South Gloucestershire Council Budget 2024-25

We want to know how you'd prioritise funding for the years ahead. We've drawn up a draft budget, which we're asking for feedback on.

Unfortunately, like councils up and down the country, over recent years, our finances have been stretched by rising costs, reduced funding and inflation, which gives us less freedom to prioritise spending as we – and you – might like us to. This year we've not proposed making any new savings at this time, but we are asking your opinion on how we implement some of the savings and income measures that were approved in the budget in February 2023.

We want to be up front and honest with you about the extent of the financial challenges and the measures that need to be considered to balance the books. We would also like to gather feedback on where you live and about your experiences with the council and the services we provide.

Q1 What is your connection to the area?

- ☐ I live in the area
- ☐ I work in the area
- ☐ I study in the area
- ☐ I commute through here
- ☐ I have a business in the area
- ☐ I am involved in a voluntary group in the area
- ☐ I am a Town or Parish Councillor
- ☐ I am a South Gloucestershire Council employee

If 'other' please specify, or if you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please tell us its name:

Options for generating additional income

You told us in our budget consultation last year that you wanted us to increase what we earn to lessen the cuts we need to make to services.

We have now progressed this work and identified options for how we might generate additional income by 2025/26 to offset current shortfalls.

An explanation of the five options can be found online at www.sgbudget2024.commonplace.is, and in the consultation document.

Q2 Please indicate your strength of agreement for the following options:

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
Introducing car parking charges	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increasing the cost of the green waste subscription service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Introducing a charge to cover the processing of Blue Badge applications	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Extending the term for Exclusive Rights to Burial	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increasing land charges	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q3 Do you have any other comments about our income generation options? Please tell us which options you're commenting on.

Q4 Do you have any other suggestions for ways we could generate income?

Reducing the cost of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Every council operates a Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which reduces the amount the lowest income households pay in council tax. Changes to the scheme were agreed in February 2023.

We want you to tell us which of the options we should progress.

Option 1: Include Universal Credit in calculations of income.
A proportion of the income individuals receive from Universal Credit (UC) payments would be included in the calculations we use to assess what level of reduction a household receives (currently UC income is disregarded).

This would be on top of what we already consider including earnings from employment and from a range of benefits including child benefit, child tax credit, income from contributions-based benefits such as employment and support allowance contributions based. This would potentially significantly reduce the level of discount Universal Credit recipients currently get off their council tax bills.

A number of options are considered here based on the proportion of Universal Credit to be considered in assessments (option a - 100% of income, b - 75%, c - 50%, d - 25%).

Option 2: An adjusted banded scheme considering earnings only - and not income from benefits (both Universal Credit and legacy benefits).
Under this option, Universal Credit recipients would see smaller percentage reductions to their discounts compared to Option 1, but all low-income households would be impacted. We would also simplify which income sources are included when calculating CTR entitlement; reductions would be determined solely on earnings from employment. The Income bands used to determine discounts would be adjusted accordingly.

A full explanation of the five options can be found online at www.sgbudget2024.commonplace.is, and in the consultation document.

Q5 Please indicate your preference for the following options. Do NOT select the same degree of preference for more than one option.

	Highest preference	High preference	Medium preference	Low preference	Lowest preference
Option 1a: Include 100% of Universal Credit income	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Option 1b: Include 75% of Universal Credit income	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Option 1c: Include 50% of Universal Credit income	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Option 1d: Include 25% of Universal Credit income	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Option 2: Consider earnings only and not income from benefits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The next 5-10 years

Over the next 5 - 10 years, the council will need to continue to find ways to make services more affordable to run.

Q6 How strongly do you agree or disagree with using the following approaches?

