

Budget Consultation

Have your say

We are asking Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole residents, council service users, community groups, Town and Parish Councils, businesses, and partner organisations to **have their say on the work we are doing to prepare proposals to balance the council's budget for 2025/26 and beyond**, in line with our financial situation and our [corporate strategy](#).

Please read this information document and share your views by completing our online survey. Paper versions of the document and survey will be available in all BCP Council libraries. The consultation is available online at

haveyoursay.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/budget

If you have any questions or require an alternative language or format, please email researchandconsultation@bcpcouncil.gov.uk giving your name, address, and telephone number.

BCP Council, like all other local authorities, is operating within an extremely challenging financial environment. The surge in demand for our services continues to grow and the funding we have available to provide these services has simply not kept up with this demand. Council Tax rates, for example, have not kept up with inflation.

Over the last year, we have taken positive steps to deliver a balanced and sustainable budget for four years, and we are working hard to remain on track throughout the next financial year. This means we must be extremely careful with our budget and work to deliver our services, savings and income targets, while also looking to identify further potential savings and efficiencies when we can. We are looking at all our services to see what additional savings can be made.

Before we set the budget for next year, we want to understand your thoughts on:

- Service priorities
- Council Tax levels
- Where you think the council should spend its money

The views you give us now will help inform our budget setting process for next year and the following two financial years.

The consultation will **close at 11.59pm on Friday 29 November 2024**.

Our commitment to you

We all know Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole is a place brimming with potential. We are committed to being an inclusive, open council working with partners to realise the potential for our people, communities and place. Last year, after a widespread consultation, we adopted our [new corporate strategy](#) and our vision:

“Where people, nature, coast and towns come together in sustainable, safe and healthy communities”

We are committed to working towards this vision, focusing our work in two priority areas:

- our place and environment
- our people and communities

We must deliver these priorities within our budget, and this means we must prioritise our services.

Rising demand on council services, such as those that keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe, combined with higher costs of delivering council services that keep our communities clean and our infrastructure secure, means that balancing our budget has become increasingly difficult over the last few years. This has been made more challenging by the long-term impacts of Covid, the increase in the cost-of-living and years of constrained budgets.

Good budget management

All councils have a legal obligation to set a balanced budget. Just as you and your household manage your outgoings against your income, so too does the council.

Good budget management involves living within our means and requires us to look at current spending, exploring alternative ways of delivering council services efficiently, and, in some cases, reducing or stopping services.

As a responsible council, we have been open and transparent about the difficult decisions we have had to make identifying savings and efficiencies essential to protecting key services, supporting the most vulnerable and providing a sound, stable financial future for the council.

We have listened

Last year, we asked for your views on our approach to managing our budget. Residents were supportive of the council saving money by: transforming our services, selling or letting leases go on buildings we no longer need, and aligning our services across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Residents were less supportive of the council increasing the cost of services we charge for (e.g. garden waste, car parking). Raising fees and charges is not something the council undertakes lightly, and we fully understand how difficult suggestions like this are for residents to hear. But, by taking these hard decisions now, we will be able to continue supporting other vital services.

What have we done so far to save money?

We have budgeted to achieve £120m in annual savings through efficiencies, transformation and additional income since 2019.

- In the last year we have sold or have agreement to sell the following assets:
 - Our share of the Bargates building in Christchurch (sold)
 - 3 and 35 Willis Way in Poole (sold)
 - Several units on the Airfield Industrial Estate in Christchurch (sold)
 - Land at Wessex Fields (agreed to sell)
 - Christchurch By-pass car park (agreed to sell)
 - The south part of Beach Road Car Park (agreed to sell)
 - Christchurch Civic Offices (agreed to sell)
- We have increased our fees and charges and looked at ways to generate more income through some of our commercial services, such as hospitality and entertainment venues, beach huts and garden waste.
- We will continue to align our services across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole to remove any differences and inefficiencies that exist following the formation of BCP Council and to take advantage of the larger scale.
- We will continue to invest to save in areas that will save money in the long term and help achieve our goals, such as net zero carbon emissions. For example, investing in sustainable council refuse vehicles and solar panels to reduce energy use and cost.

