst works are ongoing, to make sure roads and footpaths meet accessibility requirements and mitigate against any impacts for those who need access to a vehicle, for example, Blue Badge holders.

4.5 Effective development organisation

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	28/29 £000	Total £000	Equalities Impact
GAP032	<p>Annual leave purchase scheme</p> <p>We would raise income by offering an additional opportunity for employees to buy extra leave. Managers will consider requests carefully, in relation to business needs and the potential impact of additional leave on the service.</p> <p>Approach 2: Income generation Cabinet lead: Cllr Craig Cheney Committee: Strategy and Resources</p>	75	-	-	-	-	75	Further equalities assessment is needed to understand the impact on staff members at different pay grades. Equalities assessment will take into consideration if all services are able to apply evenly and to mitigate against any impacts on other staff members. The scheme should be consistently communicated and distributed to all staff members. There is the potential for a positive impact on staff wellbeing with a more flexible approach to annual leave.

Effective development organisation – continued

Ref	Proposal for consultation	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	28/29 £000	Total £000	Equalities Impact
GAP039	<p>Fees and charges budget review Review and where appropriate revise the budgets for fees and charges across sources of income that have repeatedly outperformed their approved budgets in recent years, reflecting where we are already receiving greater levels of income. Approach 2: Income generation Cabinet lead: Cllr Craig Cheney Committee: Strategy and Resources</p>	613	-	-	-	-	613	No significant equality impact has been identified at this stage. Further equalities analysis will be required once specific budgets have been identified.
GAP040	<p>Register Office We would raise Register Office prices for 2024/25 in line with current market rates, including fees to hold a ceremony, for our registrars to attend, to license a venue, for couples to hold a date and for other event hire. Approach 2: Income generation Cabinet lead: Cllr Craig Cheney Committee: Strategy and Resources</p>	76	-	-	-	-	76	There is likely to be a disproportionate impact on people from low-income households who cannot afford higher fees making marriage, civil partnerships and other services less accessible. Further equalities assessment is underway to assess the impact on different groups and to identify any potential mitigations.
GAP047	<p>Professional services We have procured a contract with Constellia to deliver the council's professional services (including consultancy) requirements. Any secured contract delivered by Constellia will earn a 0.2 per cent rebate which will be returned to the council each year. Approach 2: Income generation Cabinet lead: Cllr Craig Cheney Committee: Strategy and Resources</p>	33	-	-	-	-	33	No significant equality impact has been identified at this stage.

5 Investing to save for the long-term

Recognising the continuing pressure on our day-to-day revenue budgets, we are exploring early ideas for using capital investment in ways that can support the efficient delivery of essential services and reduce costs for the council. We refer to this as ‘investing to save for the long-term’.

The table below shows 11 issues we want to solve and our early suggestions for how we might use capital investment to help us do so affordably.

Reference	Issue we want to solve	Suggestion for an invest to save proposition
ITS001	There has been a rise in the number of children with complex needs, children who are recently placed in care, or those with complex emotional needs who have moved from other foster care arrangements, in need of foster care being placed in external residential accommodation due to a lack of carers.	We would put in place a scheme to get accommodation for families where short-term teenage fostering is being provided or supported lodgings are needed.
ITS002	There is a shortage of options for affordable sites for providers to establish new children’s homes or supported or temporary accommodation in the city.	We would assess council properties no longer needed which are large enough to be developed into a children’s home, disabled children’s home, supported or temporary accommodation, develop them so they meet the council’s needs and partner with a range of third-party providers who share our values, to achieve the required outcomes.
ITS003	We do not currently have sufficient housing support registered accommodation for the number of asylum seekers (both accompanied and not accompanied) to meet need, which is creating a backlog and inability to move on.	We would buy residential street properties or larger residential multi-functional properties to meet the needs of accompanied, and not accompanied, asylum seekers.
ITS004	We are seeing a rise in the number of young people (aged 16 to 18) entering care for the first time that are classified as homeless, but many are not being housed under our legal pathway as we do not have interim assessment facilities in place.	We would buy, lease or renovate a large property or former council building to establish a youth shelter for 18- to 25-year-olds who are homeless or in crisis. This would increase the number of beds available to young people to meet demand.
ITS005	We are seeing a rise in the number of young people (aged 16 to 18) entering care that are classified as homeless, but many are not being housed under our legal pathway as we do not have interim assessment facilities in place.	We would create an emergency social care assessment unit for children that is open 24 hours a day seven days a week and provides overnight beds. This would increase the number of beds available to young people in crisis to meet demand.

