

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

FINALISED BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2019/20

Finalised budget proposals for the Isle of Wight will see council tax rise by 2.99 per cent in April while all major services remain protected and the council continues to invest in the Island's long-term future.

Only five per cent of the £5.5 million the council had to save this year will come from service cuts as the authority has made substantial and innovative efficiency savings and income generation to meet the target.

In addition, the council has proposed to invest £43 million for capital projects in 2019/20, including £29 million for regeneration schemes delivering housing and employment, more than £4 million for school refurbishments and more than £1.5 million to invest in adaptations for disabled people so they can receive care at home.

The council's Adelaide and The Gouldings care homes will also be upgraded with a £2.3 million investment.

The council has also listened to businesses and residents during the thorough budget consultation period and plans to freeze casual day time parking charges across the Island this year, but there will be a new £1 overnight charge from 6pm to 8am, in a move that could net £147,500.

"This is a budget proposal that has listened to residents and meets the right balance between finding savings while making money available for regeneration and infrastructure investment to secure our Island's future," said council leader Dave Stewart.

"Money remains tight and we've had to make tough decisions but far less than we had to make last year because we are now far more innovative and efficient in how we deliver our services and we have done much to improve our income so our core services to residents remain protected.

"Challenges remain, and everyone who has been part of this budget process understands that what we do has an impact on residents, but we have kept service cuts to an absolute minimum.

“We have also done all we can to protect the vulnerable and we have continued our plan to put this council back on a firm financial footing. We have a greater entrepreneurial spirit that is seeing real income growth through good property investments that means more money for Island services.

“I am delighted that through our work, the financial position of the council is now on a much firmer footing and it means our savings target for the following year has been reduced by £1 million.

“The council is now in a much better place than two years ago. We have received substantial sums from the government to help us with social care and our participation in a business rates pilot has given us a one-off £3 million over two years.

“We have increased our reserves from a very low level to one that means we now have flexibility if there are problems we have to face.

“However, we believe our funding does not reflect our unique Island status and we continue to press ministers for extra funds. I am pleased to say real progress is being made in this area.”

Major budget efficiency savings are proposed in adult social care through a review of all care packages, the expansion of direct payments and more support to move people from residential care to independent supported living - something all studies show better for the individual - and it will save the council £1 million.

Mental health day centres are proposed to be changed with one closing because it has fewer than three clients per day, making a saving of £142,700. All clients using the service will have their needs reviewed and met in other ways.

The council will also review all of the people receiving home support once a day for less than one hour, making sure their care needs are properly met, saving £253,000. However, no-one will be disadvantaged by these arrangements if their outcomes cannot be met through other means.

Another £1 million will be found by savings within the roads Highways Improvement Programme, as part of a contract review.

Income generation proposals include additional money from Island leisure centres totalling £254,000 - some of which has been generated following investment in The Heights.

Nearly £45,000 will be found from increasing parking permits by up to ten per cent following a five-year freeze, plus a five per cent increase in crematorium and cemetery charges to bring them in line with other authorities, which will generate £150,000.

The minimal proposed service reductions include a family centre contract review and a review of the overall structure of the council's three non-statutory intervention

teams for children. The service will not be affected.

The council tax increase means an average band C council taxpayer will see their bill increase by 79p a week or £41.08 a year from April 2019.

The council's net revenue budget in 2019/20 will be £150 million.

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