	Strongly agree	Tend to agre	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Targeting resources on the most vulnerable and people most in need	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reducing the quality of some services provide	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increasing fees and charges for some services to ensure full cost recovery	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Making more services available online	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Using digital technology more widely to support the delivery of services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Making more efficient use of council assets such as land and buildings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Scaling back or stop providing some services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stopping provision of some discretionary services to protect services to older people and the vulnerable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Changing working practices to make better use of technology and more efficient ways of working	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Working in partnership and sharing services with other councils and public sector agencies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transferring services to other organisations like commercial companies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transferring services to other organisations like community groups, social enterprises and town and parish councils	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Encouraging more people to volunteer their time to become involved in the delivery of services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Options for council tax

The following section is for residents only; please skip to Q8 if you are not a local resident.

In February 2023 the council approved its 2023/24 revenue budget:
- a general council tax increase of 2.99%, and
- a 2% precept for adult social care.

It also approved outline budgets for the following three years (up to 2026/27) to help future planning. We are not allowed to increase council tax by more than these percentages without a referendum.

Our planned option for 2024/25 is a rise of 2.99% in council tax, which would contribute £5.4m towards local council services and a 2% rise in the adult social care precept (a separate charge, which can only be spent on adult social care services), which would contribute a further £3.6m (£9.0m in total). This would mean an increase of approximately £87.43 per year (or equivalent to £7.29 per month) for a band D household.

Our draft budget is built on the assumption that we progress with the 4.99% maximum increase permitted without a referendum. Any council tax increase below this would require us to consider additional savings in other areas.

The Chancellor is due to present his Autumn Statement on 22 November. and recognising the financial challenges faced by local authorities up and down the country, there may be further updates made to the limits in 2024/25.

Please note: the council has no control over the council tax collected on behalf of the Police, Fire Service or parish and town councils. Each of these bodies will make their own independent decisions.

We would like your views on the level of council tax we should consider for 2024/25:

- **Option 1: To increase council tax in 2024/25 by 4.99% (2.99% general council tax and 2% adult social care precept).** This would be an increase of £87.43 per year (£7.29 per month) for a band D household. This would raise an additional £9 million

- **Option 2: To increase council tax in 2024/25 by 2.99% (1.99% general council tax and 1% adult social care precept).** This would be an increase of £51.39 per year (or £4.28 per month) for a band D household. This would raise an additional £5.2 million

- **Option 3: To increase council tax in 2024/25 by 1.99% (1.99% general council tax and 0% adult social care precept).** This would be an increase of £34.30 per year (or £2.85 per month) for a band D household. This would raise an additional £3.5 million

- **Option 4: To freeze council tax in 2024/25 at the current level.** While the council is committed to protecting frontline services as much as possible, if council tax is not increased, the council would need to make new service cuts of around £9m per year

Q7 Which of the following options would you prefer?

- ☐ Option 1: To increase council tax in 2024/25 by 4.99% (2.99% general council tax and 2% adult social care precept)
- ☐ Option 2: To increase council tax in 2024/25 by 2.99% (1.99% general council tax and 1% adult social care precept)
- ☐ Option 3: To increase council tax in 2024/25 by 1.99% (1.99% general council tax and 0% adult social care precept)
- ☐ Option 4: To freeze council tax in 2024/25 at the current level
- ☐ No preference
- ☐ Don't know

Cumulative impact of savings

In the last five years, the council savings programme has made £34.7m worth of savings. Wherever possible, we've tried to do this in ways which minimise impact on our residents and service users.

Over the last five years, to what extent - if at all - have you personally noticed or experienced the following potential effects on your household or community? Please do let us know about any other impacts.

Q8 In the last 5 years, to what extent - if at all - have you personally noticed or experienced the following potential effects on your household or community?