- In the last year, we have worked with other organisations to keep services running;
 - Christchurch Town Council now funds the running of the Quomps paddling pool and a Community Safety Officer for Christchurch Town Centre.
 - We are working with the Friends of Hamworthy Park to continue exploring long-term options to run Hamworthy paddling pool.
 - We are taking part in a Department for Transport pilot study whereby they are funding 6 Community Safety Officers.
 - We have transferred Bluebell Close play area to Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council.
 - We have secured funding from the Green Futures Fund to contribute towards renewable energy generation at Two Riversmeet leisure centre.

Council Tax

We are expecting an update from the Government in their Autumn budget about local government finances and information on how much we can increase Council Tax. We know that household budgets are tight with many costs increasing, but we are anticipating the need to increase Council Tax to meet the rising costs and growing demand for council services. Our council tax rates remain below the average for a Unitary Council.

Working with our MPs and Government

We will continue working with our local MPs to campaign for a fairer funding deal for local government that helps provide councils with a resilient and sustainable future and residents with good quality services. We are already engaging with Government on this and have established positive working relationships with our MPs. We will also continue exploring council tax reform which could contribute to more sustainable funding for local authorities going forward.

We have strengthened ties with government by working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government whilst making significant progress improving our governance and culture.

We will continue to work with government to find a solution to the pressures that funding our special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) service places on our finances. This is a national issue affecting many councils. Spending on our SEND service continues to exceed the government grant provided to fund it and reflects rising demand for services in this area. Discussions continue with government concerning how we manage the accumulated historic and ongoing funding shortfall to prevent it from destabilising the council's finances.

Council finances explained

After income from various sources, £343 million is needed each year to continue running services for over 400,000 residents. Most of this money is spent ensuring we provide services when people need us the most and this means keeping children and vulnerable adults safe and healthy.

The rising demand on council services combined with an increase in costs to provide these services is predicted to add an extra £25 million to the cost of running the council over the next financial year.

Did you know?

- Between 2020 and 2023 there was a 53% increase in the number of applications for Education Health and Care Plans. These are critical plans that give children and young people the support they are entitled to receive.
- It is estimated that the net cost of storing, transporting, processing and disposing our waste will increase to £16.5 million next year.
- Next year, the National Living Wage is predicted to add £5 million to our Adult Social Care costs.
- We fixed more than 11,000 problems on our highways at a cost of £1.764 million. This included filling potholes and repairing signage, railings and drainage

We are making progress to address these budget inflationary pressures and would like your views to help us decide on how the budget should be spent over the next three years.

Statutory and Discretionary services

Most of the services the council provides are known as **statutory** services and these we must provide by law. They include everything from keeping children and vulnerable adults safe to providing a library service, bin collections and trading standards etc. Although we must provide these services there is an element of choice in how we run them, for example:

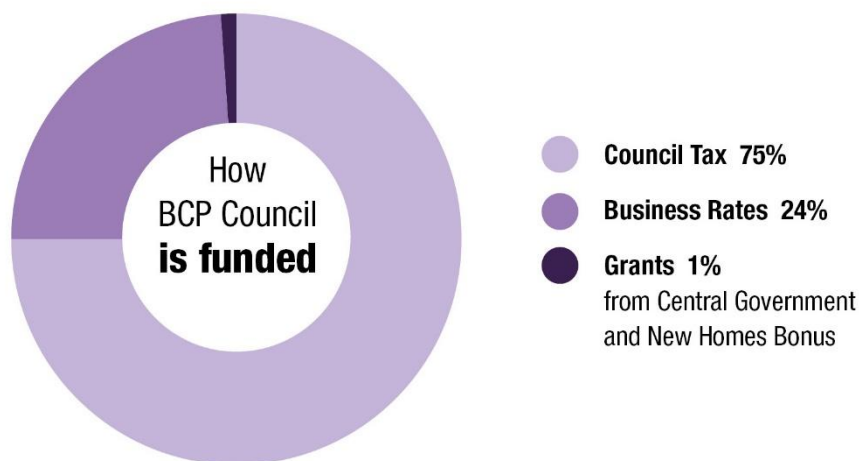
- we must provide household recycling centres which are located at a reasonable distance for our residents and to open them at the weekend, but we have discretion when we open them during the week.
- we have a statutory duty to undertake grass cutting for safety reasons, including clearing of sight lines and obstructions to footpaths and roads, but grass cutting in other areas is at our discretion.
- we are legally required to investigate anti-social behaviour, but we often go beyond this by taking actions such as issuing informal warnings, obtaining injunctions, and implementing closure orders.

