

## Rother District Council

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date:** 5 February 2024

**Title:** Draft Revenue Budget 2024/25 Proposals

**Report of:** Duncan Ellis – Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Jeeawon

**Ward(s):** All

**Purpose of Report:** To present the draft Revenue Budget 2024/25 and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2028/29 for approval.

**Decision Type:** Key

### Officer

**Recommendation(s):** **Recommendation to COUNCIL:** That consequent to the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) the expenditure and budget for 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix A be approved along with the anticipated use of reserves;
- 2) the updated Capital Programme set out in Appendix D be approved;
- 3) the Council Tax for 2024/25 at Band D be increased by £5.94 (2.99%) and set at £204.54 (subject to any changes to special expenses yes to be confirmed);
- 4) that the proposals contained within Appendix F regarding council tax premiums for empty homes and second homes be agreed as follows;
  - empty homes - the application of the current premium of 100% for all dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (empty dwellings) is reduced from a period of two years to one year with effect from 1 April 2024;
  - second homes - the application of a premium of 100% for all dwellings which are unoccupied but substantially furnished (second homes) be applied with effect from 1 April 2025;
  - that the Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to agree with the major preceptors the funding of any award under Section 13A (1)(C) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (reduction in liability) from the Collection Fund; and
  - that the Deputy Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance to make any necessary changes to the policy in line with the Council's requirements and any guidance given by the Secretary of State or regulation;
- 5) the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) be approved for 2024/25 with a move from an 80% funded scheme to a 100% funded scheme;
- 6) the fees and charges contained within Appendix J be approved and the Deputy Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet

Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance to make any necessary changes; and

- 7) that the Deputy Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance to make any final changes necessary in respect of special expenses once the position has been reviewed.

### **Reasons for**

### **Recommendations:**

To approve the draft Revenue Budget 2024/25, the updated Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2028/29 and propose the 2024/25 Council Tax to Full Council for approval. To approve the changes to the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme be continued and adjustments made to various council tax premiums as discussed within the report.

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## **Introduction**

1. The Council is required to set a balanced budget each year. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to estimate revenue expenditure and income for the forthcoming year from all sources, including contributions from reserves, to determine its net budget requirement.
2. This report updates Members on the second phase of the budget process (following Cabinet's approval of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/25 to 2027/28 on 6 November 2023), which is to prepare the draft Revenue Budget for 2024/25 by outlining the predicted financial position and the key issues Members need to consider.
3. Members will note that the 2024/25 budget requires £0.185m (£2.4m 2023/24) from Usable Revenue Reserves to deliver the Council's services. The appendices included as part of this report for consideration are as follows;
  - Appendix A - summary draft revenue budget for 2024/25 and an update on the future year forecasts and reserves position
  - Appendix B - summary information for each service area
  - Appendix C - main changes from the updated 2023/24 budget
  - Appendix D - updated capital programme
  - Appendix E - summary of the budget consultation responses
  - Appendix F - includes proposals for new Council Tax premiums
  - Appendix G – includes consideration of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2024/25
  - Appendix H – contains the minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 22 January 2024
  - Appendix I – summary of cashless car parking consultation
  - Appendix J – fees and charges
4. All budgets are shown at "Net Operational Expenditure Levels" and exclude support service recharges. This ensures Members are provided with a clear identifiable core cost for each service. The overall financial position has improved since the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by £442k, taking the forecast drawdown from reserves down from £626k to £185k. This is

for the following reasons discussed in more detail within the main body of the report;

	<b>(£000)</b>
<b>(Surplus)/deficit figures as at 25/01</b>	<b>626</b>

**Changes following O&S**

1. Additional 1% to be added to all future pay awards	100
2. Additional garden bin income	(160)
3. Additional NNDR income	(111)
4. Additional Settlement – CSP	(259)
4. Additional Settlement - RSDG	(11)

<b>Updated position</b>	<b>185</b>
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5. This report also contains an update in relation to recent legislative changes to Council Tax in relation to premiums for empty properties and second homes.

**Budget Assumptions**

6. The following assumptions were made when calculating the draft budget:
- a. **Inflation** – Non-pay budgets have been set on a cash limited basis, with a 0% increase applied, except for contracts where specific indices are relevant, (see paragraph 25 below);
  - b. **Salaries** – an additional 1% increase has been added to the pay award for next year and subsequent years. This now means the pay award has increased from 2% to 3%, adding an additional £100k to the budget estimates for 2024/25. The increases take effect from September 2024 and an allowance of 4.5% has been assumed for staff turnover based on an analysis of previous years. It is felt that this additional allocation will help the Council to better support and retain current staff and also attract new employees;
  - c. **Transfers** – the use of transfers between existing budgets has been applied to enable funding is re-directed to priority areas;
  - d. **Income** – where applicable, income budgets have been increased in line with the fees and charges proposed by Cabinet on the 6 November 2023;
  - e. **Interest rates** – where relevant, the prevailing Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rates will be used for capital appraisals (currently c5%);
  - f. **Investment Returns** - returns on investment have been calculated using the following rates:
    - i. Bank current & deposit accounts up to 5.35%;
    - ii. Investments with other institutions/local authorities – up to 4.50%;  
and
    - iii. Property Fund investments – 4.00%.

- g. **Council Tax Base** - numbers are based on the latest December 2023 forecast and assumes a collection rate of 98.3%.

## Local Government Finance Settlement

7. The draft Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) was announced by the Government on the 18 December 2023 and applies to 2024/25. It does not give the Council any indication of funding streams beyond next year and is again a further single year settlement. The Government had previously committed to undertake a Fair Funding review and a reset of the business rates system, but this was not addressed as part of this Spending Review. However, it has reaffirmed its commitment to do this in the next Parliament.
8. Each year, the Government sets the Council's Core Spending Power (CSP) as part of the LGFS. The CSP is a measure of the resources available to local authorities to fund service delivery. It sets out the money that has been made available through the LGFS. The table below shows that the 2024/25 CSP is £12.9m (£12.3m 2023/24), which is an increase of £0.6m equating to 5.1% (£0.9m or 5% in 2023/24).

	<b>£ M</b>
<b>Core Spending Power (CSP) 2023/24</b>	<b>12.3</b>
Consisting of:	
Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA)	2.6
Compensation for under-indexing the Business Rates multiplier	0.4
Council Tax	8.4
Other grants	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.3</b>
Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA)	0.1
Compensation for under-indexing the Business Rates multiplier	0.1
Council Tax	0.3
New Homes Bonus Grant (NHB)	(0.1)
Services Grant	(0.1)
Funding Guarantee Grant	0.3
<b>Core Spending Power 2024/25</b>	<b>12.9</b>

9. The SFA consists of the Council's share of business rates income and Revenue Support Grant (RSG). The baseline funding figure of £2.7m is an increase of £0.1m from 2023/24 and there is also an increase of £0.1m due to the freezing of the business rates multiplier taking this support to £0.5m. This brings the total SFA to £3.2m but because the expected share of business rates income comfortably exceeds £3.0m, the Council yet again will not receive an RSG. The LGFS did explicitly state though that local authorities would not be expected to make a payment to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) for a 'negative RSG'. It is important to note that the Central Government assessment of the Council's CSP has only increased by £1.0m since 2015/16, which only represents an 8% increase over the entire nine-year period. Other key points that directly impact on the Council are discussed in paragraphs 10 to 16.
10. **Business Rates** - As mentioned in paragraph 7, the Business Rate baseline reset, which was originally planned for 2020, has been delayed again until the next Parliament. The risk of a redistribution of business rates away from the

Council still exists, but no assumptions have been included in the five-year forecast. The small Business Rates Multiplier for 2024-25 will remain frozen again at 49.9p, but councils will be compensated for any reduction in income because of this decision. Finally, the Government has committed to reimburse councils for any negative impact on its business rates income arising from the implementation of the 2023 revaluations.

11. **East Sussex Business Rates Pool** - Further to Cabinet's decision on 6 November 2023 to continue its participation in the East Sussex Business Rates pool, DLUHC has written to the Council to approve the arrangement for 2024/25.
12. **Revenue Support Grant** – DLUHC has increased the overall RSG in line with Consumer Price Index inflation, however as explained in paragraph 9, the Council effectively has a negative RSG. Members will note that DLUHC has confirmed, in common with previous years, councils will not be required to pay over negative RSG.
13. **Council Tax setting** – The Council can increase its Council Tax by the higher of 3% or £5. Members could decide to set a higher increase but would need consent via a local referendum. A 3% increase would yield approximately £38k more than an increase of £5. The draft Revenue Budget assumes that the Council will increase Council Tax by the maximum allowed, which is 3% in this case. The Council will need to ensure that it remains within this limit, including any Special Expenses. An estimated increase to about £204.56 (£198.60 2023/24) for an average Band D property is anticipated and this will be confirmed in phase three of the budgeting process, which will be reported to Cabinet on 5 February 2024. This is subject to agreement by Full Council on 26 February and including growth would generate c£0.368m extra income. At the time of writing this report the detailed precept budgets from Rye and Bexhill-on-Sean Town Councils had not been received so it has not been possible to undertake an assessment of special expense. It is therefore recommended that the Deputy Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance to make any final changes necessary in respect of special expenses once the position has been reviewed. This will then be reported to Full Council on 26 February as part of the council tax setting process.
14. **Council Tax (other preceptors only)** – Whilst not directly impacting on the Council, Members may wish to note that the LGFS also included council tax setting flexibilities for precepting authorities. These are outlined below:
  - a. County Councils with social care responsibilities can again set an adult social care precept of up to 2% per year on top of their 3% allowance for general expenditure (so a total of 5%), without a referendum;
  - b. Council Tax referendum principles continue **not** to apply to town and parish councils meaning there are no limits on their increases. However, the Government has indicated that it will review the decisions taken by these authorities when considering referendum principles in future years;
  - c. Fire and Rescue authorities are subject to a 3% referendum principle on Band D bills; and

- d. Police and Crime Commissioners are subject to a £13 referendum principle on Band D bills.
15. **The Council Tax Base** - The 2024/25 base has been calculated at 39,197.50 and shows an increase of 676.70 Band D equivalents since December 2022. The main reasons for the change are as follows:
- a. an increase of 355.0 in chargeable dwellings;
  - b. a continued post-COVID reduction in the take up of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which has increased the base by 82.6;
  - c. an increase in the number of eligible Discounts, which has decreased the base by (6.2); and
  - d. estimated growth and associated discounts, and other minor changes, which have increased the base by 245.3.
16. **Other announcements** – In 2022, the Government announced that local authorities would benefit from a significant new funding stream in relation to the ‘Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging’ (pEPR) scheme. Various Government departments, including DLUHC, were to assess the impact of additional pEPR income on the relative needs and resources of individual authorities, with a view to implementing new fees in October 2024. This has now been rescheduled to October 2025. With the details of the new scheme being unknown at this time, no additional income has been factored into these estimates for 2025/26 and future periods.

### **Non-Specific Revenue Grants**

17. As outlined in the table in paragraph 8, the Council will receive several government grants and further information is given in paragraphs 18 to 23.
18. **New Homes Bonus (NHB)** – This grant was paid to encourage councils to develop housing growth in their area. It has, however, been under review for several years but to date there has been no proposed replacement. For 2023/24, the Council was allocated funding of £226k and a further round of payments has been announced as part of the 2024/25 LGFS. The Council’s allocation for the next financial year is £136k.
19. **Rural Services Delivery Grant (RSDG)** – This grant remains unchanged at £72k.
20. **CSP Minimum Funding Guarantee** – As per the previous year, in response to the inflationary pressures facing local authorities, DLUHC have continued to repurpose the Lower Tier Services Grant and combined it with NHB legacy payments to form the Minimum Funding Guarantee Grant. The Council’s allocation is £778k for 2024/25 (£461k 2023/24).
21. **Services Grant** – The Council’s allocation is £15k in 2024/25, which is £81k less than 2023/24.

22. **New Burdens Grants** – From time to time the Council receives funding for the net additional costs of new burdens placed on it by the Government. In 2023/24, the Council will receive an allocation of £32k to implement the requirements of the Elections Act 2022 and an unspecified grant to administer the impact of the Business Rates revaluations, for which £20k was included in the budget. We are still awaiting further details regarding any allocation for 2024/25.
23. **Other grants** – the Benefits Administration, Local Council Tax Support and Homelessness Prevention grants do not form part of the CSP calculation and are still subject to confirmation. This will be reported to Members during phase three of the budget setting process.
24. **Update** – on the 24 January just prior to the publication of this report central Government announced that they were putting a further £600m into the 2024/25 settlement to support local government. While £500m of this was to support social care pressures, a further £15m was added to nationally to RSDG with a further pledge that all Councils would receive an increase from 3% to 4% in terms of Core Spending Power through the CSP Minimum Funding Guarantee grant. While the final figures have not yet been released the estimated additional income comes to £11k (RSDG) and £259k (CSP) and has been added to the general fund summary.

## Review of Cost Pressures

25. In the MTFs forecast reported to Cabinet on 6 November 2023, Members were advised of several cost pressures that may affect the Council's budget. These have been reviewed as part of the second phase of the budget process and are discussed in paragraphs 26 to 32 below.
26. **Contractual Inflation** – The base budget has been revised upwards by £628k to allow for inflationary increases on service contracts such as waste and cleansing. While inflation continues to drop from the historic Consumer Price Index (CPI) levels of 11.1% seen last October to 3.9% as at November 2023, this is still significantly higher than the 0.4% seen in February 2021. Current projections anticipate the rate of inflation to continue to reduce towards the Bank of England target rate of 2% over the course of the next year.
27. **Homelessness** – Members will be aware of the ongoing pressure around the spiralling costs of temporary accommodation (TA), not only locally but nationally. As reported through the budget monitoring process throughout the year, the 2023/24 budget has seen additional pressure in relation to TA costs of more than £0.5m. This is despite numerous initiatives to help to try and manage the cost of this demand led pressure, including the acquisition of 36 housing units to use for this purpose. We are forecasting that the pressure will continue to grow in 2024/25 so we have included additional budget provision of £0.8m to help manage this pressure. This will take the TA budget to just under £2m next year, which means it will have tripled over the last four years.
28. **External Audit fees** – Following a national procurement exercise, the external audit costs have increased on average by 151%. We have therefore had to increase the 2024/25 budget by £54k for the main audit fee and a further £18k for the benefits audit.