Issue we want to solve		Suggestion for an invest to save proposition	
ITS006	We do not currently have enough specialist or local council-funded education provision locally to meet demand – meaning that affected children need to travel to access independent education provision.	We would increase the number of specialist education places or resource provision for young people locally. This would enable young people to be educated locally and reduce the amount the council spends on travel and education provision outside of the city.	
ITS007	Our most complex young people and adults who need places in regulated or other suitable settings may not find them, meaning they remain in hospital or rented homes and temporary accommodation. These often involve high costs to the council and the use of high volume of agency staff support.	We would review the council’s investment properties and consider whether we could use them differently, without a financial loss, to provide more placements for young people and adults with the most complex needs or are housed in temporary accommodation.	
ITS008	There has been a rise in the number of children in need of foster care being placed in externally sourced accommodation due to a lack of carers. This is particularly the case for those with complex needs, children who are recently placed in care, or those with complex emotional needs who have moved from other foster care arrangements. Similar placement challenges are being experienced for some client groups in adult social care settings.	We would create additional accommodation for children and young adults by constructing living spaces or pods on the grounds of existing children’s homes or residential care facilities. This would reduce the need for costly and externally sourced accommodation.	
ITS009	We are seeing a rise in the complexity of the care needs for children in care and the demand for tailored, individual placements.	We would create additional accommodation for children and young adults by constructing living spaces or pods on the grounds of existing children’s homes or residential care facilities. This would reduce the need for costly temporary accommodation.	
ITS010	A number of prospective foster carers are being blocked from applying to be foster carers as their housing is not suitable.	We would consider spending money on home extensions or adaptation to increase the amount of new foster carers or fostering caring capacity available in the city.	
ITS011	The use of outdated or unsuitable IT equipment can contribute to less effective customer service and contributes to higher customer debt levels and makes it more difficult for the council to reduce its debt levels overall.	We would invest in our IT systems to improve our ability to collect income that is due to the council, while also making our online payment systems easier for people to use.	

6 Further information

6.1 Other budgets the council manages

Further information is provided below about four other budgets the council manages that it must keep separate from its main day-to-day spending. These are the:

- Housing Revenue Account
- Dedicated Schools Grant
- Public Health Budget
- Capital Budget

Each of these is funded in different ways and the council can only spend the money in those budgets on very specific things. Each year, where required, we consult on these separately before we set the council's budget in February.

The Housing Revenue Account

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is mostly made up of the rent we collect. This money is used to plan and provide services for people living in council housing, including repairs and improvements. The Housing Revenue Account also has a programme to build new council homes and invest in additional stock. As this money is legally restricted from our other funding, if we want to make material changes to how our money within the Housing Revenue Account is spent, we will consult specifically on these proposals with those impacted.

The Dedicated Schools Grant

This budget is used to pay for schools and education services for children and young people in Bristol and can only be used for these things. The money to pay for these schools and services comes from the UK Government every year in a grant called the Dedicated Schools Grant. This grant is split into four parts or blocks:

- **Schools Block** – money that is given to primary and secondary schools and academies in the city.
- **Central School Services Block** – funding for the council to carry out essential things it needs to do for all schools and academies in the city.
- **High Needs Block** – dedicated funding for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or for those who need alternative provision, such as a Pupil Referral Unit.
- **Early Years Block** – money to fund free nursery and pre-school hours for three- and four-year-olds and for two-year-olds from households with low incomes.