The council also runs **discretionary** services. We have no legal obligation to provide these, but we feel they're important for our residents and businesses (e.g. community safety officers, playgrounds, litter and dog waste bins, graffiti removal, community development and economic development). Other discretionary services provide an income for the council which can be used to support the running of statutory services (e.g. attractions and hospitality offers). Over recent years, as our budget has become more challenging, we have asked other organisations to support the running of some of our discretionary services (e.g. paddling pools and community safety officers). We will continue working with organisations to explore other opportunities.

How the council is funded

BCP Council receives approximately £100 million per year less in government funding than in 2010 (if the previous authorities were combined). The council receives most of our core funding from council tax (75%), with business rate income making up 24% and a very small proportion coming from grants. Whilst the council is responsible for collecting business rates, the income goes to central government who redistributes it to local authorities.

All councils have savings set aside, called reserves. Unearmarked reserves are there to help manage the council's financial security in the event of extraordinary or unforeseen events. They also act as a financial contingency should any additional costs associated with the general day-to-day running of the council change significantly.



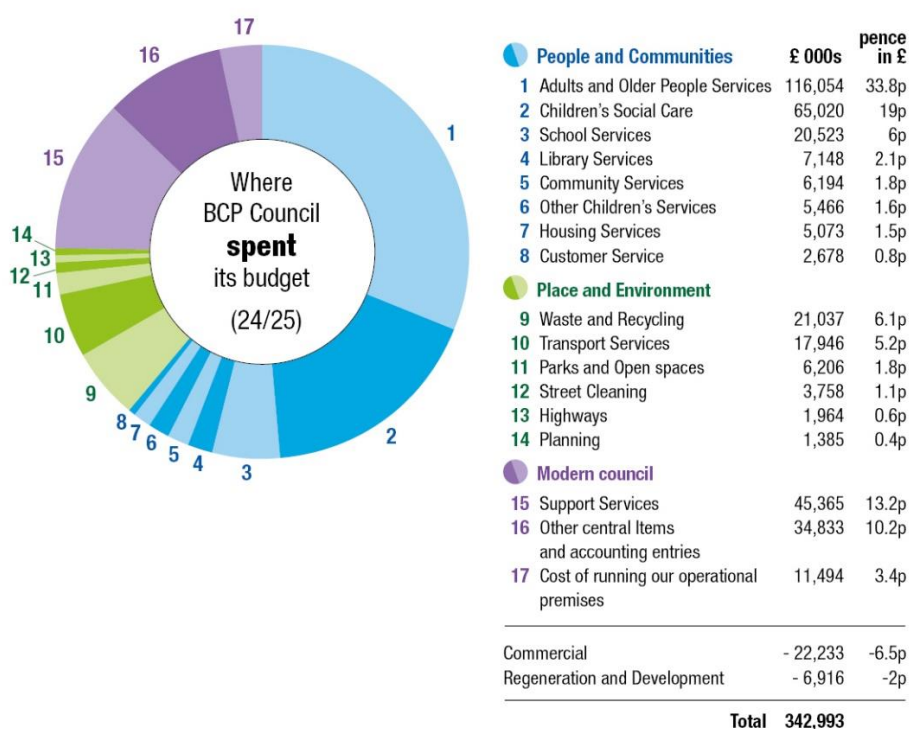
How the council spends its money

Capital and revenue are words you will often hear when we talk about our budget. Put simply, to the average household, revenue costs would be day-to-day costs such as your energy bills, petrol in your car or paying your TV licence. Capital costs would be big investments such as buying a house or building an extension.