29. **Net Financing Costs** – As Members will be aware, there is currently a fundamental review of the capital programme being undertaken to ensure that capital schemes remain affordable and continue to deliver the outcomes originally anticipated. The capital programme has experienced significant pressures over the preceding year, key pressures include:

- the negative impact of inflationary pressures on materials and build costs;
- rental income levels not keeping pace with build costs;
- significant increases in Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) borrowing rates which are currently around 5% (these were around 2% just two years ago); and
- availability of contractors to deliver the schemes, reducing competition.

30. Based on the assumption that where schemes do progress, they will at least break even, the forecast net financing costs for 2024/25 are forecast to deliver a net income of just under (£0.2m). This is comprised of investment income of c(£1.3m), borrowing costs (interest) of c£0.6m and MRP (Minimum Revenue Provision) which represents the amounts the Council must set aside to repay the principal debt) of c£0.5m. This is however still under review.

31. Whilst the high interest rates impact negatively on the Council’s borrowing requirements, the plus side is that income from treasury investments has increased. The Council’s Treasury advisers predict that the Bank rate is likely to peak between 5.50% and 6%.

32. Members should note however, that these estimates continue to be extremely sensitive to changes in interest rates and capital expenditure cash flows. Therefore, the need to review larger and more complex schemes on an individual basis for affordability must remain in place. As these reviews are completed, recommendations will be made to Members regarding future delivery.

33. **Staffing Costs** – The salaries budget has been calculated from first principles and has resulted in an overall cost increase of £0.4m from the revised 2023/24 budget, which is in line with original expectations. The main changes are as follows:

Growth*	£0.3m
Pay award/increments	£0.4m
Regrades 2023/24	£0.1m
Vacancy/turnover savings @c4.5%	(£0.4m)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£0.4m</b>

(\*includes provision for new Monitoring Officer and fixed term posts funded from MTFS reserve, Homelessness Prevention Grant etc.)

34. Discussions have been ongoing for several years regarding whether the Council should join the National Joint Council (NJC) for local government pay, rather than setting the pay award independently which is the current position. A full report will need to be considered regarding the pros and cons of such an approach so that all the risks and opportunities can be fully explored. While it is recommended that this work is commenced now so that the Council can



explore the opportunity, consideration should be given to any potential implementation or changes to be brought in once the Council is on a more sustainable financial footing and is making contributions back into reserves rather than using reserves to help balance the budget. Based on present forecasts that occurs during the 2025/26 financial year.

35. As mentioned elsewhere in the report, next year's budget provides for a dedicated Monitoring Officer to provide support and legal advice to the Council. This was a recommendation from the Peer Review which has now been implemented. Provision has also been made to provide for some additional temporary (6 month) human resources (HR) support, to help with the review of the Council's structures, reporting lines, spans of control/transformation etc. which will help support with the shared services work and delivery of our savings targets.
36. As Members will be aware we have a significant capital programme at around £170m. There are also new opportunities emerging in respect of potential additional funding through the Levelling Up Partnership (LUP) which could see the programme reach around £200m. One of the challenges in terms of capacity is that we currently have no permanent resource within the finance team to focus on capital, the current single resource is only a fixed term position which is due to end in April 2024. Provision will therefore be made for the introduction of two posts to help support this work. The benefit of these posts is that they can be capitalised so there will be no impact on the revenue budget, where possible we will also draw down grant funding to cover these costs.
37. **Non-Pay inflation** – Due to the current budget pressures, non-contractual inflation has not been added to future years budgets, which will be cash limited.

### **Fit for the Future workstream savings**

38. As reported within the 2024/25 MTFs, due to the budget pressures being experienced for not only the 2023/24 financial year but also the years following, the Council has had to fundamentally review what services it provides and how they are provided to try and identify savings to help achieve a balanced, sustainable, resilient budget for future years. While the Council has previously attempted to deliver savings under the Financial Stability Programme (FSP), the programme unfortunately has a history of under-delivery, with less than 20% being delivered over the last two years.
39. Given the Council's financial position, it is important that any savings plan delivers for the future, so it is therefore necessary to re-focus and re-prioritise delivery of the savings plan. The medium-term sustainability of the Council's financial position is vital and underpins our new 'Fit for the Future' financial resilience programme. The main workstream areas are summarised below.

# Rother: Fit for the future Programme



40. As part of the production of the MTFS forecasts in November, a detailed budget review took place to identify efficiencies, savings, and additional income to help support frontline services, to balance the budget, and make the Council's future financial position as resilient as possible. The draft proposals totalled £3.3m, with the efficiencies, income and savings identified coming from several areas as follows:

- Shared services
- Investment income
- Digital transformation and IT
- Various operational savings – travel, subsistence, conferences etc.
- Contract savings from retendered contracts
- Additional income from increased annual demand – car parks, planning etc.
- Increased fees and charges
- Devolution

41. Following more detailed work on the proposals, total savings of £3.1m have now been included within the provisional budget figures and are summarised within the table below. This is slightly lower than the original forecasts by £0.2m.

Savings update as at January 2024	24/25 MTFS	24/25 Draft budget	Variance	%
Operational improvements and efficiencies	(732)	(639)	(93)	87%
Treasury Management Activities	(1,069)	(1,069)	0	100%
Service reconfiguration/efficiencies/fees & charges	(1,539)	(1,441)	(97)	94%
	<b>(3,340)</b>	<b>(3,150)</b>	<b>(190)</b>	<b>94%</b>

42. Of the £3.1m identified, £2.5m has been directly allocated within the relevant budget codes to support the monitoring and delivery of the proposals and to

support accountability. The balance of the £0.6m can be seen within the General Fund Summary (Appendix A under the 'Fit for the Future' line) and represents savings from potential shared services and service efficiencies from the Council's digital agenda. Once the detail of these proposals has been developed, these will also be built in directly against the relevant service codes.

43. Fees and charges proposals are contained within Appendix J. It is proposed to further increase the charge for garden bins and this will generate a further £160k pa to support vital frontline services.

### **Usable Revenue Reserves**

44. The Council held several 'useable' revenue reserves as at 31 March 2023 (£12.8m) which fall within one of the following categories:

- General Reserve (revenue) - £5.0m
- Earmarked Reserves (revenue) - £4.1m
- Ringfenced Reserves (revenue) - £3.7m

45. The *General Reserve* is held for two main purposes:

- to provide a working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cashflows and avoid temporary borrowing; and
- a contingency to help cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies (such as Covid).

46. As part of setting the budget each year the adequacy of all reserves is assessed along with the optimum level of General Reserve that we should hold. The optimum level of the General Reserve considers a risk assessment of the budget and the context within which it has been prepared. The level as set for the 2024/25 financial year is £5m.

47. *Earmarked Reserves* provide a means of building up funds to meet known or predicted liabilities and are typically used to set aside sums for things such as funding one-off restructuring costs. The Council also holds contingency reserves to reduce the impact on Council Tax payers of future uncertain events such as business rate appeals.

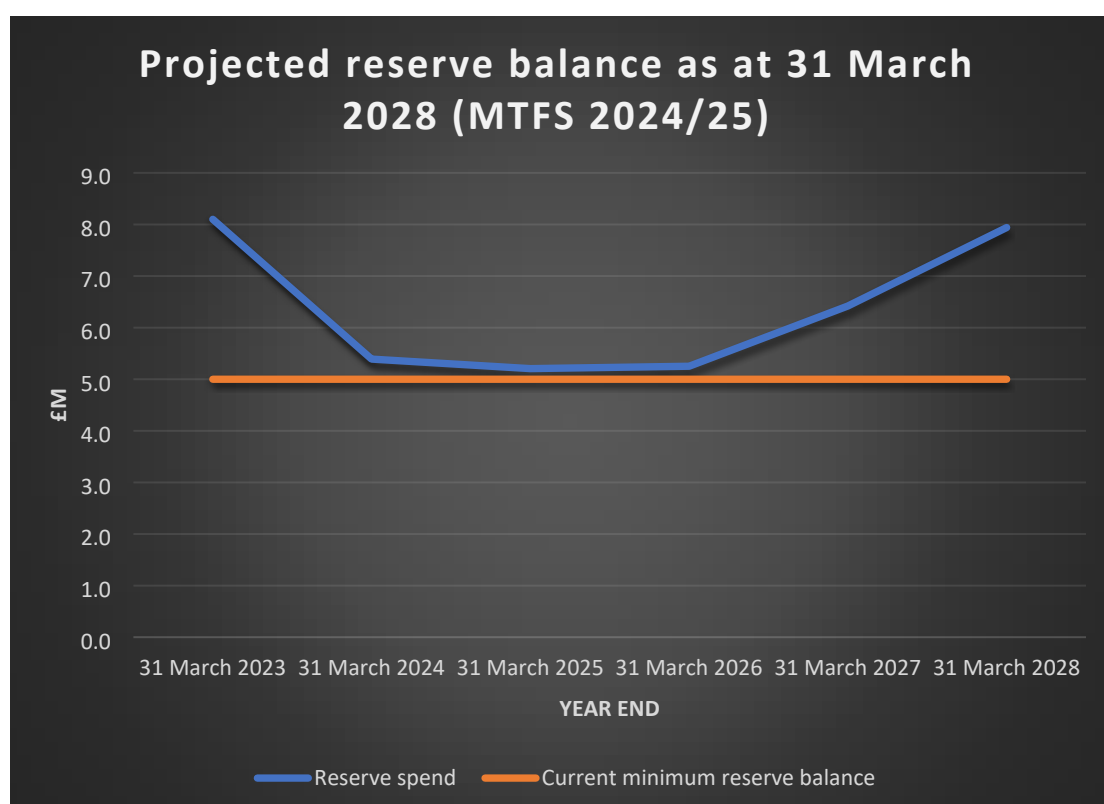
48. *Ringfenced Reserves* are reserves where funding is allocated for a specific or technical accounting purpose and can only be spent in line with the purpose of that funding and cannot be used to support wider council expenditure unlike our earmarked reserves. Several specific grants are held within these reserves, such as any balance remaining from Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's).

49. Use of reserves to balance a budget provides only a short-term solution as the funds can only be used once. They can however be used to smooth the impact of funding gaps over the short to medium term and to allow for planning and implementing projects and work streams that will deliver a longer-term financial benefit through reduced costs and/or additional income, such as those proposed below through the Council's new 'Fit for the Future' programme.

50. As outlined above the balance of usable revenue reserves as of 1 April 2023 stood at £12.8m. However, the balance of the remaining earmarked reserves,

which can be used to help balance the budget, equals £3.1m (excluding the £1.0m NNDR volatility reserve).

51. The budgeted use of reserves for the 2023/24 financial year was originally £2.2m including contributions to capital. However, the quarter 2 budget monitoring report was projecting an increase to £2.7m due to the significant budget pressures being experienced during the current financial year as reported as part of the budget monitoring process, particularly in relation to demand led pressures such as temporary accommodation costs. If this does not improve before the year end this only leaves a forecast balance as of 1 April 2024 of £0.4m above the minimum recommended level (excluding the NNDR volatility reserve).
52. Due to the improvements to the financial position as outlined at the start of this report the reserve position has improved since the last report to O&S with the updated position shown below. This no longer shows the Council dipping below the current recommended £5m level.



53. The draft Revenue Budget for 2024/25 proposes the use of just under £0.2m (£2.2m originally budgeted for 2023/24) from Usable Revenue Reserves which will reduce Reserves to £5.2m by 31 March 2025. From 2025/26 onwards the projections see contributions going back into reserves with a small contribution initially before contributions of (£1.2m) in 2026/27 and a further (£1.5m) in 2027/28 which would take reserve levels back up to around £8.0m).
54. The Council does have access to the £1.0m business rates volatility reserve which is a reserve that's the Council could reallocate, so this reserve could be reduced to £0.5m with a £0.5m contribution to the 2024/25 budget deficit to maintain the General Fund Reserve level at £5.0m.
55. In their 2021 report '[Lessons from Recent Public Interest Reports](#)', Grant Thornton (GT) discussed financial sustainability of local authority finances.

Their view was that ‘councils who have, throughout the period of grant reduction, recognised and been committed to maintaining adequate reserves, have not only continued to provide strong services but have also put themselves in a position to ride out the current pandemic storm.’

