Our budget 2027/28

South Gloucestershire Council

Delivering with you

Why we need to act

Like councils across the country, we are facing rising costs, increasing demand for essential services and funding that has not kept pace with the responsibilities we are required to meet. More people need support, particularly through adult and children's social care and temporary accommodation, and the cost of providing that support continues to increase.

We have worked hard over many years to improve services and become more efficient. We still need to go further.

This is an opportunity to continue to look at how we work and how we can become a better, more effective council. New technology, new ways of working and the experience of other councils give us opportunities to do things differently: simplifying how we work, making better use of our resources and achieving better outcomes for residents at lower cost. For example, we can make services easier to access, simplify forms and processes, use technology to reduce repetitive administrative work, join up information so residents do not have to tell us the same thing more than once, intervene earlier to prevent problems escalating, and work more closely with communities and partners. By learning from what works well here and in other councils, we can improve your experience, support our staff to focus on the work that adds most value and achieve better outcomes for residents at lower cost.

We should not assume that because something has always been done in a particular way, it must continue that way. We need to challenge ourselves to learn, improve and make the most of the opportunities now available to us.

Our priority is to protect people with the greatest needs, achieve the best possible outcomes for residents and make every pound work as effectively as possible.

This consultation explains where our money comes from, what we spend it on, the financial challenge we face and how we intend to respond. Most importantly, it gives residents, communities and service users the opportunity to help us understand how services can work better.

Where our money comes from

For 2027/28, we expect to have approximately **£362.1 million** available to fund council services.

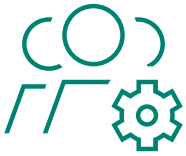
Most of this money is generated locally. Council tax is our largest single source of income, providing an expected £228.4 million. Business rates and the City Region Deal provide a further £76.5 million, while government funding and other sources make up the remainder of £57.1 million.

Our expected income for 2027/28

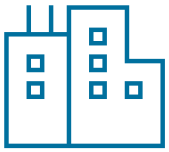
Total resources: **£362.1 Million**



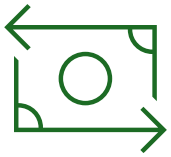
COUNCIL TAX
£228.4m | **63%**



BUSINESS RATES
£45.9m | **13%**



CITY REGION DEAL
£30.7m | **8%**



GOVERNMENT GRANT FUNDING
£57.1m | **16%**

Around **84% of the council's projected resources** will be linked to council tax, business rates and the City Region Deal. This shows how important locally generated income is to funding the services people use every day.

What we can and cannot control

There are limits to our ability to raise more money locally. Council tax bands and nationally determined discounts are outside the council's control, the council does not set business rates, and new local taxes would require government support and legislation.

Council tax will continue to be an important source of funding but residents cannot and should not be expected to meet the whole cost of rising demand and costs that are outside either their control or the council's.

We must also ensure that we have sufficient funding to deliver the statutory services we are legally required to provide.

Balancing the budget therefore cannot simply be about increasing income. We need to continue to make sure every pound is working as effectively as possible and focus our resources on the approaches that deliver the best outcomes for residents.

What we spend our money on

Our funding supports hundreds of services across South Gloucestershire. These range from services used by almost every household, such as waste and recycling, roads and libraries, to specialist care and protection for residents who need more intensive support.

Where our 2026/27 budget of £361.4 million has been spent

COUNCIL SERVICES SUMMARY	2026/27 £m
Supporting vulnerable adults	165.7
Supporting vulnerable children	59.2
Education and skills	17.8
Environment & Community Services	19.6
Planning	0.5
Waste & recycling	26.2
Libraries & safe communities	4.4
Public health	0.3
Housing benefit	2.6
Support services	31.0
Other (Treasury, levies, contingency budgets, City Region Deal & other fixed costs)	34.1
TOTAL	**361.4**