The council's revenue expenditure includes things like salaries, building maintenance and the operating costs of running services such as maintaining refuse vehicles and opening libraries. Our capital expenditure includes things like a major road improvement scheme and the council's new build programme where we have built 58 homes in 2023-24 and 19 homes so far, this financial year. We have also purchased 61 existing homes in 2023-24 and 112 so far this year that are used for affordable housing.

It may seem that a simple solution to addressing the budget pressures would be to stop spending money on capital schemes and spend the money instead on the running of our day-to-day services. However, we are not permitted to spend capital money in this way. The government offers incentives for capital spending by providing specific grants to support national priorities (such as improving roads), and by enabling the council to borrow money cheaply to support our own local priorities and invest-to-save initiatives (such as housing schemes).

So, to balance our finances, we need to make savings from our revenue budget. The breakdown below is to help you understand where this money is spent. It is based on our expected net costs for 2024/25. Most of our money goes on Adults and Children's services.



This list of services doesn't include all the detailed services delivered by the council. It gives an idea of the kinds of services that are included in the costs.

Adults and Older People Services £116.054M (33.8p in every £1)

Supporting people to live independently at home either by accessing community services or through residential/nursing homes for those with long-term complex needs.

1

Children's Social Care £65.020M (19p in every £1)

Supporting and safeguarding vulnerable children, young people and families, and children in care to make sure they are protected. Securing fostering and adoption places and support for care leavers to find education, training and housing.

2

School Services £20.523M (6p in every £1)

Securing specialist education places and services for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Assisting with school admissions and support for those home educating their children.

3

Library Services £7.148M (2.1p in every £1)

Providing a book, audiobook, DVD and CD lending service. Giving online access to e-books, e-audiobooks, digital magazines, and newspapers. Providing computers and internet access through libraries. Providing a Home Library Service for those unable to visit the library.

4

Community Services £6.194M (1.8p in every £1)

Providing Community Safety initiatives to ensure public safety and well-being. Environmental Health Services relating to food safety, noise control, and pollution monitoring. Licensing Services including taxis and hackney carriage. Providing a bereavement service that covers our crematoria, cemeteries and coroners' service. Maintaining our cemeteries and memorial grounds. Running our museums and providing cultural events for both residents and visitors. Operating a telecare service.

5

Other Children's Services £5.466M (1.6p in every £1)

Supporting children, young people and families with complex needs through targeted help (e.g. parenting support), and Family Hubs. Supporting young people involved in or at risk of becoming involved in crime or antisocial behaviour. Providing a youth justice service.

6

Housing Services £5.073M (1.5p in every £1)

Providing advice and support for those seeking housing, including help with finding a home, applying for the housing register, and understanding tenant rights. Helping individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Ensuring properties meet safety and health standards. Managing housing for specific needs, such as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and permanent pitches for gypsies and travellers.

*We also manage 10,000 council homes in Bournemouth and Poole but this is a completely separate budget to the council's revenue budget.

7

Customer service
£2.678M (0.8p in every £1)

Providing accessible ways to interact with our services including online, by phone, or in person at our offices. Providing out-of-hours services for urgent issues. Assisting with applications and registrations for various council services, such as housing, benefits, and permits. Facilitating the payment of council tax, business rates, housing rent, parking fines, and other bills. Receiving reports of problems or faults, such as street cleaning issues, housing repairs, or anti-social behaviour. Dealing with complaints, feedback and compliments about the council.