56. They went on to say that ‘maintaining sound reserves is absolutely vital and a key indicator of sound financial governance. It should be at the heart of all medium-term financial plans. In our view, general fund reserves (including earmarked general fund reserves) should be a minimum of 5% of net spending and arguably should be somewhere between 5 and 10%. This level of reserves will provide councils with a vital cushion.’
57. One of their key recommendations was that reserves needed to be at least 5% of net General Fund expenditure flexed upwards to consider the macro-economic and local risks the Council faces.
58. Even if we use the highest 10% level as recommended, based on the current projected Net Cost of Service figures over the next 4 years the minimum reserve levels would be as follows:

<b>GT recommended reserve levels vs current projections</b>	<b>2024/25 Budget</b>	<b>2025/26 Budget</b>	<b>2026/27 Budget</b>	<b>2027/28 Budget</b>
	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>
<b>Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>14,687</b>	<b>14,601</b>	<b>14,045</b>	<b>14,302</b>
10% reserve contingency	(1,469)	(1,460)	(1,404)	(1,430)
Actual reserve levels currently forecast	(5,234)	(5,280)	(6,448)	(7,968)
<b>(Surplus)/deficit compared to GT recommendations</b>	<b>(3,765)</b>	<b>(3,820)</b>	<b>(5,043)</b>	<b>(6,538)</b>
	36%	36%	46%	56%

59. As can be seen from the table above, even at the projected lowest levels are reserves are forecast to be almost £4m higher than the maximum recommended GT level, increasing to £6.5m by 31 March 2028. It is however the view of the Chief Finance Officer, that the GT recommended levels are not sufficient given the current economic climate, inflationary levels experienced over recent years and ongoing demand led service pressures and that reserves in the region of £4m are more reasonable. This will however be subject to final review and assessment as part of the Council Tax setting report which will include and individual appraisal by the s151 officer on the robustness of the estimates and the recommended reserve levels at that point.
60. Based on the Council’s current budget forecasts reserves are currently forecast to be about 36% of the Council’s Net Revenue Expenditure by the end of 2024/25 and this is forecast to increase to 56% by the end of 2027/8. Members should also note that in the context of this Council’s budget setting process, Reserves means Usable Revenue Reserves.
61. Whilst one of the Council’s corporate objectives was to achieve Financial Stability by the end of 2025/26 and so end the revenue budget’s reliance on Reserves, the current financial crisis has made this significantly more difficult to achieve. The LGFS does little to alleviate the problem and there is an expectation on the part of Government that councils will use their Reserves to fund revenue expenditure. The Council has limited ability, however, to access

useable revenue reserves without falling below the current recommended £5m limit. Implementation of the Fit for the Future programme is therefore fundamental to achieving a balanced medium term position.

## Capital Programme

62. As outlined above (see Net Financing Costs), there is currently a fundamental review of the capital programme being undertaken to ensure that capital schemes remain affordable and continue to deliver the outcomes originally anticipated. The Net Financing Costs section outlines some of the challenges that the programme is facing which has led to the need for the review.
63. The capital programme can be found within Appendix D and has been updated for spend to date in the current financial year, along with projected expenditure through until 31 March 2024. Budgets have then been profiled over future years based on these projections. As several of the schemes are currently undergoing review, the budgets have been kept at the same levels while the review work is concluded (rather than any budgets being removed at this stage), and any impacts will be dealt with by separate reports as required.
64. There are no new proposals or capital growth items included within the updated programme, except for any recent Committee decisions regarding capital investment and budget levels, such as the Blackfriars infrastructure scheme increase.
65. The gross capital budget is £202m with £33m having been spent in prior years leaving a balance of £169m to be spent in the current and future financial years, with a forecast of £20m for 2023/24 and the remaining £149m scheduled between 2024/25 and 2028/29. This is however subject to the ongoing capital programme review and business case re-appraisal.
66. Again, as outlined above, the capital financing assumptions/MRP charges assume that where schemes do progress, they will at least break even. There is no new borrowing assumed over and above that already included within the current programme. There is a more detailed update regarding the current capital programme progress and spend in the current 2023/24 financial year contained within the quarter 3 budget monitoring report contained elsewhere on this agenda.
67. Central Government have now confirmed that the implementation deadline for food waste services to be provided to all households (including flats) is now confirmed as 31 March 2026 (it was previously March 2025). While funding has been offered to help support the additional costs the Council will experience through the introduction of this new service it is currently approximately £0.2m less than our current projections. We are therefore continuing to lobby central Government through the Joint Waste Partnership. It is recommended that a capital budget of £1.247m is included for 2024/25, with £1.042m to be funded through Section 31 (s31) grant with the balance of £0.205m being covered by capital receipts until such time as we understand the final s31 allocation.
68. **Capital consultation** - At the end of December, DLUHC announced two related consultations on options for additional capital flexibilities, and the changes to the MRP regulations and statutory guidance. The main principles of these consultations are as follows:

## *Final consultation on changes to MRP regulations and statutory guidance*

This relates to the final consultation on changes to the MRP regulations and statutory guidance. The key principles focus around adequate provision for borrowing through MRP charges and the potential use of capital receipts to offset these charges. [The consultation can be found here](#), and will run until 16 February.

### *Additional capital flexibilities*

At the provisional settlement, DLUHC announced that they would engage with local authorities to explore and develop options for additional capital flexibilities. The focus is around two key themes:

- **Supporting invest-to-save activity.** Increasing the flexibilities to use capital receipts and borrowing to finance the costs of transformation and efficiency projects.
- **Local management of budget pressures.** Providing greater flexibilities on the use of capital receipts, including the scope to meet general budget pressures, and potential additional flexibilities where the proceeds relate to the sale of investment properties.

This consultation has now been launched as a call for views, the closing date is 31 January 2024 and [can be found here](#).

69. Option 1 within the ‘additional capital flexibilities’ consultation is considering the potential use of capital receipts to fund general revenue cost pressures, although the focus seems to be around certain pressures, such as TA. There are, however, several caveats to this potential proposal, with a condition that the authority must put in place and commit to delivering an efficiency plan to reduce costs, with a defined payback period on any capitalised spend. The intent is that any use of the flexibility must be part of an overall plan to move back to financial sustainability within the Medium Term Financial Plan. This would also be subject to the availability of capital receipts.
70. It should however be noted that, as with any consultation, this is all subject to change and as with all proposals the devil will be in the detail once any proposals are finalised. As such and given the deadlines for both the consultation response and the committee schedule for setting the budget and council tax levels for next year, it is very unlikely that the Council will see any benefit from these proposals at this stage. Subject to whatever is finally agreed however, this is something that could be reviewed and considered as part of the 2024/25 budget monitoring process and future year forecasts.
71. Officers are currently reviewing the guidance and will be submitting responses by the required deadlines.

### **Collection Fund Surplus/Deficit**

72. The Collection Fund continues to be reviewed, an additional £111k has been added since the last report as a result of the updated forecasts.

## Budget Consultation

73. The budget consultation closed on 17 December 2024, the details of which are contained within Appendix E. The Council has a statutory duty to consult on its annual budget setting and on any substantial change proposed for a service before it makes a decision. In general terms respondents were supportive of the proposals. The key results were as follows:
74. **Who responded** - We had 694 individual responses from residents, visitors and local organisations, business, charities, clubs, and other bodies. In terms of context this is by far the highest level of response the Council has ever had to a budget consultation, so the various engagement methods employed this year (My Alerts, videos, social media, press etc) have obviously been beneficial. The previous year's consultation only received 126 responses, so this year has seen a fivefold increase. On a recent East Sussex County Council budget briefing it was reported that they had received around 2,000 responses for their equivalent consultation. We also received a related petition signed by over 1,800 members of the public. Our thanks go to all who participated.
75. **Council Tax** - Most respondents support to some extent the Council increasing Council Tax to help fund services.
76. **Public Toilets** - Most respondents agreed with the 13 sites selected to remain open. Devonshire Square was the most supported location for re-opening. In addition, there was strong feeling that Pett Level should be open due to the lack of alternatives in the area and its increasing popularity for visitors. In third place is the Mount Street Car Park public toilets in Battle because they are more centrally located and to support tourism. There is a lot of support to keep all public toilets open. If devolving is a solution, then town and parish councils were a popular choice. Some form of local business scheme was a frequent suggestion.
77. **Grounds Maintenance** - The public said that 42% of them would be negatively affected by a cut in grounds maintenance. There were concerns that a deterioration in appearance would have a negative economic impact especially on tourism, the impact on physical safety and how accessible the sports facilities would be if taken over by a single club.
78. **De La Warr Pavilion Concessionary Grant** - Only 14% of residents would be affected by removing the concessionary grant. There were concerns about a reduction in use by community groups, the effect on those groups in carrying on and what impact having fewer events would have on the viability of the Pavilion and the local economy and tourism.
79. **Fees and Charges** - There is majority agreement, to some extent, in raising some fees and charges.
80. **Priority Services and Functions (Grouped)** - The highest priority was devolving services to retain them, in second place was supporting services for vulnerable people.
81. **Cashless parking proposals** – A consultation exercise was also undertaken to seek views regarding the Council's proposals to move to cashless payments in the car parks. A summary of the results of this exercise can be found within



Appendix I and a full list of the detailed responses will be made available to Members. Of the respondents we note that many people were concerned about the impact of not being able to pay by cash and the convenience of that option.

### **Council Tax premiums**

82. A large part of the Council Tax legislation is mandatory on all billing authorities within England. Discounts such as single person discounts, disregards and exemptions are set by statute with no discretion allowed. However, there are an increasing number of areas where each Council may determine the type and levels of charge to be made.
83. Following the introduction of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (which gained Royal Assent on 26 October 2023), there are opportunities for the Council to consider changes to our approach relating to certain discretionary areas to improve outcomes for residents. Full details of which are contained within Appendix F.
84. The changes provided by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 essentially fall into two distinct parts namely:
- (a) to bring forward the period from two years to one year when an unoccupied and substantially unfurnished dwelling (empty dwelling) can be charged a premium of 100%. All other empty dwelling premiums remains unchanged; and
  - (b) to enable the charging of a 100% premium for any dwellings which are:
    - no one's sole or main residence; and
    - substantially furnished.
85. When determining its policy, each billing authority must decide the level of charge (or discount) by 31 March prior to the financial year in which it wants to introduce the changes.
86. The Council is therefore required to determine the level of any discounts or premiums which will apply in its area and a decision is required to be made by Full Council under Section 11A, 11B and the new S11C of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Once determined, the resolution of the Council will need to be published in at least one local newspaper(s) within 21 days of the decision.
87. Should the Council be minded to support the proposed changes to empty properties, this could be introduced from April 2024. However, in relation to the second homes premium, Section 11C (3) of the act requires that the first decision to impose this class of premium must be taken at least 12 months before the financial year to which it would apply. This premium would therefore not take effect until the 2025/26 financial year.

### **Outcomes**

88. The expected outcomes of the proposed changes are as follows:

- a) taxpayers will be encouraged, through the changes in discounts and the implementation of the premiums, to bring empty properties into use and to revert the use of second homes to primary residences;
- b) the reduction of empty homes and second homes within the district in line with the Council's Empty Homes Action Plan; and
- c) potential increased Council Tax income from empty homes and second homes.

### **Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)**

- 89. The proposal for the 2024/25 financial year is to change the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) scheme, to introduce a new, 100% funded scheme from April 2024.
- 90. The proposed changes will improve the overall maximum level of support to 100% for the lowest income and most vulnerable working age applicants and remove the £5 per week minimum payment. There is a full discussion of these issues contained within Appendix G.

### **Conclusion**

- 91. The Council's financial outlook has significantly deteriorated over the last two years due to economic uncertainty, the cost-of-living crisis, increasing demand led pressures from areas such as TA and increasing inflation. Its ability to deliver a balanced budget is now even more dependent on strong financial management and the delivery of the Fit for the Future financial resilience programme. Resources may also need to be reorganised to deliver the priorities and objectives of the new emerging Corporate Plan.
- 92. It is essential, therefore, that the Council maintains a suitable level of Reserves and continues to operate within the approved budget each financial year to prevent further unplanned calls on reserves. Failure to do so will impact on the Council's ability to meet its statutory obligations and will result in Members having to make more difficult decisions around the provision of local services.

### **Financial Implications**

- 93. The financial implications are detailed within the body of the report.

### **Legal Implications**

- 94. The Council is legally required to set a balanced budget each year. The final decisions will be made by Full Council on 26 February 2024 when the budget is approved, and the Council Tax is set but at the current stage there are no concerns regarding the Council's ability to balance the 2024/25 budget.

### **Human Resources Implications**

- 95. There are no Human Resource implications for the proposals within this report.

### **Other Implications**

- 96. A detailed risk assessment on the budget has already been undertaken as part of the work on the MTFs and draft budget proposals which went to Cabinet in

November 2024 along with a sensitivity analysis. The relevant appendices are 5 and 6 and the report can be accessed [here](#).

97. The external consultation is detailed separately within the body of the report along with the analysis of the results which is contained within Appendix E.

<b>Other Implications</b>	<b>Applies?</b>	<b>Other Implications</b>	<b>Applies?</b>
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	Yes
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	Yes	Exempt from publication	No

Chief Executive	Lorna Ford
Report Contact Officer:	Duncan Ellis, Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer
e-mail address:	Duncan.ellis@rother.gov.uk
Appendices:	<p>Appendix A - Draft Revenue Budget – 2023/24 to 2027/28</p> <p>Appendix B - Revenue Budget Summary - Cost of Services</p> <p>Appendix C - Main changes in net cost of services between 2023/24 and 2024/25</p> <p>Appendix D – Updated Capital Programme</p> <p>Appendix E – Summary of consultation responses</p> <p>Appendix F(a) – Council Tax premiums proposals</p> <p>Appendix F(b) – Council Tax empty homes and second homes premiums policy</p> <p>Appendix F(c) - Council Tax premiums equality impact assessment</p> <p>Appendix G – Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)</p> <p>Appendix H – Minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 22 January 2024</p> <p>Appendix I – Summary of cashless car parking consultation</p> <p>Appendix J – Fees and charges</p>
Relevant Previous Minutes:	None.
Background Papers:	Local Government Settlement 2024/25 (draft December 2023) Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 – 2027/28
Reference Documents:	None.

**DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET - 2022/23 TO 2026/27**

Appendix A

	2023/24 Budget (updated) £ (000)	2024/25 Budget £ (000)	2025/26 Budget £ (000)	2026/27 Budget £ (000)	2027/28 Budget £ (000)
<b>Departmental Budgets</b>					
Chief Executive	3,539	3,170	3,056	2,935	2,892
Deputy Chief Executive	4,703	4,860	4,852	4,845	4,842
Director Place & Climate Change	8,784	7,335	7,192	7,041	6,987
<b>Total Cost of Services</b>	<b>17,026</b>	<b>15,365</b>	<b>15,101</b>	<b>14,822</b>	<b>14,721</b>
Net Financing Costs	(170)	(166)	430	462	621
Contract and Income Inflation	0	0	(113)	(116)	82
Additional 1% staff pay award	0	100	100	100	100
Financial Stability Programme (FSP)	0	0	0	0	0
Fit for the Future - savings projections/service pressures	0	(611)	(917)	(1,223)	(1,223)
<b>Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>16,856</b>	<b>14,687</b>	<b>14,601</b>	<b>14,045</b>	<b>14,302</b>
Special Expenses	(751)	0	0	0	0
Business Rates - retained share	(4,849)	(4,820)	(4,965)	(5,114)	(5,267)
Non-Specific Revenue Grants (Government)	(1,157)	(1,664)	(1,337)	(1,371)	(1,406)
Council Tax Requirement (Rother only)	(7,650)	(8,018)	(8,345)	(8,728)	(9,149)
Collection Fund (Surplus)/Deficit	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(14,407)</b>	<b>(14,503)</b>	<b>(14,647)</b>	<b>(15,213)</b>	<b>(15,822)</b>
<b>Funding Gap</b>	<b>2,449</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>(46)</b>	<b>(1,168)</b>	<b>(1,520)</b>
Earmarked and General Reserves	(8,128)	(5,419)	(5,234)	(5,280)	(6,448)
Use of/(Contribution to) Reserves	2,449	185	(46)	(1,168)	(1,520)
Contribution from revenue to capital expenditure	260	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Reserves</b>	<b>(5,419)</b>	<b>(5,234)</b>	<b>(5,280)</b>	<b>(6,448)</b>	<b>(7,968)</b>
<b>Reserves as a % of Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>56%</b>

## Revenue Budget Summary 2024/25 - Cost of Services

## Appendix B

Department	2024/25 expenditure £(000)	2024/25 income £(000)	2024/25 net £(000)
<b>Chief Executive</b>	<b>3,349,890</b>	<b>(179,830)</b>	<b>3,170,060</b>
Chief Executive	374,270	0	374,270
Chief Finance Officer (S151)	1,602,160	(10,000)	1,592,160
Democratic Services	678,280	(1,500)	676,780
Human Resources	695,180	(168,330)	526,850
<b>Deputy Chief Executive</b>	<b>24,856,046</b>	<b>(19,996,284)</b>	<b>4,859,762</b>
Corporate Policy & Projects	450,760	(33,945)	416,815
Corporate Programme & Improvement	138,460	0	138,460
Deputy Chief Executive	343,820	0	343,820
Digital & Customer Services	1,883,850	(67,000)	1,816,850
Environmental Services, Licensing & Community Safety	1,093,580	(410,580)	683,000
Internal Audit	162,930		162,930
Revenues & Benefits	20,782,646	(19,484,759)	1,297,887
<b>Director Place and Climate Change</b>	<b>19,523,626</b>	<b>(12,028,663)</b>	<b>7,494,963</b>
Climate Change Strategy	125,360	(6,230)	119,130
Director - Place & Climate Change	119,750		119,750
Housing	5,089,154	(2,608,164)	2,480,990
Neighbourhood Services	9,524,080	(4,869,200)	4,814,880
Planning Development Management	1,723,820	(1,333,500)	390,320
Planning Policy	615,990	(50,000)	565,990
Regeneration	2,325,472	(3,321,569)	(996,097)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>47,729,562</b>	<b>(32,364,777)</b>	<b>15,364,785</b>

**Appendix C****Main movements between Total Cost of Services**

	<b>(£000)</b>
Updated Cost of Service - 2023/24	17,026
Draft Cost of Service - 2024/25	15,365
<b>Net increase/(decrease) in Cost of Service</b>	<b><u>(1,661)</u></b>
Temporary accommodation costs	562
Temporary accommodation purchases - cost recovery	(203)
Housing admin recovery of costs (DFGs)	(140)
Waste contract inflation	152
Planning agency staff for pre-planning app (PPA) support	101
Car park charges	(729)
Grounds maintenance savings	(280)
Garden bin and bulky waste income	(520)
Additional planning income - government changes	(235)
Additional planning income - PPA	(137)
Other miscellaneous changes	(232)
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>(1,661)</u></b>

Updated Capital Programme 2023/24 Onwards

Appendix D

	Total Scheme Budget	Prior year spend	2023/24 Revised Budget	2024/25 Forecast	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Forecast	2027/28 Forecast	2028/29 Forecast
	£ (000)	£ (000)	£ (000)	£ (000)	£ (000)	£ (000)	£ (000)	£ (000)
<b>Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration</b>								
<b>Other Schemes</b>								
Corporate Document Image Processing System	120	33	1	86	0	0	0	0
Rother Transformation ICT Investment	386	269	40	77	0	0	0	0
Community Grants	1,446	636	130	240	110	110	110	110
Development of Town Hall Bexhill	856	856	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rural England Prosperity Fund	604	0	110	494	0	0	0	0
Ravenside Roundabout	200	0	0	200	0	0	0	0
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	253	0	33	220	0	0	0	0
CIL Scheme 1 Village Hall Energy Project	500	17	142	341	0	0	0	0
<b>Property Investment Strategy</b>								
Beeching Road Hotel and Food store Development	15,000	396	30	14,574	0	0	0	0
PIS - Beeching Park Estate	435	0	435	0	0	0	0	0
PIS - Beeching Road 18-40 (Creative Workspace)	1,235	1,235	0	0	0	0	0	0
Barnhorn Green GP Surgery and Industrial Development	9,741	1,486	528	7,727	0	0	0	0
<b>Housing Development Schemes</b>								
Community Led Housing Scheme - CHF	327	327	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blackfriars Housing Development - infrastructure only	21,000	6,416	6,148	7,424	759	253	0	0
RDC Housing Company Ltd Investment (RDC loans)	79,923	2,620	2,465	41,535	7,000	0	26,303	0
Development of council owned sites	270	57	4	209	0	0	0	0
King Offa Residential scheme	805	146	213	446	0	0	0	0
Mount View Street Development - Housing	4,535	4,493	42	0	0	0	0	0
Community Led Housing Schemes - Cemetery Lodge	200	0	0	200	0	0	0	0
Camber, Old Lydd Road	395	27	35	333	0	0	0	0

	<b>Total Scheme Budget</b>	<b>Prior year spend</b>	<b>2023/24 Revised Budget</b>	<b>2024/25 Forecast</b>	<b>2025/26 Forecast</b>	<b>2026/27 Forecast</b>	<b>2027/28 Forecast</b>	<b>2028/29 Forecast</b>
	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>
<b>Housing and Community Services</b>								
De La Warr Pavilion - Capital Grant	388	275	59	54	0	0	0	0
Bexhill Leisure Centre - site development	396	318	0	78	0	0	0	0
Fairlight Coastal Protection	291	74	11	131	75	0	0	0
Disabled Facilities Grant	16,229	6,098	1,893	1,738	1,625	1,625	1,625	1,625
Sidley Sports and Recreation	857	857	0	0	0	0	0	0
New bins	1,175	518	157	125	125	125	125	0
Bexhill Promenade - Protective Barriers	48	48	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing - Temporary Accommodation Purchase	12,476	5,364	5,824	1,288	0	0	0	0
Bexhill Promenade - Shelter 1	59	59	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bexhill Promenade - Outfall pipe	200	9	191	0	0	0	0	0
Bexhill Leisure Centre - refurbishment	200	110	17	73	0	0	0	0
Bexhill Leisure Centre and Rye Swimming Pool - dilapidations	110	0	0	60	50	0	0	0
Micro Woods Community Grants	27		0	27	0	0	0	0
Community Orchards Grants	49		0	49	0	0	0	0
Capital - Sidley House Open Space Improvements - Parks LUF	75	4	71	0	0	0	0	0
Egerton Park CPT	122	0	54	68	0	0	0	0
Camber Sands Welcome Centre	944	0	200	744	0	0	0	0
LTA Tennis Court Refurbishment - Egerton Park	105	0	105	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Strategy &amp; Planning</b>								
Payments to Parishes - CIL	211	40	85	86	0	0	0	0



	<b>Total Scheme Budget</b>	<b>Prior year spend</b>	<b>2023/24 Revised Budget</b>	<b>2024/25 Forecast</b>	<b>2025/26 Forecast</b>	<b>2026/27 Forecast</b>	<b>2027/28 Forecast</b>	<b>2028/29 Forecast</b>
	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>	<b>£ (000)</b>
<b>Resources</b>								
ICT Infrastructure Replacement Programme	137	137	0	0	0	0	0	0
New website development	31	23	8	0	0	0	0	0
Invest To Save initiatives (Financial Stability Prog)	391	45	12	334	0	0	0	0
Planning Software (Invest to Save)	359	0	0	359	0	0	0	0
LUF De La Warr Pavilion Project LUF Grant	24,088	9	759	3,853	12,655	6,812	0	0
Capital - LUF Programme	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LUF Heart of Sidley Programme	3,095	2	242	2,436	415	0	0	0
Battle Train Station	1,000	0	0	0	1,000	0	0	0
Sedlescombe Traffic Calming Measured	74	0	0	0	74	0	0	0
Battle Sports Pavilion	400	0	0	400	0	0	0	0
Air Quality (Pollution) Monitor	29	0	0	29	0	0	0	0
Boiler replacements at admin buildings	95	0	95	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Capital Programme</b>	<b>201,892</b>	<b>33,001</b>	<b>20,144</b>	<b>86,038</b>	<b>23,888</b>	<b>8,925</b>	<b>28,163</b>	<b>1,735</b>

**Funded By:**

Capital Receipts	2,100	60	50	0	0	0
Grants and contributions	9,735	8,353	14,523	7,587	1,625	1,625
CIL	227	1,770	1,321	850	0	0
Borrowing	4,614	33,667	884	378	125	0
Capital Expenditure Charged to Revenue	1,003	453	110	110	110	110
Borrowing and Loan for Rother DC Housing Company Ltd	2,465	41,535	7,000	0	26,303	0
Section 106	0	200	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>20,144</b>	<b>86,038</b>	<b>23,888</b>	<b>8,925</b>	<b>28,163</b>	<b>1,735</b>

**2024 Budget Consultation: Summary Report****Why the Council Consults on its Budget**

1. The Council has a statutory duty to consult on its annual budget setting with local businesses and business groups. In addition, it is long established custom and practice to consult the residents, as payers of Council Tax, and a cross-section of community groups and organisations. In addition, the Council has a statutory duty to consult on any substantial change proposed for a service.

**What the Council was consulting on**

2. The Council focussed the consultation on some of the options it wished to consider helping fill a £3.8 million in the 2024/25 budget:
  - The proposed rise in Council Tax by the statutory maximum amount allowed by local authorities;
  - Reducing service provision for public toilets, grounds maintenance and cutting the de la Warr Pavilion concessionary grants budget and
  - Increasing fees and charges where the Council has the control to do so.
3. We provided the public with links to various information, such as the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28, to support the consultation process and this can be found below.

**How We Consulted and Who was invited to Respond**

4. We identified that the following groups would be impacted by the proposed budget. Firstly, there is a statutory requirement to consult with local businesses and representatives of the business community. In addition, we identified that we wished to hear from and sent an invitation to take part to:
  - Council Taxpayers and residents or visitors using services where changes are proposed;
  - Town and parish councils;
  - Representative voluntary groups, clubs and other organisations that work with people experiencing sickness or disability, using recreation and sporting facilities in our parks and other green spaces, experiencing poverty or deprivation, minority ethnic groups, or having an interest in the environment, conservation, and heritage of the area; and
  - Our Rother Local Strategic Partnership membership who includes representatives from the voluntary sector, Sussex Police, local and regional NHS and public health, East Sussex Fire and Rescue, East Sussex County Council, our main local housing association and so on.
5. The opportunity to consult was communicated through social media (Facebook and X, formerly Twitter), through media releases and two articles in the My Alerts emails sent to over 37,800 residents' email addresses. Three video interviews with Councillors were also provided as part of this.
6. An invitation to consult was sent by email to seven business organisations (such as the Chambers of Commerce). Invitations to consult were sent to 47 local voluntary groups, charities and organisations representing the categories

above. We also emailed the 22 members of the Rother Local Strategic Partnership. In addition, we sent a consultation invitation to 18 sports clubs and local organisations that use our parks and recreation grounds, which was sent to 35 committee members, coaches, or other representatives in total.

## **Respondents to the Consultation**

7. We received a range of responses through various contact channels.
8. We received 584 completed online questionnaires from residents with a further 16 completed online questionnaires from members of the public that either visit or work in the district.
9. There were 60 specific responses regarding only public toilets sent through emails, online Contact Us forms, handwritten notes and printed letters that were either posted or handed into council offices.
10. There were eight completed online questionnaires and four emailed responses from local organisations that are in the local charity and voluntary sector or residents' associations. This includes an email from East Sussex County Council's Communities, Economy, and Transport department.
11. A further eight responses came from seven local sports clubs by way of our online questionnaire and an email.
12. We had four responses from respondents who said that they represented a business or business organisation, but their businesses were not named.
13. In total, seven parish councils responded to the consultation by email or posted returned questionnaires. A further three respondents said that they were responding for a parish council but did not name their parish council and are probably parish councillors answering as residents.
14. This gives us a total of 694 individual responses.
15. In addition, during the consultation period the Council received petitions in relation to public toilets, signed by 1,857 individuals. We have not recorded how many were residents and how many were visitors.
16. The signed, printed petition sheets are headed as follows:  
  
*'We need Devonshire Square toilet and others to remain open as it's against our Human Rights, for the elderly, people with disabilities and families.'*
17. Most but not all the documents included an additional sentence.  
  