	Not applicable/ don't know	A lot better	Slightly better	The same/no impact	Slightly worse	A lot worse
Condition of roads and paths	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Availability or accessibility of council services (e.g. opening hours or services no longer being delivered)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of council services (e.g. helpfulness of staff, responsiveness or speed of service, getting a satisfactory outcome)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How safe I feel in my local area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How clean, tidy and well maintained my local streets and open/communal spaces are	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Higher cost of council services I use	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How affordable Council Tax is for my household	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Availability of social care services or services affecting my or my family's health/ wellbeing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reduced funding/ less resources affecting other services I use (e.g. schools, charities, community groups)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Problems with housing, planning or development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q9 Please use this space to make any other comments about the budget:

Inequalities Strategy

Inequalities, in other words, unequal and unfair opportunities and outcomes, have a significant impact across all areas of life and affect everyone.

They also have a cost, for individual people and communities, as well as for organisations such as the Council. Evidence shows that inequalities in South Gloucestershire can be persistent and, in some cases, are growing.

Q10 Which of the following ten areas should the Council prioritise in its work to tackle inequalities (please select **up to three**):

Please put a tick the box next to the **three** options you select.

Educational attainment and experience	☐
Employment	☐
Housing	☐
Health (including mental health)	☐
Children's social care	☐
Hate crime	☐
Poverty and financial hardship	☐
Accessibility, particularly in terms of digital inclusion, transport, the built and natural environment, and access to the wider economy	☐
Adult social care	☐
Tackling inequalities as part of work to address the Climate and Nature Emergency	☐

What do you think of your local area and the council?

Throughout this survey we ask you to think about “your local area”. When answering, please consider your local area to be places within 15 to 20 minutes walking distance of your home.

Q11 Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Fairly satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Fairly dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ Don't know

Q12 Over the past two years, do you feel that South Gloucestershire has become a better place to live, is the same or is worse?

- ☐ Better
- ☐ The same
- ☐ Worse
- ☐ Don't know

Q13 If you said that South Gloucestershire has become either better or worse in the last two years, please tell us what you feel has changed:

Q14 Thinking about services you have **used in the last year**, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with each of the following services provided or supported by South Gloucestershire Council?

	Not used	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Care for older people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Care for physically disabled and those with learning difficulties	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Children's social services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Customer services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Environmental health and trading standards	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Housing advice services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Highways and roads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Free car parking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Libraries	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Local bus services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parks and open spaces	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Planning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public Health (not including NHS services)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sport and leisure facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Waste and recycling services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Welfare benefits and council tax reduction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

In considering the next questions, please think about the range of services South Gloucestershire Council provides to the community, as well as the services your household uses. It does not matter if you do not know all the services South Gloucestershire Council provides to the community. We would like your general opinion.

Q15 Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way South Gloucestershire Council runs things?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Fairly satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Fairly dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ Don't know

Q16 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about South Gloucestershire Council?

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The Council keeps me informed about the services it provides	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Council keeps me informed about any proposals for change	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can influence decisions affecting my local area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q17 To what extent do you think South Gloucestershire Council acts on the concerns of local residents?

- ☐ A great deal
- ☐ A fair amount
- ☐ Not very much
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Don't know

Q18 Please indicate the level to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The Council can be relied on to consistently deliver services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Council is clear and honest about what it does and why	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Council contributes towards improving the local area and residents' wellbeing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Council has the public's best interests at heart	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Council works collaboratively with other organisations and the public	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

About You

This section is really important. It's vital that we understand the experiences of a wide range of respondents in order to ensure that everyone is treated equally. By understanding more about what people from diverse backgrounds tell us, we can ensure we act appropriately to meet needs. All questions are optional and any responses to these questions will remain confidential. Individuals will not be identified and personal details will not be published.

Q19 Please tell us your postcode (this is used for analysis purposes only)

Q20 What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 65 to 75
- ☐ Over 75
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q21 Are you?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q22 Do you have any dependents living in your household in the following age groups?

- ☐ 0-10
- ☐ 11-17
- ☐ 18-21
- ☐ 22+
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q23 Please tell us your sexual orientation?