8

Waste and Recycling
£21.037M (6.1p in every £1)

Blue, black, green bin collections. Recycling and treating waste and providing Household Waste Recycling Centres. Managing and operating waste transfer station. Providing ways to increase recycling, composting and generating energy, improving environmental outcomes. Providing a commercial waste service.

9

Transport Services
£17.946M (5.2p in every £1)

Includes delivering school transport for pupils in mainstream and special educational needs schools. Subsidising certain socially necessary public bus services. Funding the national scheme providing free off-peak travel for senior citizens and people with disabilities. Supporting sustainable transport initiatives.

10

Parks and open spaces
£6.206M (1.8p in every £1)

Maintaining our parks, gardens, trees, playgrounds and sport pitches, allotments and verges. Looking after our nature reserves such as Hengistbury Head, Stanpit Marsh, Kinson Common, and Talbot Heath.

11

Street Cleaning
£3.758M (1.1p in every £1)

Emptying and maintaining public litter bins, including dog waste bins. Collecting litter from streets, parks, and public spaces, removing illegally dumped waste. Cleaning graffiti from public properties. Street sweeping and special clean ups.

12

Highways
£1.964M (0.6p in every £1)

Inspecting, repairing and maintaining roads and footways. Responding to highway emergencies, managing winter gritting and severe weather responses. Gully emptying service. Developing new roads and active travel options to encourage walking and cycling. Responsible for road safety, working with partners to prevent accidents. This does not include road infrastructure improvements, such as resurfacing and major road repairs, which are funded from the capital budget.

13

Planning
£1.385M (0.4p in every £1)

Managing Planning Applications and associated public notices, ensuring that building regulations are met for design, construction, and alterations to buildings. Developing and implementing planning policies, local plans, and neighbourhood plans, enforcing unauthorised building work and breaches of planning regulations, managing conservation areas, protected trees, and listed buildings.

14

Support Services
£45.365M (13.2p in every £1)

Helping lead and manage services and support frontline workers. This includes services like Finance, HR, IT, Legal, Democratic, Marketing, Communications, Policy and Business Support.

15

Other central items and accounting entries **£34.833M (10.2p in every £1)**

Transformation costs and short-term loans and debt repayments. National pay award for all staff. Contingency funding potentially undelivered annual service savings and unexpected events.

16

Cost of running our operational premises

£11.494M (3.4p in every £1)

This includes most of our facility management costs for all our buildings e.g. annual servicing, electrical testing, structural repairs, street lighting, building control, mechanical and electrical engineering.

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Some of our services bring in more income than the cost of running them.

Commercial

-£22.233M (-6.5p in every £1)
We spend £37.170M on this service but we receive an income of £59,403M so our net spend is -£22.233M

Promoting tourism and attractions. Overseeing the council's property portfolio, including commercial properties that generate rental income. Operating public car parks and managing parking enforcement. Running leisure centres, sports facilities, and other recreational services that offer memberships and pay-as-you-go options.

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Regeneration and development

-£6.916M (-2p in every £1)
We spend £2.733M on this service but receive an income of £9.654M so our net spend is -£6,916M

Overseeing the development and delivery of new housing projects to meet local demand. Managing significant regeneration projects, such as Holes Bay, the Dolphin Centre, and the area around the Winter Gardens. Attracting external investment into the area, creating conditions for successful partnerships and commercially viable projects.

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How to have your say

In February, councillors must set the council's budget for the next financial year. The following committees will all discuss the council's budget.

Monday 3 February 2025 Overview and Scrutiny Board

Wednesday 5 February 2025 Cabinet

Tuesday 25 February 2025 Full Council

It is important that we hear your views. We would like to hear from you about your priorities before setting our budget for 2025/26 and beyond.

You can have your say by completing our online survey on the following website haveyoursay.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/budget

Alternatively, you can view a copy of the information document and complete a paper copy of the survey by visiting any BCP Council library.

If you have any questions or require a large print copy of the survey or alternative language or format, please email researchandconsultation@bcpcouncil.gov.uk giving your name, address, and telephone number.

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