*'Public toilets must be taken seriously by politicians and local councils and be treated as essential infrastructure in local towns.'*

## **Demographic Breakdown of Residents Who Responded**

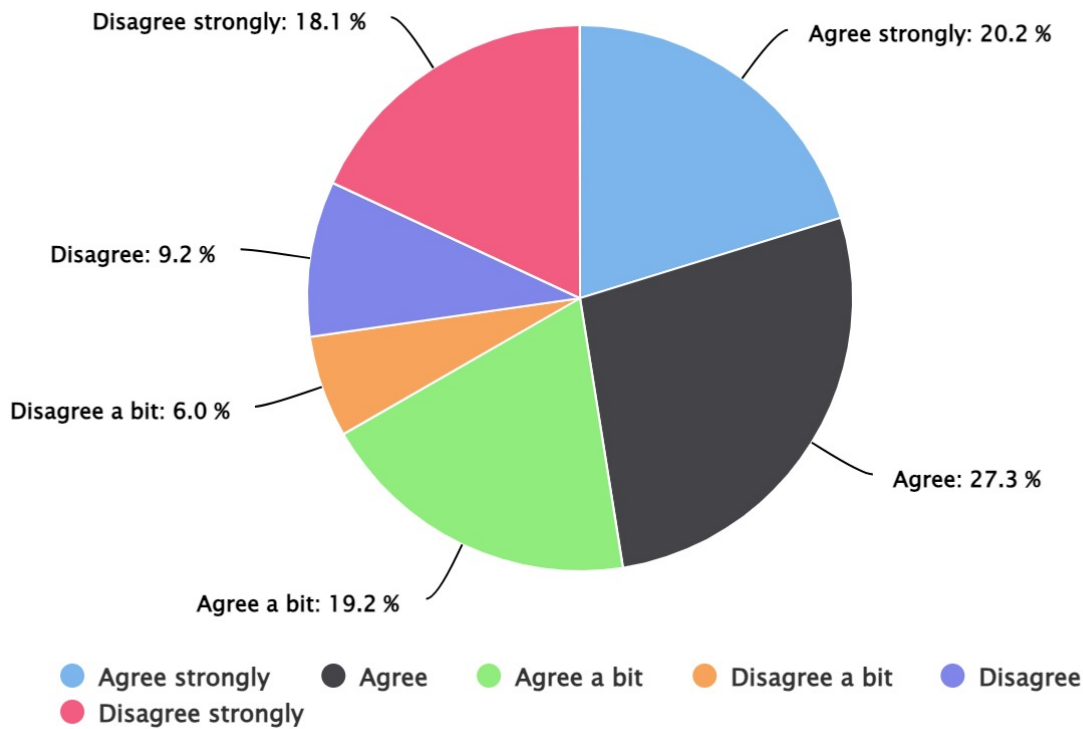
18. The following information was only asked of those using the online survey. We can only extrapolate volunteered information from correspondence.

19. Of the total responses:
- 45% were from Bexhill (47.7% of Rother's population);
  - 8% from Battle (7.5% of Rother's population);
  - 6% of respondents were from Rye (5% of Rother's population);
  - The remaining 41% were residents from rural Rother living in the villages or countryside;
  - In addition, we have identified that 27 of the 60 emails regarding public toilets (only) were from Rother residents. This is based on their supply of an address, a statement that they are a resident of a place in Rother or similar clear indication of residency.
20. We had 46% male respondents, 48% female respondents, 1% trans respondents and 5% preferred not to answer the question.
21. In age groups, only one person was under 18 but this consultation was not targeted at under 18s. We had 3% aged 18 to 34 and this age group was significantly under-represented with not enough people to do any analysis by this age group. However, 22% were aged 35 to 54, 26% were aged 55 to 64 and 45% were aged 65 to 79. We had 4% of respondents over the age of 80 but this is not a large enough sample for analysis by this age group.
22. 70% of respondents were not disabled and 20% were disabled. The remaining 10% respondents did not wish to answer this question.
23. 85% of respondents were White British. A further 3% were another category of White ethnicity. We have 0.3% who were gypsy or travellers. In addition, 1% were from a mixed ethnicity or background, 0.3% were from a Black ethnicity and 0.3% were from an Asian ethnicity. 10.1% prefer not to say their ethnic background. People from non-White ethnicities continue to be a bit under-represented compared to Rother's population.
24. Visitors provided the same information, but the sample is too small for analysis purposes unless we combine residents and visitors' responses together.

## **Results to Key Questions**

### **Raising Council Tax**

25. We asked respondents their views on raising the Council Tax by £5.94 a year for a Band D property. We asked, in the current financial circumstances, if respondents agreed or disagreed it is appropriate to increase Council Tax to help continue to fund services?
26. Members of the public answered with a combined 48% that either agreed or agreed strongly, with a total of 67% agreeing to some extent. So, more than two in every three residents agreed to some extent. The remaining 33% disagreed to some extent with 18% disagreeing strongly.



27. The same question was asked to local organisations, parish councils, etc. Only three parish councils responded to this question, and all agreed, two responses from businesses agreed and two disagreed, seven sports organisations answered this question and six agreed and one disagreed, while seven other organisations answered this question and they all agreed.
28. Bexhill Heritage stated that they ‘reluctantly support the proposed Council Tax increase’.

### Public Toilets

29. The analysis below is based on the Council’s consultation exercise. There is separate consideration of the petition received in respect of public toilets at the end of this appendix.

### Support to Keep Open 13 Sites

30. We asked all respondents which of the 13 sites we had kept open during the trial closure should remain open (until other arrangements were in place) or should close and be replaced by another site. There was strong majority support that all the 13 public toilet sites should remain open from all members of the public.
31. The site with least support is Camber West Car Park (old toilet block), with 29% saying close and replace with another. In addition, 29% said Lucknow Place Car Park (Rye) should close and be replaced with another site. In third place is Bexhill Cemetery, at 27.5% saying they should close.
32. The most supported sites are Camber Central Car Park (90%), Battle Market (89%), Winchelsea Beach (89%) and Rye Station Approach (89%).

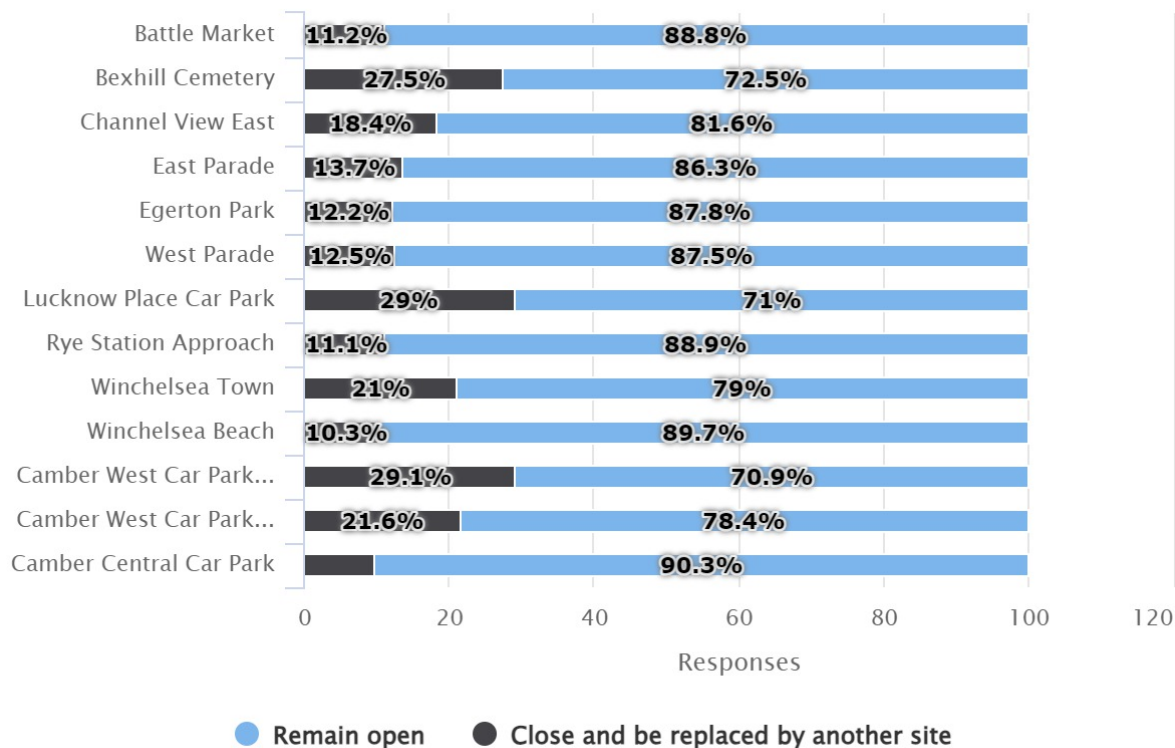


Figure 1 Members of the Public: sites to remain open to close/replace

33. **Bexhill in Bloom** responded that Bexhill Cemetery and Channel View East could be closed and replaced with other sites, the remainder to remain open. Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society answered that East Parade site could be closed and placed with another site.
34. We have emails on behalf of the **Beach Hut Owners Group** for East Parade supporting the continued opening of the East Parade site. The main arguments are:
  - a. Around 80 beach huts pay the Council around £600 a year to approximately totally £50k a year to use their huts all year round;
  - b. The toilets are crucial for proper use and enjoyment of the huts;
  - c. Considering what is paid it is wrong of the Council to close the toilets; and
  - d. East Parade is used by many walkers and cyclists and beach visitors, so toilets are needed all year. It is a busy and vibrant place, used for leisure, pleasure, promoting mental and physical health.
35. **Winchelsea Residents Association** wrote in support of the retention of public toilets in Winchelsea. Their main arguments were:
  - a. It is unfair to ask residents to state the case for local needs and vote negatively for other locations. This should not regress into a numbers game, rather a fair and rational assessment;
  - b. The town is not large, but it receives thousands of visitors to the heritage area as well as the school and shop and a full programme of events;
  - c. The centre of the town is on the 1066 walk promoted by the County Council, with new information points;
  - d. Visitor numbers are increasing;
  - e. The area attracts a significant number of elderly people and children who reasonably expect toilets to be available;

- f. There are no alternatives other than the current public toilets, the pub toilets are customers only and not suitable for large numbers. Winchelsea is isolated from other public toilets, the closest to the town being 1.5 miles at Winchelsea Beach and a difficult journey; and
  - g. Previous experience of temporary closures has results in visitors abusing nearby spaces, near to the recreation ground and path to and from the primary school and the bus shelter. This was a risk to public health.
36. **Bexhill Heritage** said ‘clean, safe, and fully operational public toilets are, understandably, regarded as an entitlement by our visitors and residents alike. Those toilets that the Council suggests should remain open in Bexhill represent a minimum acceptable provision for the town, especially so given Bexhill’s age profile. We note that the Council hopes that the remaining toilet facilities will be maintained to a higher standard than at present. This will be important. We also note that the Council wishes to devolve responsibility for public toilets in Bexhill to the Town Council. It is disappointing that negotiations to affect this transfer of responsibility have seemingly failed to achieve a satisfactory outcome. We urge the Council to redouble its efforts in this matter and seek mediation as necessary. It is urgent and residents are being let down.’

### **Alternative Sites Proposed to Close That Should Be Open**

37. We asked if respondents would like to suggest an alternative site instead of, or to be exchanged for, the 13 proposed sites and 103 members of the public had an alternative to suggest.
38. Of those using the questionnaire, we had 45 respondents saying that they would like to have Pett Level open, with 19 respondents wanting to keep open Devonshire Square (Bexhill) with 10 respondents suggesting Little Common Roundabout.
39. Through other correspondence there are seven responses for all Rother facilities to be open, 45 references to open any closed facilities in Bexhill and four requests to open all facilities in Battle. For specific sites the combined count, without including the general support for all sites or all sites in Bexhill or Battle, is as follows:

Mount Street car park	9
Cooden Sea Road	6
Devonshire Square	34
Little Common Recreation Grnd	0
Little Common Roundabout	11
Manor Barn	12
Norman’s Bay	1
Polegrove Bowling	2
Polegrove Grandstand	4
Sidley Car Park	2
Strand Quay	2
Gun Gardens	4
Pett Level	48
Sedlescombe	4

40. In addition, there was the petition to open Devonshire Square and the petition to open all public toilets. Devonshire Square was re-opened by Bexhill Town

Council under temporary arrangements before this report was written. Therefore, arguments in favour of opening Devonshire Square are available on request but are not included in this report.

41. The following represents the main arguments from the public in favour of opening the sites in the trial closure:

42. **Pett Level:**

- a. Remote, no other facilities nearby like shops, cafes, that could be used as an alternative;
- b. Nearest available public toilets at Winchelsea Beach, located between Winchelsea Beach and Hastings Country Park, longer distance than Camber beach where three public toilets will remain open;
- c. Charges at Camber have driven more use of Pett Level beach, acting as overflow to Camber on busy days;
- d. Large volume of people use this site, busy all year, popular hiking route, SSSI, visited by many local school children, large school groups, used by swimmers, used by dog walkers, used by delivery and bus drivers, tradesmen and motorists, residents;
- e. Closure will lead to misuse of other locations;
- f. Risk to women, females, children and disabled;
- g. Nearby beach side café has no toilets;
- h. 5 toilets in Bexhill and 4 in Camber but Pett Level used all year round and no other in vicinity so no logic in closing;
- i. Greater numbers of visitors as now significant tourist destination: ample on-street parking, beach, submerged ancient forest, geological interest, promenade, lifeboat house with events;
- j. During lockdown, with toilet closures, village became polluted, use of bushes, gardens, boats, drives, beach, sea, will be repeated. Health and environmental issues;
- k. Businesses are not always open, won't let non-customers use toilets;
- l. Local businesses will suffer if remove facilities;
- m. Busier than Winchelsea Town, town and beach have other toilet facilities and pub and other commercial places;
- n. Pett Lifeboat constantly asked if visitors can use toilet but operate with shared septic tank and can't provide facility;
- o. New Beach Club is members only and won't allow public to use facilities; and
- p. Discriminating against disabled people not easily mobile. Current disabled facility dirty, disgusting, contaminated.

