South Gloucestershire Council Budget FY2025-26

The council is keen, through this consultation, for residents and other stakeholders to get a clear understanding of the extent of the financial challenges it faces and the measures that may be needed to balance the books.

We're proposing some new measures for consideration through this budget consultation process, but we'll continue to identify ways to save or raise additional funds and consult on these separately as appropriate over the coming months and years.

The financial pressures mean we will have to do some unpopular things, and we will have less freedom to prioritise spending as we all might want to. However, we are committed to being a listening and empowering council, holding adult conversations with local people and other stakeholders about the dilemmas we face. And where there are genuine opportunities for you to influence decision-making, we want you to tell us what you think.

Supporting information is available online at https://budget2025.commonplace.is/

What is your connection to the area?

- [ ] Local resident
- [ ] Local business
- [ ] Member of a town or parish council
- [ ] Representing a community group or voluntary sector organisation
- [ ] Member of council staff

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

Approaches to balancing our budget

Our costs are increasing at a far greater rate than our income. And there are uncertainties around some funding streams. We therefore need to plan ahead and adopt a combination of the approaches set out over the next few pages to reduce costs and generate additional income.

Approach 1: Reviewing our internal costs

Our starting point as we face financial challenges is to consider what we are spending to ensure we are operating as efficiently as we can. Our mantra to our staff is that they should treat every penny they spend at work as if it were their own and we have already delivered savings of over £100m since 2010.

Options under consideration

- We are proposing a further review of all major contracts and purchasing, setting a new target to reduce spend on these big-ticket items by 2028/29.
- We plan to continue reviewing the property we own and identifying whether in the short, medium or long term we want or need to use it, rent it out or to sell it.
- We propose to conduct cost benefit analysis to determine the business case for further investment in properties to be used for long-term accommodation for individuals with complex needs. Whilst this involves additional short-term investment, it should save us significant amounts of money over the longer term through reducing costs of expensive residential care.

Are you in favour of us setting a new target saving across all major procurement and purchasing?

- [ ] Strongly in favour
- [ ] Supportive
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Opposed
- [ ] Strongly opposed

In the box below, please let us know if you have any thoughts on this approach to saving money.

Do you support our approach of reducing the costs of our office estate?

- [ ] Strongly in favour
- [ ] Supportive
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Opposed
- [ ] Strongly opposed

In the box below, please let us know if you have any thoughts on this approach to saving money.

Do you support the proposal to improve outcomes and reduce costs by investing in additional properties to provide long-term local accommodation for people with complex needs?

- [ ] Strongly in favour
- [ ] Supportive
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Opposed
- [ ] Strongly opposed

In the box below, please let us know if you have any thoughts on this approach to saving money.

Approach 2: Finding more efficient ways of working

Local authorities have been asked to make significant savings over the past decade and South Gloucestershire Council has done this by ensuring we are working as efficiently as we can. However, we are constantly seeking out best practice from across the public sector and more broadly to find new, cheaper and more effective ways of delivering services.

Options under consideration

- We're proposing to invest in better technology to allow more people to contact us and complete straightforward processes online.
- We plan to continue investigations into new technology, seeking out opportunities to reduce administrative tasks.
- We plan to continue and expand on initiatives like Mockingbird and reablement, which have demonstrated opportunities to save money by reducing demand for our most expensive services, whilst delivering the same or better outcomes.

Do you support our proposal to improve our online reporting options to try to move more enquiries online?

- [ ] Strongly in favour
- [ ] Supportive
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Opposed
- [ ] Strongly opposed

In the box below, please let us know if you have any thoughts on this approach to saving money.

Approach 3: Managing responsibility for delivering and paying for services

We work closely and effectively with many public sector agencies, town and parish councils and the wider voluntary and community sector to improve the lives of local people. We share resources and join up services where it allows us to improve the support we can offer.

However, in a world where resources are more constrained, we must consider what support is affordable and which group or organisation is best placed to deliver services. We must also ensure that each organisation is paying a reasonable share of the costs.

Options under consideration

- Continue discussions with health partners to ensure we are working efficiently in partnership and agree how everyone can pay their share for the increasing costs of health and social care.
- Talk to Town & Parish Councils and the wider voluntary sector to find the most efficient way to maintain local facilities like public conveniences, playing fields and other open spaces.

The options we are proposing in this section involve discussions and negotiations with partner organisations to agree a way forward. We therefore do not have a final position on which to consult with residents. We are however, interested to hear what you think about these proposals. Please share your thoughts in the box below.

In the box below, please let us know if you have any thoughts on this approach to saving money.