The increasing complexity of children's needs and the national reforms from 2014 have resulted in a rise in demand for Education, Health and Care plans and increased demand for special educational needs provision within the High Needs Block. A longer-term plan is required, and the Education Transformation Programme (which aimed to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people sustainably, while addressing the council's increasing financial challenges) has since transitioned into the following three separate areas of work which will contribute to addressing the deficit in the High Needs Block budget:

- High Needs Block Deficit Recovery Plan
- Belonging with SEND Programme
- Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme

The Dedicated Schools Grant is legally restricted from other council funding and Bristol's Schools Forum is consulted on allocations within and between the funding blocks that make up the grant.

The indicative 2024/25 allocation announced for Bristol's Dedicated Schools Grant is £433.1 million. This is a decrease to the figure quoted in the Bristol Schools Forum report as there has been a late adjustment by the Department for Education (DfE). This excludes the growth fund and Early Years Block which is paid and calculated separately. The provisional uplift applied to the High Needs Block is 7 per cent. Based on the historic Dedicated Schools Grant deficits and current trends, this will not be sufficient for the funding needs within the High Needs Block.

As part of the transformation programs outlined above, a range of mitigation proposals are being developed and could potentially bring the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant to a sustainable footing, pending further due diligence and formal consultation where required. The latest report on these proposals was presented to Bristol Schools Forum on 26 September 2023 and we are currently separately consulting on a proposal in relation to Bristol's SEND top-up consultation www.ask.bristol.gov.uk/send-top-up which is open until 13 December 2023.

The council will continue to work with stakeholders and the DfE to drive the improvements required in outcomes for children with additional and special educational needs and achieve a balance in-year position, that can be sustained over the long term whilst making sure we can deliver the provision needed for children with special educational needs and disabilities in the city.



The Public Health Budget

The council receives a yearly grant from the UK Government, which can only be used to promote good mental and physical health in the city and pay for services that help people stay healthy. This year (2023/24) the council received £35.7 million to pay for public health work. Where appropriate we joint-fund services with other organisations and receive income from partners for this purpose.

The amount of the 2024/25 Public Health Budget has not yet been announced. The council has no say in how much money central government gives us to pay for public health work and we are required to spend the money in line with set guidelines known as the 'Public Health Outcomes Framework'. The council will look to make sure that the increased cost of Public Health services is contained within the budget provided, whilst recognising that this is an increasing challenge due to inflationary pressures.

The Capital Budget

Besides spending money on running day-to-day services the council also spends hundreds of millions of pounds a year investing in the city. This investment takes the form of building things like schools and houses, introducing new transport options, our HRA housing investment programme to maintain and improve existing stock, and partnering with other organisations to deliver big pieces of work; for example, the high-profile Temple Quarter programme of property and infrastructure regeneration in Bristol, centred around Temple Meads Station. A lot of this money is paid for by grants from the UK Government, but it is also made up of long-term borrowing and money we make from selling things we own.

This year (2023/24) we expect to invest over £288.5 million in the city (of which £167.1 million is related to the General Fund). We plan to invest at least a further £458.9 million (£189.7 million General Fund) in the coming year.

Reserves

In addition to the council's budgets to pay for investment and day-to-day services, the council also holds money in reserve; much like many people will have savings. The main council reserve is called the General Reserve, which it must have to cover one-off unexpected expenditure, reduced income arising in any particular year and emergency events such as natural disasters and other unforeseen urgent needs. The amount of money put aside is based on the overall size of the council's budget and risks. In recent years, the general reserve has been decreasing and is currently forecast (as at quarter 2) to be £28.5 million by March 2024. The council also holds several other reserves called earmarked reserves. These are sums of money that have been put aside to deal with specific liabilities.

It is possible to top-up the budget with money from reserves but of course, as we can only use our reserves once, it is not prudent for reserves to be used to finance things we spend money on every year, as the full funding gap will still need to be addressed.

While the council will not hold reserves above those needed for the medium and long term plan, reductions to our reserves in recent years mean there is a smaller buffer to meet short term needs and could potentially increase the dependency on long-term borrowing. We will continue to review the level of the reserves each year as the medium-term budget work progresses, to ensure it is sufficient for the level and type of risks to which the council is exposed.



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