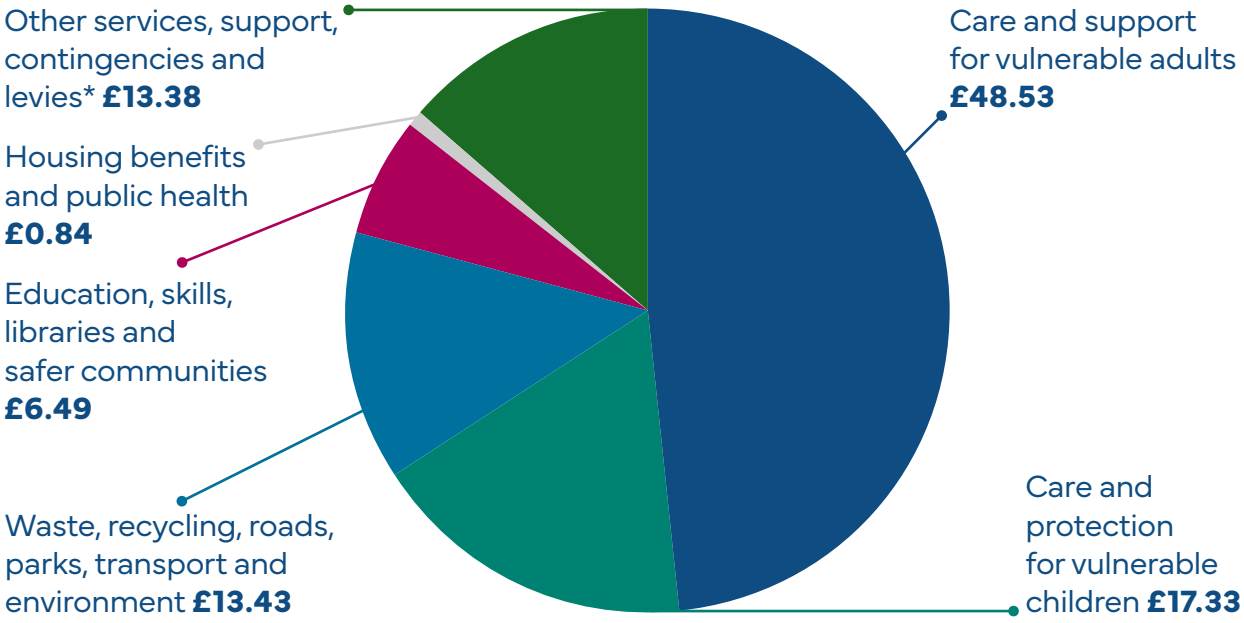
The largest share of our budget supports vulnerable adults and children. In 2026/27, approximately **£66 of every £100** of council spending supports these services.

That's two-thirds of our spending on supporting adults and children who need care and protection. The remaining third must fund the wide range of other services residents and communities rely on, as well as the systems, buildings and staff needed to deliver them.

These are not simply figures on a spreadsheet. Behind every care package, placement and service is a person, family or community. Our responsibility is to provide that support effectively and compassionately, while making sure that the money available achieves the best possible outcome.

How every £100 of our budget is spent (2026/27)

Area of spending from every **£100**



*Excludes City Region Deal

The gap between our income and spending

At the heart of our financial challenge is a straightforward issue: **the cost of continuing to provide services is growing faster than the resources available to pay for them**.

For 2027/28, the council currently expects to have approximately **£362.1 million** available. Forecast spending is approximately **£380.8 million**, after taking account of the new savings proposals already identified. That creates an underlying gap of approximately **£18.7 million**.

The 2027/28 budget position

Expected resources **£362.1m**

Forecast spending **£380.8m**

Underlying gap **£18.7m**

COUNCIL SERVICES SUMMARY	2027/28 £m
Supporting vulnerable adults	171.9
Supporting vulnerable children	62.4
Education and skills	20.6
Environment & Community Services	21.5
Planning	0.6
Waste & recycling	27.3
Libraries & safe communities	5.4
Public health	0.3
Housing benefit	2.7
Support services	33.4
Other (Treasury, levies, contingency budgets, City Region Deal & other fixed costs)	34.7
TOTAL	**380.8**

We have financial reserves that can be used this year to give us time to improve and change services in a planned way but this is money that can only be spent once. Reserves do not provide a permanent answer to the continuing difference between our income and the cost of delivering services.

Without further action, over the next four years, the current financial plan shows funding gaps of approximately **£20.4 million in 2028/29, £22.9 million in 2029/30 and £20.3 million in 2030/31**.

The council is legally required to set a balanced budget each year. Acting now gives us the opportunity to improve how we work in a planned and considered way and build services that are more effective and financially sustainable for the future.

What is driving the gap?

There is no single cause. Several pressures are coming together at the same time.

Local government funding has changed

Changes to the way local government is funded have also affected South Gloucestershire.

One of the most significant changes is the reduction in business rates income following changes to how growth previously retained locally is treated. Although government grant funding appears to have increased, this reflects multiple funding streams being brought together and consolidated, rather than all of the increase being new money.

More people need care and support

A large and growing share of the council's budget supports children, families and adults who need care and support. These services are facing pressures from the number of people and the complexity of their support needs, as well as the rising cost of providing that support.

These services help people to live safely, independently and with dignity, but growing demand means that a larger share of the council's resources is needed to provide them.

The latest forecast illustrates the scale of the challenge and the significant pressures in adult social care and commissioned children's services.

Adult social care

Adult social care represents the largest of these pressures. The council's 2026/27 net adult social care budget is approximately **£155.7 million**, with spending currently forecast at around **£157 million**.

Our focus is on helping people maintain their independence wherever possible, strengthening local provision and intervening earlier to prevent or delay the need for more intensive support.

This can deliver better outcomes for people while helping us use our resources more effectively.

Children's social care

Commissioned children's services are forecast to spend around **£1.3 million** above budget, primarily driven by increasing demand for complex residential placements for children with high levels of need.

