



For Immediate Release

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Budget proposals to protect front line services approved by councillors

Proposals for a Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council budget, that protects services that residents value most while keeping council tax low, have been agreed by councillors.

Approved by Council last night (25 February), a £5, or 10p per week, average increase for the borough council part of the council tax for 2021/22 is likely to make it one of the lowest of the districts in Hampshire, and most of the rest of the country, again.

Despite this, the council still has one of the highest spend per heads of districts in England and the highest of districts in Hampshire. This is despite rising costs and demand for services and a huge reduction in government funding.

Like many others across the country, the council's budget has also been put under further pressure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic with falling income and extra costs to provide support during this unprecedented time.

Following a public consultation between November 2020 and January 2021, a number of options were removed from the final budget proposals, including the proposed removal of free parking for disabled badge holders in council owned car parks, proposed removal of a subsidy for pest control fees for residents in receipt of benefits and a proposed reduction in grants the council pays to parish councils for grass cutting.

In addition, the final budget includes reduced savings proposals for B LOVE in 2021/22 and a review of the council's IT resources as the council works to open up more digital channels for residents.

An amendment to the budget, voted for by councillors at last night's meeting, will see the removal of a proposed above inflation increase in bulky household waste charges and a reduction in the overall proposed increase for the annual charge for the council's garden waste service.

Maintaining services that residents value, including weekly bin collections, community safety patrols and keeping areas looking their best, are funded as part of the budget for the next year.

This includes previous commitments for additional funding to increase community safety patrols and a new scheme for councillors to support small-scale projects in their communities, which were delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To help fund services, as well as a small increase in council tax, a 3% average increase in fees and charges will help to pay for the costs of these services without putting the burden on council tax payers.

Over the last 11 years £15.1 million in savings have been made while protecting services, with the borough council continuing to look at how it can run more efficiently.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Improvement Cllr Hannah Golding said: "Residents' priorities are at the heart of everything we do and following public consultation on our proposals, we have listened to the feedback and removed a number of options to help balance the council's budget for the next year.

"Our budget continues to focus on what matters most to our communities while keeping council tax low as well ensuring we are well placed to prepare for the borough's future as we work alongside our partners to respond to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"Although we have a history of strong financial management, this year we have had to make some difficult decisions with reductions in funding, rising costs and demand for our services.

"To ensure we can continue to provide services in the future, we will need to continue to look at opportunities that we have to address funding gaps in the future, including how we work to ensure we continue to be as efficient as possible and our services continue to meet the needs of our residents."

ENDS

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