Approach 4: Outsourcing

In recent budget consultations, local people have indicated that they believe the council delivers services more efficiently and effectively than private companies could. However, in line with our approach of ensuring we are achieving best value from every penny we spend, we continue to review and compare costs and outcomes of outsourcing versus delivering services ourselves. For example, following an open market competition, we have recently agreed to sign a new contract with Suez who will continue to collect rubbish and recycling from kerbside, but we have taken in-house the operation of recycling centres.

Options under consideration

- We are not proposing to outsource any additional major services at this time as there are no areas where the evidence is clear that a private sector organisation can deliver the service to the same standard more cost-effectively than the council can.

To what extent do you support our current approach of not outsourcing services unless there is a clear financial benefit to doing so?

- [ ] Strongly in favour
- [ ] Supportive
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Opposed
- [ ] Strongly opposed

In the box below, please let us know if you have any thoughts on this approach.

Approach 5: Generating additional income

The other side of the budget coin is to increase what we earn. We have considered all opportunities to reduce our costs before passing on higher charges to residents.

Options under consideration

- Increasing the cost of the green waste subscription service to £70 per year for 2025/26. This increase, from the current annual fee of £60, allows us to continue to cover the escalating costs of providing the service. This fee would also bring us into line with what is charged by neighbouring councils.
- Our draft budget assumes that we will increase Council Tax by the maximum currently permitted percentage of 4.99%. However, we are seeking views through the consultation on different levels of increases and are looking to capture views on rises above this current cap, should this become an option.
- Introducing best practices and new efficiencies within our debt collection function.

To what extent would you support an increase in Council Tax of:

	Strongly support	Support	Neutral	Somewhat opposed	Strongly opposed
3.99%	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.49%	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.99%	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A higher percentage increase (if legislation permits)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

In the box below, please let us know if you have any thoughts on our preferred approach to Council Tax increases.

Approach 6: Stopping, cutting back and prioritising services and support

Through our budget-setting process, the council has been at pains to prioritise changes which do not impact our ability to deliver services. We are in a relatively financial stable position now, so can minimise cuts in the short term. But this has only been possible because we have taken difficult decisions early. Therefore, given the cost pressures and uncertainties around our future funding, we think we will need to continue this approach of planning ahead and make some cuts over coming months and years.

Options under consideration

- Open discussions with partner organisations who we currently support through direct funding to consider the most effective way of delivering priorities. The options we are proposing in this section involve discussions and negotiations with partner organisations to agree a way forward. We therefore do not have a final position on which to consult with residents.

We are however, interested to hear what you think about these proposals.

Please share your thoughts in the box below.

Cumulative impact of savings

Since 2010, the council has delivered cuts and savings of over £100m. Wherever possible, we've tried to do this in ways which improve our efficiency, minimising the impact on our residents and service users. However, the scale of the cuts has meant that we haven't always been able to maintain service delivery to the same level. We'd like to know what impact you think this has had for you and people like you.

Thinking about how we deliver council services, do you think the following aspects have improved, stayed the same, or got worse:

	Much better	Slightly better	The same/no impact	Slightly worse	Much worse
Availability/accessibility of services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Responsiveness to requests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cost of services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

And what has been the impact over the past five years for you and your community

	Much better	Slightly better	The same/no impact	Slightly worse	Much worse	Not appli cable to me
Condition of roads and paths	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cleanliness of streets	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Maintenance of parks and open spaces	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community cohesion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Levels of crime and anti-social behaviour	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ease of getting around	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Efficient running of the planning system (individual requests for planning permission)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective planning of building and new development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Support for the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in society	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improving outcomes for people facing poverty and financial hardship	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social care support for the elderly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Children's social care	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teaching and education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Level of support to the voluntary and community sector	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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

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.

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

What is your age?

- ☐ 18 or under
- ☐ 19 to 29
- ☐ 30 to 39
- ☐ 40 to 49
- ☐ 50 to 59
- ☐ 60 to 69
- ☐ 70 to 79
- ☐ 80 or over
- ☐ Prefer not to say

What is your gender?

- ☐ Man
- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

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

Please tell us your sexual orientation?

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

Do you identify as a transgender person?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

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

- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Yes - Physical impairment
- ☐ Yes - Sensory impairment
- ☐ Yes - Mental health condition
- ☐ Yes - Learning disability/difficulty
- ☐ Yes - Long standing illness or health condition
- ☐ Yes - Other (please state)

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)

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

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

Which council tax band are you in?

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

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

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

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

Please return your completed questionnaire to South Gloucestershire Council, Insight and Engagement Team, Budget 2025, 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