

ECC Report February 2024

ECC's 2024/25 budget proposals



The County Council has published its budget proposals for 2024/25. These set out how it intends to deal with financial pressures and maintain and develop services throughout the next year.

As of 16 January 2023, Cabinet Members have approved these proposals. They will now be debated at Full Council on 13 February 2024.

The current Administration has a track record of strong financial management, having saved over £1 billion since 2008. Further savings of £32 million are proposed in 2024/25 and an additional £20 million anticipated in 2025/26. However, along with the rest of local government, we are currently facing unprecedented pressures on our budgets.

High interest rates, inflation, growing demand for services and a disappointing financial settlement from central government are all factors impacting budget decisions.

In 2024/25, we are proposing a council tax increase of 2.99%, plus the 2% adult social care precept.

This table shows the proposed Essex County Council precept amounts for 2023/24 and 2024/25:

Council Tax Band	2023/24	2024/25
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Band A	£966.78	£1015.02
Band B	£1,127.91	£1,184.19
Band C	£1,289.04	£1,353.36
Band D	£1,450.17	£1,522.53
Band E	£1,772.43	£1,860.87
Band F	£2,094.69	£2,199.21
Band G	£2,416.95	£2,537.55
Band H	£2,900.34	£3,045.06

The increase would help bridge the gap seen nationally in areas such as children's services, adult social care and Home to School Transport. Essex would remain in the bottom third for tax rate across shire authorities.

As part of our proposals, we will continue delivering a range of schemes as part of our long-term capital spending programme. These include the new station at Chelmsford's Beaulieu Park, Colchester/Tendring A120-A133 link road and rapid transit scheme, and the Chelmsford North-Eastern Bypass. Investment is also planned for things like new schools and highways maintenance.

Councillor Chris Whitbread, Chancellor of Essex, said:

"It's no secret that local government is currently facing significant financial pressures and unfortunately Essex is not immune to them. We know these challenges are felt by many of our residents too.

However, I am confident our latest budget proposals reflect the best possible balance of protecting and developing essential services while continuing to focus on priority areas which residents have helped us establish. We will also continue work to improve our county's infrastructure. We have a robust plan for the coming year and the years ahead.

It's also important, now more than ever, to ensure we're achieving the best possible value for money for taxpayers. This year's proposed council tax increase will mean finding an extra £1.39 a week for a typical Band D property household.

We know any increase will not be welcome news for many and this isn't something we do lightly. However, given the current economic outlook and demand pressures, it is something we are unable to avoid. This increase will place us in a more stable position in the coming years and allow us to plan with greater certainty in the medium term.

I am proud that we have again been able to balance the books in Essex for the coming year. But I want to be clear that without significant interventions and support from central government, more and more difficult decisions lie ahead for councils in the future".

To inform the plans, we held a public consultation last year. Thousands of people shared what matters most to them and their family.

The proposals will be presented at our Cabinet meeting on Tuesday 16 January and at Full Council on Tuesday 13 February.

Find out more about [our budget proposals for 2024/25](#).

£ 465,000 to boost residents' health



Five organisations have been awarded more than £450,000 to launch projects to improve the health of Essex residents.

A total of £464,963 will be awarded via the first round of our Public Accelerator Bids (PHAB) major grant programme.

Projects are aimed at improving the physical and mental health of residents in Essex. They support the aims of our [Essex Wellbeing, Public Health and Communities Business Plan](#).

The five successful projects are:

- **Tendring Wellbeing and Intervention Services CIC** - to support more than 350 residents with around 2,500 one-to-one therapy sessions in 2024. This will support people remotely, face-to-face and in schools.
- **East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust** – to support its cancer wellbeing and information centre. This provides tailored support for patients, improving their quality of life by offering a comprehensive

prehabilitation and rehabilitation programme. PHAB funding will support patients in Harwich, Clacton and Jaywick in Tendring, as well as central Colchester.

- **ATF Southend** - will receive funding to support its Neighbourhood Connectors programme in Basildon. Neighbourhood Connectors will work to identify young people experiencing poor mental and physical wellbeing. They will offer a wide-ranging programme of support, including through sport and creative opportunities.
- **Headway Essex** - to introduce a new hospital link-worker role and a 'What Happens Next after ABI' booklet. The grant will also help the charity introduce general health reviews and health goal planning at its day centres and support groups.
- **Maldon District Council** - to launch Beat the Street in the district in summer 2024. Beat the Street will aim to improve the health and wellbeing of 5,000 Maldon residents. Through the app, participants earn points by walking, running, cycling, scooting or rolling between Beat Boxes.

Councillor John Spence, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for *Health, Adult Social Care and ICS Integration*, said:

"We want our PHAB programme to tackle some of the health inequalities we know exist across Essex, helping to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of some of the county's most disadvantaged residents."

"I'm hugely impressed by ambition of the first projects to receive funding and look forward to seeing the difference they make in our communities".

Lucy Wightman, Director of Wellbeing, Public Health and Communities at Essex County Council, said:

"PHAB is about laying the foundations for supporting residents in Essex to live a healthy life and achieve their full potential."

"There are opportunities available to organisations of all types and I would urge groups across Essex to consider whether the PHAB programme could benefit them in future".

All five successful bids were chosen following assessment by a panel of experts.

PHAB major grants funding is awarded following a two-stage process, with initial expressions of interest followed by a formal application process. The third round of expressions of interest will open on Monday 8 April, 2024.

Find out more [about PHAB and how to apply for funding](#).

Celebrating one year of the Essex Local Offer website



The [Essex Local Offer](#) provides help for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

It brings together education, parent support, activities, health and social care to improve access to services.

Since the launch of its website a year ago, the Local Offer has passed significant milestones.

More than 400 services are now available to support children and young people with SEND. That's a 38% rise.

Over 1,000 families have also come to our 32 Local Offer roadshows across the last two years.

The Essex Local Offer is a major part of improving our SEND services. [Visit the website](#) to see how it can help you, a friend or a family member.

You can also [tell us](#) about any services you think should be in the Local Offer.

Crews respond as Storm Henk arrives in Essex



Essex Highways' crews have worked extremely hard in the first week of January dealing with the impact of Storm Henk on Essex.

The service received more than 1450 weather related enquiries in just 2 days, including reports of flooding, wind damage and more.

In the first 24 hours, we received around 800 enquiries in total. This is more than four times the amount seen over the same time period in early December.

Our tree surgeon partners mobilised 12 crews overnight on the first day of the Storm and attended more than 75 fallen trees across Essex. They have continued to attend incidents throughout Wednesday

Working with our partners, including UK Power Networks, we are clearing any issues as quickly as possible in order to get the roads across Essex moving safely again as soon as possible.

We would like to thank residents of Essex for their patience and remind them to take care when travelling on the roads in wet or windy conditions.

Councillor Tom Cunningham, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport, said:

"I want to pay tribute to Essex Highways staff, who have worked very hard in difficult conditions to help keep our county's roads moving safely following the arrival of Storm Henk.

I would also like to thank residents of Essex for their patience whilst we have dealt with any incidents or obstructions on the roads.

It is important residents take care when travelling on the roads in wet or windy conditions and I would urge them to take care over the coming days with more rain expected."

Residents can [report issues to us online](#), or by calling 0345 758 5592 if there is a risk to safety.