43. **Manor Barn:**

- a. Only facility in Old Town, no other public facilities in area, better geographical spread of facilities;
- b. Important for people working on their allotments, as otherwise time on site is limited;
- c. I use it. Easier to use. Constantly in use;
- d. Lights are left on even if closed; and
- e. Usually used disabled toilets and many now closed that usually use in Bexhill. Chronic illnesses mean need to use toilets when out and about.



44. **Little Common Roundabout:**

- a. Necessary due to bus stop. Used by bus drivers, who need somewhere to go;
- b. Only option in Little Common. Bexhill has other options, LC does not;
- c. Well used by public. High footfall. Heavy use;
- d. Busy A259. Used by drivers as well as local shoppers;
- e. Older demographic;
- f. Limited options near Little Common; and
- g. Disability with flare-ups out of the blue, thought of being caught out whilst shopping in Little Common just too much to bear, not able to go there since closure.

45. **Mount Street, Battle:**

- a. Not at the far end of town, more central to shops, other toilets too far away for shoppers and tourists;
- b. Tourist town, not feasible to operate with only one public toilet. Tourists expect more facilities. Tourists have taken long journeys;
- c. Well used and better choice than Market Square, better than remote market square toilet;
- d. Pivotal to local community;
- e. Damaging to High Street businesses; and
- f. Causes person with prostate cancer and side-effects resulting in frequent, urgent need, great difficulty, and distress, especially after driving 15-20 minutes to Battle and needing toilet when arrive, can't hold on long enough to walk to Market Square.

46. **Cooden Sea Road:**

- a. Only access to toilet for train travellers, no loos in station;
- b. Major beach, near beach, for visitors;
- c. Hotel doesn't allow use of theirs;
- d. Gents not open for over a year, disabled toilet has to be used, pumps outside prevent access to any of loos;
- e. Bike riders, dustmen, postman, tourists all use this more than some of the proposed toilets; and
- f. Many elderly residents rely on these facilities.

47. **Polegrove Grandstand:**

- a. Keep at least one open between the Polegrove and East Parade. Other toilets too far away;
- b. Don't close any of them. Lobby Government for more money;
- c. Hundreds of people walk their dogs each day, people work there; and
- d. Too much vandalism in the park.

48. **Rye Gun Gardens:**

- a. Many people ask about a toilet in St Marys Church and are directed to the Gun Garden.

49. **Sedlescombe:**
- a. Not enough toilets available in villages; and
  - b. Give some thought to taxi drivers out in the country and need this convenience, as does the flex bus that is based in the village.
50. **Polegrove Bowling:**
- a. Covers both ends of the park; and
  - b. Older residents are bowlers, have different needs, only needed in summer.
51. **Sidley Car Park:**
- a. Has no public toilets at all; and
  - b. Many elderly people, residents, rely on these facilities.
52. **Strand Quay:**
- a. Town centre location. Better location than Station Approach;
  - b. For elderly and disabled. Many elderly must wait for bus and need a toilet to use; and
  - c. Current high usage, particularly by elderly and those using Rother car parks at Strand and Gibbets Marsh.
53. **Normans Bay:**
- a. No other seafront public toilets from Pevensey Bay to Bexhill except Normans Bay;
  - b. Increased footfall due to coastal path;
  - c. A lot of day visitors to beach in summer months – families, elderly;
  - d. Health hazard – during Covid, using beach, side of road, in village, using underwear and socks as toilet paper and discarded on beach; and
  - e. Disabled visitors to beach requiring facilities with some urgency.
54. Please note that there were 5 comments about keeping open all the listed public toilets listed for closure. Also, several suggestions to adopt a scheme where businesses have some form of compensation or incentive to provide public toilets.
55. Organisations responded as follows.
56. **Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society** would keep Manor Barn open. Their reasons were: 'It's good if visitors are encouraged to visit the historic Bexhill Old Town area and provision of these toilets is helpful for tourists as well as for those using the remaining few local shops and businesses. The toilets are situated in the Manor Gardens Car Park so adjacent to the Manor Gardens which attract many visitors as well as tourists, some of whom travel to the area by public transport. The toilet at Bexhill Train Station is not open to the general public.'
57. **Strandliners** (local charity or voluntary group) would keep open Pett Level because 'Public toilets near green and blue spaces (parks and beaches) are invaluable to local Rother residents health and wellbeing. Many schools and groups use Pett Level toilets when visiting. Strandliners regularly hold events

at Pett Level for adults and young people, RSPCA Mallydams Wood use the toilets for their groups. If there were no toilets at Pett Level there may be less beach visitors, ensuring health and wellbeing is reduced for Rother residents, or there will be more people caught short and using bushes, trees, rocks etc. It is not a better choice, it is another toilet that should remain open with the others.'

58. **East Sussex County Council's** Project Officer – Bus Service Improvement Plan raised the access to public toilets that are needed by bus drivers. 'An issue that has arisen is the reduced (indeed closed) toilet facilities available to bus drivers. Unlike train drivers they do not have one on-board. It is something people don't tend to think of. They can of course use depots, but with extended routes and more early morning and evening services will not always be close to one. Such access impacts their health and well-being which of course has a knock-on impact on bus services. A key means of tackling climate change is to reduce vehicle numbers and emissions and one bus can take 70 cars off the road. We appreciate that budgetary pressures has led to closures of lavatory facilities. What we were wondering is if they would be scope for drivers to access facilities using radar keys? If an additional lock is added for security, we could look at how we manage those keys for drivers as well.'
59. A committee member of **Sidley Martlets Bowls Club** would open Polegrove Bowling public toilets because there are 'already 2 sites available on Bexhill sea front and this alternative would be for those using the Polegrove.'
60. **Fairlight Parish Council** asked for Pett Level toilets to be open. Their reasons were:
- a. Whilst some public toilets particularly those in the towns may be closed without leaving members of the public without access to toilets due to commercial outlets or public venues in the vicinity, this is not the case in rural areas. In Pett Level for instance, there are no public houses or cafes within easy walking distance. The nearest public house or eating establishment is a walk of 1 mile with an ascent of 169 feet. There is a café (Eater's at Pett) at Pett Level which has only one porta-loo and this is not available for non-customers;
  - b. Many Fairlight residents enjoy the walk from the village to Pett Level either to be able to have a picnic on the beach or have a cup of tea as provided by Pett Church free of charge at all times or an ice cream from the ice cream van in good weather, or enjoy the other attractions of Pett Level including the Lifeboat station with events such as fetes, the submerged forest, many fossils on the beach and the Military Canal;
  - c. This area is also part of the coastal path and there are many footpaths for people who wish to come to the area, to enjoy the beach and the scenery. Some of these have travelled a moderate distance, and the area is populated by many retired people. There, can be considerable crowds in the summer, with overflow from Camber meaning Pett Level is now "discovered";
  - d. This closure is marked as a trial, but there is no evidence of how the trial will be evaluated. This could be by monitoring the number of people who are forced by their bodies to seek a secluded spot to relieve themselves, or by an increase in unsavoury smells coming from some areas of the beach and land around. We knew during covid when the lavatory was shut what it was like – and that is bad; and

e. Fairlight Parish Council urges you to recognise that an area such as Pett Level which is popular all year round especially of sunny winter days needs public toilets more than an urban area where alternative toilets are available. The toilets at Pett Level are an essential local resource which Rother needs to continue to fund to maintain the amenity of the area.

61. **Salehurst and Robertsbridge Parish Council** already have a long-term lease for the car park and toilets. They had some specific comments on public toilets in rural villages. 'We specifically object the closure of public toilets as a cost-saving measure which wholly disregards the wishes and needs of the local population. In Salehurst & Robertsbridge, the village car park and toilets are leased on a long-term basis from RDC and we agree that this arrangement should be replicated wherever possible, with a one-off financial incentive where appropriate and affordable. We regard the longstanding argument about the freehold of toilet blocks to be irrelevant under these circumstances.'

### **Other Organisations or Venues Better Placed to Provide Public Toilets**

62. We asked respondents which other organisations or venues they thought would be better placed to provide public toilets in their area, given that Rother District Council cannot provide them. The responses from the public were:

- RDC should provide all, should not close any, best choice to provide, etc
- Don't need public toilets anyway – already other venues
- Town councils and parish councils
- Portakabin company
- Libraries
- Heart of Sidley
- Restaurants, cafes, pubs, e.g. Wetherspoons
- Sports clubs – football, cricket, bowls, depending on location.
- Supermarkets
- Private company
- East Sussex County Council
- A charity
- Local businesses (unspecified)
- de la Warr Pavilion
- Places of worship
- Old Town Preservation Society
- Town Hall, other council buildings
- Rye Partnership
- National Trust, English Heritage
- Transport providers
- Shopping precincts and centres
- Multiple suggestions related to charging for the service as an alternative to closure

63. There were four local organisations that named town or parish councils, two of the sports clubs mentioned a town council, one sports club thought no one else would want to provide the facilities and one sports club said it remained the responsibility of RDC. Bexhill Athletic Football Club already have the key to the facility at Sidley Recreation Group and are happy to keep these open during events on site and close them when they leave. However, this was a short term arrangement until the takeover of the pavilion and toilets by Heart of Sidley.

- 64. **Battle Town Council** said Battle Town Council is currently considering devolvement and is awaiting further information from Rother District Council to allow this discussion for decision.
- 65. **Rye Town Council** said that they were best placed to provide public toilets in Rye.
- 66. **Icklesham Parish Council** replied that Icklesham Parish Council are keen to take on responsibility for both the toilets in Winchelsea Town and Winchelsea Beach and have been in discussions with Rother regarding this for some time. As RDC are aware, both buildings are in a terrible state of repair and the Parish Council are currently taking steps to ensure that this is a viable option for the Parish Council.
- 67. **Crowhurst Parish Council** replied that they did not know of any other organisation that can afford to keep them open other than RDC.

### Other Savings Proposals

#### Grounds Maintenance Contract Reductions

- 68. We asked respondents if they would be negatively impacted by reductions to the grounds maintenance contract. For the public, 42% said that they would be affected. However, 58% said they wouldn't be affected.

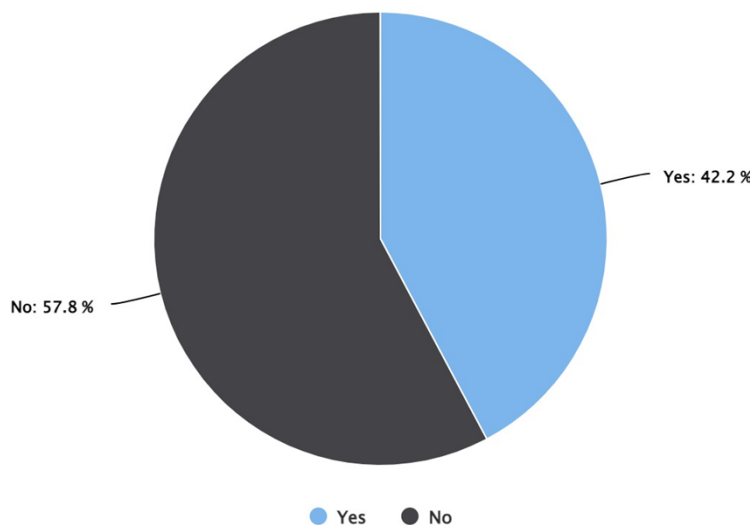


Figure 2 Public responses, affected by changes to grounds maintenance

- 69. Here are some key points made about impact:
  - a. Living next to public space hugely overgrown;
  - b. Reduces ability to play sports at reasonable cost, reducing number of people who can play. Higher subscriptions on members. Falling player numbers. Affordability for those on low incomes and young people;
  - c. Contractor must be taking advantage so should bring back in-house;
  - d. Mental health benefits diminished;
  - e. Using play parks for children, unable to use due to grass;

- f. Already getting shabby or unkempt, unattractive reduction in aesthetics, Seafront gardens overrun with rats in recent years probably cost for removal nearly as much as maintenance, general decline, more downward spiral, scruffy town;
  - g. Attractiveness to visitors impacts local economy/businesses/shops, business failure leads to empty shops, job losses;
  - h. Pride, negative attitude;
  - i. Difficult to walk when disabled;
  - j. Blocks view of roads, verges overgrown has impact on drivers and safety;
  - k. Fewer activities for young people could lead to more vandalism and ASB;
  - l. Parks and open spaces valuable for many living in flats or no outdoor space;
  - m. Loss of safety in using pitches;
  - n. Have to use volunteers to maintain pitches/greens, parks;
  - o. Could destroy clubs under pressure to find money;
  - p. Increase in hay-fever allergies;
  - q. Increase in dog fouling;
  - r. Tarmac over verges instead, no cutting, no blocked drains; and
  - s. Discourages use of parks, greens, community spaces, restricts access.
70. **Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society** replied that ‘there are three historic sites in Bexhill Old Town which would be detrimentally affected: Manor Gardens, Barrack Hall Park, and Barrack Road Memorial Gardens. The Manor Gardens, with their Grade II listed Manor House "ruins" are beautifully kept by the current contractor and this is often remarked upon by visitors. The Gardens have been inspected and played their part in the South and South East in Bloom Competition where Bexhill has won gold twice. They have many regular visitors and can be used as a backdrop for events when hired from Rother District Council. Barrack Hall Park is an historic area which formed part of the large camp of the King's German Legion on their arrival from Hanover in the early 19th century. Some years ago Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society gave a large sum of money to Rother District Council so that the Park could be redesigned and to ensure a moratorium on building development on the site for 125 years. Barrack Hall Park has also been listed in "Fields in Trust". The Barrack Road Memorial Gardens were a cemetery, the resting place of troops of the King's German Legion and some local people. There is a new commemoration board in the Gardens, recently installed by the Bexhill Hanoverian Study Group and part funded by Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society.’
71. **Bexhill in Bloom** said that their ‘volunteers would have to work harder to maintain certain areas in Central Bexhill. We need more volunteers, but people, especially older people are looking for work. Bexhill Town Council should take on some responsibility. Maybe cheaper to employ your own gardeners, as Hastings have done. That way you have direct control and dedicated area support.’
72. **Rother Ramblers** replied that ‘the excellent work carried out by the grounds maintenance teams enhances the areas making it more attractive for residents and visitors. It encourages and supports wildlife and its habitats. Some of the areas are peaceful and help with mental health and wellbeing.’
73. **Winchelsea Residents Association** said there would be a loss ‘of proper facilities especially for school children’.