- ☐ Straight or Heterosexual
- ☐ Gay or Lesbian
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ All other sexual orientations
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q24 Do you identify as a transgender person?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q25 Do you consider yourself to be disabled? (**Please tick all that apply**)

- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Yes - Physical impairment, such as difficulty using arms or mobility issues which may mean using a wheelchair or crutches
- ☐ Yes - Sensory impairment, such as being blind/having a serious visual impairment or being deaf/have a hearing impairment
- ☐ Yes - Mental health condition, such as depression, anxiety or schizophrenia
- ☐ Yes - Learning disability/difficulty (such as Down's Syndrome, dyslexia, dyspraxia) or cognitive impairment (such as autism spectrum condition)
- ☐ Yes - Long standing illness or health condition, such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease or epilepsy
- ☐ Yes - Other (please state)

Q32 What is your religion?

- ☐ No religion
- ☐ Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)
- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Sikh
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

Q33 In the last month, which of the following were you doing for most of the time:

- [ ] Working as an employee
- [ ] Self-employed or freelance
- [ ] On maternity or paternity leave
- [ ] Doing any other kind of paid work
- [ ] Retired (whether receiving a pension or not)
- [ ] Studying
- [ ] Looking after home or family
- [ ] Long-term sick or disabled
- [ ] Other
- [ ] Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

Q34 Which of the following forms of financial support do you currently receive or are in the process of applying for?

- [ ] Income support
- [ ] Housing benefit
- [ ] Employment support allowance
- [ ] Working Tax Credit
- [ ] Pension Credit
- [ ] Universal Credit
- [ ] Job Seekers Allowance
- [ ] Council Tax Reduction
- [ ] None of the above
- [ ] Prefer not to say

Q35 Do you currently pay a lower level of Council Tax as part of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Prefer not to say

Q36 Which council tax band are you in? (if you are not sure a rough guess is fine)

- [ ] A
- [ ] B
- [ ] C
- [ ] D
- [ ] E
- [ ] F
- [ ] G
- [ ] H
- [ ] Don't know
- [ ] Prefer not to say

Q37 Do you have caring responsibilities (other than for your own children)

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Don't know
- [ ] Prefer not to say

Q38 Are you currently, or have you previously, served in the UK Armed Forces?

- [ ] No
- [ ] Yes, I am currently serving/have previously served in the regular UK armed forces
- [ ] Yes, I am currently serving/have previously served in the reserve UK armed forces

Q39 Please tell us your ethnic origin

- [ ] Arab/Arab British 01
- [ ] Asian/Asian British - Bangladeshi 02
- [ ] Asian/Asian British - Chinese 03
- [ ] Asian/Asian British - Indian 04
- [ ] Asian/Asian British - Other 05
- [ ] Asian/Asian British - Pakistani 06
- [ ] Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - African 07
- [ ] Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - Caribbean 08
- [ ] Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - Other 09
- [ ] Gypsy or Irish Traveller 10
- [ ] Mixed/multiple ethnic group - Other 11
- [ ] Mixed/multiple ethnic group - White & Asian 12
- [ ] Mixed/multiple ethnic group - White & Black African 13
- [ ] Mixed/multiple ethnic group - White & Black Caribbean 14
- [ ] White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British 15
- [ ] White - Other (please state) 16
- [ ] White Irish 17
- [ ] White - Roma 18
- [ ] Other ethnic group 19
- [ ] Prefer not to say 20

If other, please state:

Please return your completed questionnaire to South Gloucestershire Council, Insight and Engagement Team, Budget 2024, PO Box 1953, Bristol, BS37 0DE

Any personal information that you have supplied will be held by South Gloucestershire Council in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations (UKGDPR) 2021. This information will only be used as part of this exercise and personal information will not be published or passed onto any other organisation. Your personal information collected as part of this survey will be kept for two years to help us improve services before being securely destroyed.Our privacy notice, which explains how we will process your personal information, how long we will retain it and your rights as a data subject, is available at www.southglos.gov.uk/privacy