Our focus remains on finding the right support for each child, strengthening prevention and early help and developing more suitable local provision.

Better local provision and earlier support have the potential to improve outcomes while reducing reliance on more expensive external provision.

Special educational needs and disabilities

Demand is also increasing for support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), putting pressure on specialist education and services such as home-to-school travel.

Having the right support available locally is better for children and families and can reduce reliance on more expensive provision outside South Gloucestershire. Eight new inclusion bases are being developed in local mainstream schools, providing up to **160 additional local places**.

This is the kind of approach we want to explore more widely: improving outcomes while making more effective use of our resources.

Housing pressures and temporary accommodation

Housing pressures are also adding to the financial challenge. Rising rents, the cost of living and a shortage of affordable homes mean more households are approaching the council because they are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Our focus is on preventing homelessness wherever possible, helping people secure and sustain a home, and increasing access to suitable, good-quality accommodation.

Again, acting earlier can improve outcomes for residents while reducing the need for expensive emergency placements.

An opportunity to do things differently

The financial challenge means we need to accelerate our work to become a better and more effective council.

That starts with challenging ourselves.

We should not assume that because a service or process has always worked in a particular way, it remains the best way to achieve the outcome we want.

Technology is developing rapidly and creating new opportunities to simplify processes, automate routine activity, use information more effectively and make it easier for residents to access services. We need to explore those opportunities and understand where they can improve people's experience while reducing the cost of delivering services.

We can also learn from other councils. Where other authorities achieve similar or better outcomes at lower cost, we need to understand what they are doing differently and consider whether those approaches could work in South Gloucestershire.

Our focus will therefore be on continually improving how the council works. That includes:

- redesigning services around the outcomes we want to achieve;
- simplifying processes and removing unnecessary activity;
- making better use of technology and data;
- helping people earlier and preventing needs from escalating;
- supporting people to be more independent;
- working differently with communities, partners and other organisations;
- learning from councils that achieve better outcomes at lower cost; and
- ensuring the council's own management, administration and support arrangements are as efficient as possible.

The aim is straightforward: to achieve the best possible outcomes for residents while reducing the cost of delivering them wherever we can.

The principles that will guide our decisions

Achieve better outcomes at lower cost

We will focus on the outcomes that matter to residents and look for more effective and efficient ways of achieving them.

Protect people with the greatest needs

We will prioritise children, families, disabled people, working-age adults and older residents who rely on statutory care and support.

Challenge ourselves to improve

We will continually question whether the way we work today is the best way of achieving the outcomes residents need.

Embrace technology and innovation

We will explore how new technology, digital tools and better use of data can improve services, simplify processes and reduce costs.

Prioritise prevention and independence

Helping people earlier can improve lives and reduce the need for more intensive and expensive support later.

Learn from the best

Where other councils achieve similar or better outcomes more efficiently, we will understand what they do differently and consider what we can learn from them.

Work differently with communities and partners

We will explore how town and parish councils, schools, public services, community organisations and other providers can help us achieve better outcomes.

Make the council simpler and more effective

We will simplify processes, remove unnecessary activity and make sure our management, administrative, digital and professional support is focused on helping the council deliver effectively for residents.

Be open about change

We will explain what we are seeking to improve, why change is needed and what it could mean for residents and service users.

Listen and learn

The experiences of residents, service users, communities and our staff will help us understand what works, what could work better and how services could be improved.

Make sustainable decisions

We will look for changes that improve how we work for the long term, rather than short-term solutions that simply move costs into the future.

An ongoing conversation about improving services

This budget consultation is not the end of the conversation. It begins a continuing discussion about **how we can become a better, more effective council and deliver services sustainably for the future.**

As we develop proposals, we will explain:

- what we are trying to improve;
- why change is needed;
- what could work differently;
- what the potential benefits and risks are;
- what we can learn from elsewhere; and
- how residents and service users can contribute their experience and ideas.

Have your say

We know we need to change. We want your help to make sure that change makes services better.

The budget consultation is an opportunity to tell us what outcomes matter most to you, where services could work better, where processes could be simpler and what we need to consider as we develop new approaches.

We want to hear:

- which services and outcomes matter most to you;
- what currently works well and what could work better;
- how different ways of providing services could affect you, your family or your community;
- whether there are impacts or opportunities we have not fully understood;
- where services could be simpler or more efficient;
- how the council could work more effectively with communities and partners; and
- what we should consider as we redesign services.

Your feedback will help us understand what matters most to residents and shape the detailed proposals that come forward.

The financial challenge means we need to change, but it also gives us an opportunity to accelerate improvement. By making better use of technology, learning from others, challenging ourselves and focusing relentlessly on what works, we can become a more effective council.

Our ambition is to deliver the best possible outcomes for South Gloucestershire while making every pound work harder, so that our services are sustainable for the future.