74. **Bexhill Heritage**, as part of their response, expressed that they are ‘concerned about reductions in expenditure for the maintenance of parks and open spaces and for the facilities they contain. Such a policy will inevitably erode civic pride and is likely also lead to an increase in vandalism as people might be tempted to take the view that ‘nobody seems to care so why should we?’ Egerton Park is justifiably popular with everyone. Allowing it to ‘run down’ will be a very significant blow, especially to children and families. Actively seek to identify and secure alternative sources of funding to support the delivery of some of these services? We strongly recommend that the Council applies a more gradual tapering to the proposed ‘public realm’ budget reduction while, at the same time, making even more strenuous efforts to persuade local organisations and groups to take further responsibility for parks, open spaces, and leisure buildings. Bexhill Heritage is willing to hold discussions with the Council to this end. We are confident that other local organisations would also be prepared to step forward. We also urge the Council to identify and secure alternative sources of funding. Again, talks with the Town Council should be high on the agenda.’
75. All the sports organisations that responded agreed that they would be affected by changes to grounds maintenance. Their comments are as follows:
76. **Sidley Martlets Bowls** club facilities are enjoyed by c70 bowling members and by a further c1,000 bowlers each year from around the district, local towns and villages and touring teams. As well as a form of gentle exercise and some competitive activities, bowls is recognised as a great way of reducing social isolation. The annual cost of maintaining a bowls green is relatively expensive at about £11,000pa.’ ‘XXX. It might be better for clubs to take over the maintenance as long as some provision is made for low-income families to be able to still use the facilities.’
77. We are **Bexhill Athletic Football club**. We currently provide football training and competitive matches for around 110 people, aged between 14 - 55 years of age. The benefits of physical activity on mental and physical health is unquestionable, however we provide a preventative service to many vulnerable children, promoting fair play and sport education. The planned changes will adversely affect our club, as without the pitches being maintained we would not have facilities to provide the activities that we do. We have submitted a proposal to RDC and Heart of Sidley - confirming our willingness to take on the maintenance of the football pitch - common practice amongst many grass roots clubs in the UK and a precedent which has been set by sports clubs such as Rye Rugby Club, We do not see why or what interest the Heart of Sidley would have in running this facility or taking control of the management of the pitches, when our club is the primary user of the pitch. We propose that, alongside the maintenance of the pitch, we would control all of the bookings - ensuring the we make space for community events which we are aware take place several times per year and events which the Heart of Sidley would wish to add throughout the year.
78. The **Little Common Ramblers Cricket Club** replied that ‘finding equipment and volunteers will be onerous financially. This could destroy many cricket clubs.’
79. I am a member of **Little Common Cricket Club** - it would mean that we have to take on the grounds ourselves, we are fortunate in that we have volunteers

passionate about putting time in to improve the club. However, we currently don't have the equipment or storage facilities required to be able to do this, this would come at some cost to us which makes things very difficult.

80. **Bexhill United Ladies FC** will be impacted catastrophically by the devolution of facilities to Bexhill United FC/Little Common FC without safeguarded provision for equal access to facilities. XXX. The Council were able to enable booking. If fair, affordable and equal access is not mandated as part of the devolution, women and girl's football will be adversely impacted in Rother either through having no access to facilities or potentially being priced out. As a stand-alone, self-funded Women's and Girls Club (the only one in East Sussex, let alone Rother) we focus on increasing and maintaining participation, with a not-for-profit approach. This is only possible if facilities are available. Whilst men's clubs can make provisions for girls/women, there are countless examples where women's/girls football is the first section to be cut depending on committee personnel or club funds. Football is fun, improves self-esteem, creates new friendships– and like all sport, it plays a key role in combating obesity, particularly in teenagers. It also positively impacts mental health. It is imperative we are able to continue to offer participation opportunities. Including Bexhill United LFC in the devolution arrangements will likely unlock funding. There are other grassroots men's clubs who will face the same issues Bexhill United Ladies FC will if they are also not afforded the opportunity to be involved in the devolution.
81. The town and parish councils answered as follows:
82. **Battle Town Council** will be adversely affected by the number of complaints received. Also by loss of amenity at children's play area due to long grass, litter and hidden debris.
83. Now that RDC has no presence in the town, **Rye Town Council** is often the first port of call for complaints about services provided by other bodies - frequently RDC or ESCC. A reduction in the standard of grounds maintenance is likely to result in the Town Hall staff spending more time responding to complaints. The service reduction proposed will have an adverse impact on the appearance of the public realm, reducing residents sense of 'pride of place' and might deter visitors from returning to the town - affecting negatively the local economy.
84. Not applicable: all of the green spaces within **Icklesham Parish** are managed by the Parish Council.
85. **Salehurst and Robertsbridge Parish Council** replied that the council 'believe that grounds maintenance can be devolved to parish and town councils where appropriate but only if the responsibilities and costs are fully explained and calculated. Local councils should have the right to refuse to take on these responsibilities if they feel they will not be financially viable.'

### **De La Warr Pavilion Concessionary Fund**

86. We asked respondents if they would be negatively impacted by removing the de la Warr Pavilion's concessionary fund. This is a grant fund given to local community groups to help them afford to rent the Pavilion for their events. The public said that 14% of them would be impacted.



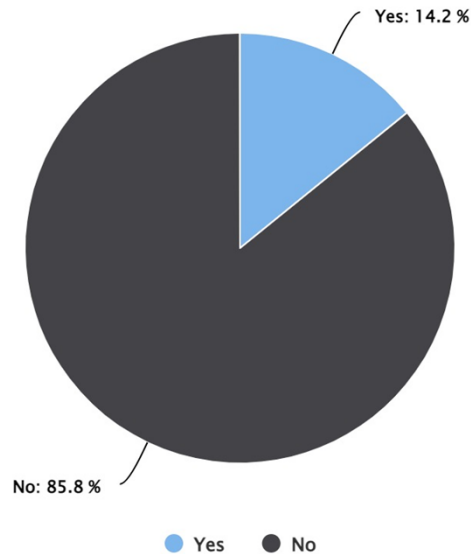


Figure 3 Public Response on Negative Impact if Removed DLWP Concessionary Fund

87. At this point, some respondents misunderstood the meaning of the word concession and thought it was related to concessionary ticket prices, but these two issues are unrelated and therefore those comments are not included. Comments on the impact or removal of the fund were:
- a. Needed, otherwise the space becomes an elite space, which is wrong. Essential the building is used by all the community and as often as possible. A landmark site which all should be able to access and use;
  - b. If decision jeopardises the Pavilion, it would be a disaster for Bexhill as jewel in crown. Combined with other cuts would contribute to spiral of dereliction;
  - c. Worry the DLWP will be open less often;
  - d. Reduced events would result in fewer visitors. Less people paying for parking and using local shops, reduction in income;
  - e. Local groups should be encouraged to be part of the success of DLWP and have reasonably priced access to such an iconic facility, because DLWP is a huge local asset and contributor of thriving restaurants and cafes. Key area for Bexhill tourism;
  - f. This is a prestige building and should be maintained, maintain it as considerable people attend the events. Worried building fabric might suffer;
  - g. Reduces the range of events available in the area. Certain events like summer sing and productions by amateur groups would not be put on, leaving both casts and audiences without a focus. Loss of local art group displays. Losing much loved activities. Stops local community groups providing free or low cost events, workshops, etc. to anyone from the District. DLWP probably won't have much to offer;
  - h. Fewer reasons to visit and buy coffee, cake, gifts;
  - i. Unfair question – many people in Rother will not be impacted by this but the people who will be should have a strong voice;
  - j. Ask all groups this will affect before removing;
  - k. Would raise ticket and other prices. Will be too expensive for many local residents;
  - l. Heritage is important;
  - m. Relatively small amount of funding is a lifeline to local groups and provides financial support to iconic building;

- n. Community groups could not afford to use the theatre. Narrows the groups entitled to use DLWP. Some worthwhile community groups would fold. Community groups need a hand up to feel their sense of worth and support in what they do, it's only £12k but is appreciated by such groups;
- o. As an active member of BAW we have two exhibitions a year in The Studio of the DLWP. The most recent in the foulest weather on 4 November attracted approaching 300 visitors during the day. As the only viable seafront venue this is vital; there is no hall available in the town centre and we rely on 'passing trade' for visitors;
- p. Bexfest very beneficial to Bexhill, over 10,000 people of all ages visit the town from 2021. Rising cost of hire of DLWP has made hiring the venue unattainable. Without these events, or help with costs, events will struggle, and the tourism will become obsolete. We need to keep supporting local events and festivals within the area;
- q. No impact as not the only venue in Rother and long way from many people's homes, limited in what it can offer, not people friendly, seems to be cashless, phone isn't answered, received a lot of government money in any case;
- r. Why should local and young up and coming talent not get a chance to perform in a wonderful venue. They are our future. For each child on stage will be bring family, neighbours, friends to see them, each person spending and increasing profits for everyone; and
- s. Less chance to see local artists perform.

88. **Battle Town Council** said that Battle residents may be affected by this.

### **Increasing Fees and Charges**

89. We asked respondents how much they agree or disagree that the Council should put up some fees and charges to help fund services. The public responded that 41% either agreed or strongly agreed and a total of 68% agreed to some extent.

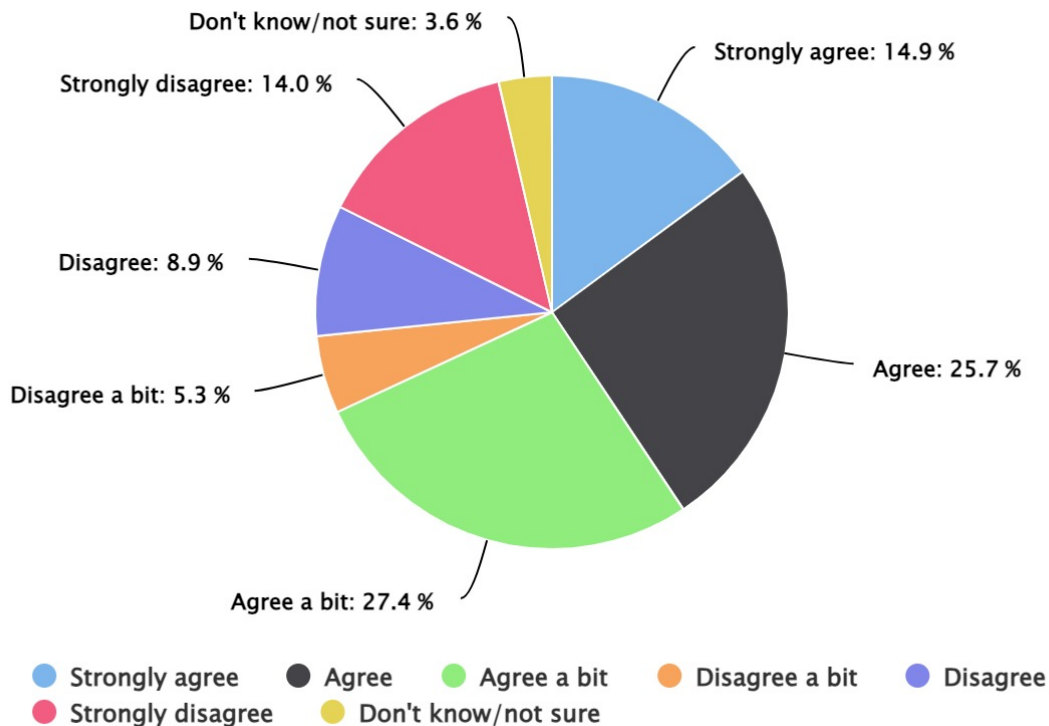


Figure 4 Public on Putting Up Fees and Charges in line with inflation

90. Responding organisations that gave a view on this question all agreed to some extent to raising fees and charges with two exceptions. Bexhill and Rother Homeless Unity Group disagreed and one response from an unnamed business disagreed.

