

County Report March 2023

Unfortunately, East Sussex County Council will be raising Council Tax by 4.99 %.

The increase marks the 10th year in a row that ESCC has increased its share of council tax. No new cuts were included in the approved budget, although previously planned cuts of around £937,000 will fall in the year.

Even with the latest increase, the council's financial plans identify a £41 million funding gap by 2025, unless more support is given to the council by central government.

Before the budget was agreed, the Conservative majority council voted down an amendment, which had been jointly put forward by the Lib Dems and other opposition groups.

The amendment called for additional spending totalling £4.93m, with all but £25,000 of this figure to be funded from the council's 2023/24 Revenue Support Grant. The remaining money was intended to come from renting out part of County Hall, the council's headquarters in Lewes.

The additional spending proposed in the joint amendment included £1m for additional pothole patching and pavement repairs, £800,000 for the council's Special Education and Disability Need service and £700,000 for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

It also called for £615,000 to reduce the cost of transport for day service users and £628,500 to increase the provision of non-residential adult mental health services by five per cent.

East Sussex Fire Authority has voted for a 5 per cent increase in the precept that will be added to council tax bills for the 2023-24 financial year which starts in April.

The fire authority precept will add £104.37 to an average "band D" council tax bill in Brighton and Hove and across East Sussex – up £5 from £99.37 this year.

C7 Litter Pick

I shall be joining residents for the litter pick on Saturday 4th March and I expect we will collect an enormous amount judging by the huge number of complaints of litter I am getting from round the whole of my division.

Funds for some families available.

Families are being urged to check if they are eligible for help to buy milk and food through the NHS Healthy Start initiative.

The NHS scheme provides funds each month to buy milk, fruit and vegetables, and obtain free vitamins. Women who are over 10 weeks pregnant as well as families with a child under 4 and who are in receipt of certain benefits can apply for the scheme.

People who qualify for help will be sent a Healthy Start card with money loaded on it that can be used in shops such as supermarkets, convenience stores, petrol stations, and pharmacies that display the Mastercard® symbol and sell healthy food and milk.

The Healthy Start card is topped up automatically once a month.

I urge pregnant women and families with children under 4 to check their eligibility for this handy prepaid card.

For more information on Healthy Start and details of how to apply visit www.healthystart.nhs.uk/.