### Priority Services and Functions

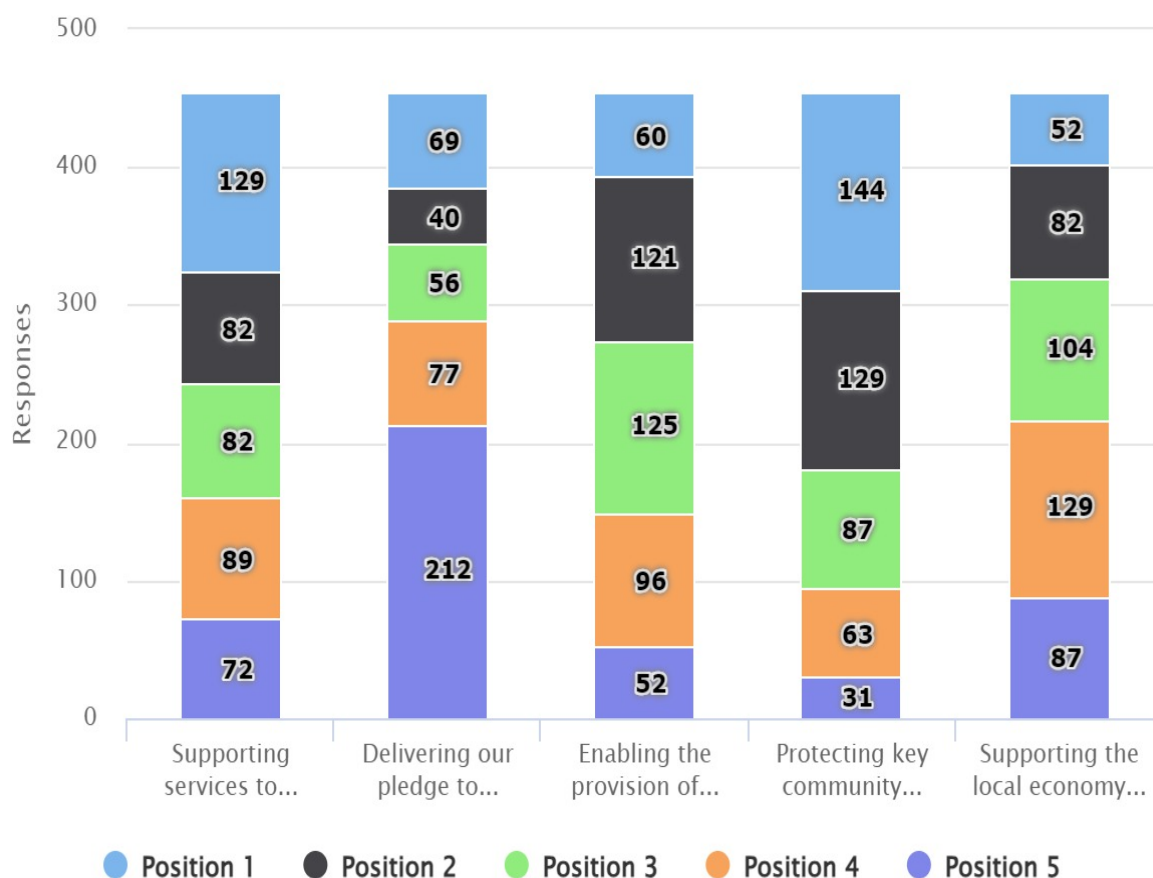
91. We asked respondents to put five groups of services and functions into priority order. They were asked to place them in order from 1 (top priority) down to 5 (lowest priority). These were as follows:

- Delivering our pledge to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 (this involves improving energy efficiency of buildings, investing in renewable energy and more sustainable ways of running our vehicles);
- Protecting key community facilities and services by devolving them to parish/town councils or sports/community organisations (this includes public conveniences and maintaining parks, gardens, and sports pitches to current standards);
- Enabling the provision of leisure facilities and working with partners to improve health and wellbeing outcomes (including sports centres);
- Supporting the local economy (through support for cultural and heritage facilities, tourism, and regeneration projects); and
- Supporting services to vulnerable people (such as funding to the community voluntary sector to provide advice and support to those struggling with the cost of living).

92. Members of the public clearly placed as a top priority the functions of protecting key community facilities and services by devolving them to parish/town councils

or sports/community organisations, with 32% selecting this as their top priority and a further 28% saying that this was their second priority.

93. The second priority was supporting services to vulnerable people, funding voluntary sector to provide advice and support to those struggling with the cost of living. Here 28% of respondents selected this as their first priority and a further 18% selected it as their second priority.
94. The third priority was enabling the provision of leisure facilities and working with partners to improve health and wellbeing outcomes (including sports centres). Although only 13% had this as their top priority, it is balanced by 27% having it as their second priority. In addition, 28% had it as their third priority.
95. The fourth priority was supporting the local economy through support for cultural and heritage facilities, tourism and regeneration projects. Only 12% of the public had this as their first priority and 18% had it as their second priority. A further 23% selected it as a third priority and 28% selected it as their fourth priority.
96. For 47% the lowest priority was delivering a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, energy efficiency of buildings, renewable energy, and more sustainable ways of running vehicles. A further 17% selected it at position 4.



97. Responding organisations rated the following as their top two priorities:
98. **Bexhill and Rother Homeless Unity Group** – selected supporting services to vulnerable people as their top priority and enabling the provision of leisure facilities as their second priority.

99. **Bexhill in Bloom** selected supporting services to vulnerable people as their top priority and devolving services to other organisations as their second priority.
100. **Rother Voluntary Action** selected supporting services to vulnerable people as their first priority and becoming a carbon neutral organisation as their second priority.
101. **Strandliners** selected becoming a carbon neutral organisation as their first priority and devolving services to other organisations as their second priority.
102. **Friends of Ancient Monuments and Museum** selected supporting services to vulnerable people as their first priority and devolving services as their second priority.
103. **Rother Ramblers** selected devolving services as their first priority and enabling the provision of leisure facilities as their second priority.
104. **Winchelsea Residents Association** selected supporting services to vulnerable residents as their first priority and devolving services as their second priority.
105. Two sports club representatives selected supporting the provision of leisure facilities as their first priority. Three sports club representatives selected supporting services to vulnerable people as their first priority. Three sports club representative selected devolving services as their first priority.
106. Two of the businesses (unnamed) selected supporting the local economy and one selected supporting services to vulnerable people as their first priority.
107. **Battle Town Council** selected delivering a carbon neutral organisation as the first priority and supporting services to vulnerable people as the second priority.
108. **Rye Town Council** selected supporting services to vulnerable people as the first priority and enabling the provision of leisure facilities as the second priority.
109. **Crowhurst Parish Council** – selected delivering a carbon neutral organisation as the first priority and supporting services to vulnerable people as the second priority.

#### **Other Issues to Consider**

110. Finally, we asked respondents if they had anything else that the Councillors should take into account before finalising the budget. This is a summary of the key points. Anything already covered in previous questions is not included. Any matter already addressed in our covering information for this consultation and any references to services and functions that are not in the control of the district council are not included.
111. The public said to take into account:
  - a. The pressures on the poorest and lower paid, large elderly and vulnerable population. Needs of older people;

- b. Reducing outreach office hours impacts residents technologically excluded and financially excluded;
- c. As the de la Warr Pavilion has just received a very large grant it should not receive any other funding or grants from the district or town council. The shortfall of £500,000 could be addressed by cutting the annual grant to the DLWP;
- d. The council needs to address empty homes, purchase them, charge more council tax. Buy homes to house homelessness. More affordable housing. Go back to owning council houses;
- e. Bring grounds maintenance and other services in-house, employ directly, sell their services commercially, Ashford Borough Council and Aspire Landscaping, invest to save. More entrepreneurial, alternative solutions;
- f. Reduce staff absences, staff sickness, invest in Planning Team, reduce staffing, stop remote or home working, answer the phone;
- g. Remove, get rid of Bexhill Town Council – costing more Council Tax, their remit was to take responsibility for some services and have yet to see what they are doing;
- h. Fees and charges, proportionate increase is okay but then shouldn't need to go cashless to save money. Put prices up;
- i. Consider the increases in planning fees;
- j. More partnership working with charities, parish councils, share services and management with other local councils;
- k. Lobby the government to increase funding to local councils;
- l. Don't be too aware of cost of living. 10.1% increase in pensions for 2023/24. May be increase in pensions of 8.5% for 2024/25 unless there is a move to stop the triple lock;
- m. More enforcement on caravan sites;
- n. Consider the rural communities as they also have elderly, disabled, vulnerable people. Spread budget around Rother;
- o. Do more consultation with local people on their opinions, on what they want;
- p. Give more opportunities to local trades/traders;
- q. Bring in more investors to the area;
- r. Provide more information about funding and cuts to back office systems as has to have an effect;
- s. Public sector workers have had below inflationary wage increases. Raising charges is going to impact;
- t. Offering assistance doesn't help those just about managing when it is getting harder each year. Don't forget the middle people, keeping their heads above water but not enough for treats and luxuries;
- u. Review contracts, re-tender contracts, make sure most cost effective, inspect contracts up to standard;
- v. Make more use of volunteers, recruit volunteers;
- w. Have more beach huts. Even on the promenade for seasonal renting.

112. A full list of comments will be made available to Council Members.

113. **Rother Voluntary Actions** added that 'where possible all effort should be taken to reduce the impacts of cuts on Rother's 3rd sector and VCE organisations and the infrastructure that supports them. Many are seeing increasing demand for their services due the Cost-of-Living Crisis (COL) as this is impacting heavily on VCSE organisations and they are supporting high numbers of vulnerable residents by delivering basic need services such as support for food poverty, mental health, families in crisis, debt advice, domestic violence, addiction, and dependency.'

114. **Rye Town Council** added ensuring that applications for external funding will, if successful, result in benefits spread across the whole of the Rother District (and not predominantly Bexhill).
115. **Salehurst and Robertsbridge Parish Council** were not specifically replying to this question. However, they had additional comments in their written response about what they would like the Council to take into account that would fit here. 'We acknowledge the considerable financial pressures being felt by RDC and note the proposals being put forward to ensure its continued solvency. We believe that if drastic measures are not taken immediately, RDC is likely to be effectively insolvent during calendar year 2024. We feel strongly that rural villages and communities should not bear the brunt of cuts being made to services. There is a widespread perception that RDC is very focused on Bexhill, as the largest populated area in the region and the one with the most electoral seats.' 'We deplore any attempts to bring party politics into the argument and District and Local Council levels. This is unhelpful and we call upon all our representatives to work together in a spirit of harmony to resolve these difficulties. Any decisions taken should be with a finite timescale for detailed review after a specific period has passed. Any alterations to services (including closures) should be regarded as temporary rather than permanent, with a view to reinstating them in less straitened times. Rightly or wrongly, people judge the performance of their local councils by what they see and not what may happen behind the scenes. Salehurst and Robertsbridge parish lies within a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which is a major tourist attraction in its own right. We want visitors, as well as residents, to enjoy their time here and to have the facilities which they require. It is incumbent on all levels of local government to work together constructively to ensure these are maintained in rural as well as urban areas.'

## **Conclusion**

116. We would like to thank all respondents who took the trouble to take part in this consultation. The subjects were complex and contentious, and many people had to take quite a lot of time to consider all the material and their own responses.
117. We note that although we have overall support for many measures that the Council wishes to take there are many respondents concerned about the cumulative longer-term impacts on the district.

**The following is an extract from our website used to support the budget consultation process:**

# 2024/25 Budget Consultation – Financial Challenges Ahead

**The ongoing difficult financial climate continues to put council budgets under severe pressure.**

**Inflation, increases in the cost of providing local services such as waste and**

housing, coupled with over a decade of reductions in central Government funding means that we now face a £3.8 million budget shortfall for 2024/25.

Councils in England face a funding gap of over £4 billion over the next two years and you can read more about the [Local Government Associations 'Save local services' campaign](#).

Our Lead Cllr for Housing, Ruairi McCourt, explains the budget situation in the following video.

[NOTE: We also had a video from the Leader of the Council, Cllr Doug Oliver during the first weeks of the consultation.]

### **What services do we provide?**

The chart below shows how the Council spends its money on the services we provide, with the gross expenditure budget for 2023/24 being £44.1m.

A large chunk of our £44 million budget is spent on our waste and recycling contract, but we also provide other local services such as support for the homeless, environmental health, leisure facilities, public toilets, street cleaning, dealing with littering, car parks and open spaces, council tax and housing benefit, and local planning applications.

These are all vital services that help support people and our economy across the district, but they all cost money to run, and we will have less money to run them.

### **Proposed savings and efficiencies**

We need to address our £3.8m budget gap. We are aiming to make savings over the coming years from our new Fit for the Future programme, which we should generate savings of £3.3m next year. This still however leaves us having to use £0.5m from reserves to balance the budget.

If we are not able to identify efficiency savings, extra income, or budget reductions, we will have no choice but to use more of the Council's reserves, which are rapidly reducing.

Service reductions will be a last resort, and we'll protect our resident's priorities by making efficiency savings and increasing our income wherever we can.

The survey contains questions regarding proposals for the closure of certain toilets across the district; a list of those facilities which will be impacted can be found on our [Public toilets to close on a trial basis over the winter months](#) webpage.

Similarly, there are proposals around changes to the grounds maintenance contract; however, it should be noted that many open spaces, especially those outside Bexhill, fall under the remit of the town and parish council's and will not be affected by these proposals. You can view the [list of potentially affected sites \(pdf\)](#).



## **Income Increases**

The current draft budget proposes increases in fees and charges where these are under the Council's control.

Our proposals help us stick to the priorities that residents, businesses, and our partners have helped us set, while helping to address the budget gap we are facing.

## **Capital programme**

The Council's capital programme shows what we intend to spend on purchasing new assets and improving existing ones over the next five years. Over the period of our Medium-Term Financial Strategy we plan to invest more than £150m, funded by a mix of grants, capital receipts, reserves and borrowing.

## **How you can help – give your views**

How do you think the Council should manage this budget challenge? You can give your views during our budget consultation from Tuesday 7 November until Sunday 17 December. You can do that online or by post (just email or phone for a paper questionnaire to be posted to your address).

We'll collate all the views we receive and report them to our main council meetings early next year. All views given will help us to decide on the best way forward – so your help will be greatly appreciated.

## **Complete Survey**

A print-ready copy of the Budget Consultation survey is available to download using the button below. When complete, you should post this to *Budget Consultation, Rother District Council, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN39 3JX*.

## **Print-ready Survey (docx)**

Large print and other versions of the printed questionnaire are available on request by emailing [consultations@rother.gov.uk](mailto:consultations@rother.gov.uk). Please indicate the version you require, the consultation you are enquiring about, and your postal address.

## **Next steps**

Over the coming months, the Council will be working on its budget for the forthcoming financial year (2024/25). We will be holding key council meetings and consulting residents, businesses, and stakeholders. At each major step in the process, we'll update you with the current news on our website and across our social media channels to keep you informed of the latest developments.

## **Any further questions?**

Our Budget FAQ's webpage may answer any questions you have. For more information, please see the FAQ's at the bottom of this webpage.

## **Want to delve deeper into the details?**

Read the full report – [Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28 \(pages 3 to 46\)](#)

- Appendix 1: Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) – General Fund Summary Forecasts (page 47)
- Appendix 2: Savings Summary (page 48)
- Appendix 3: Capital Programme (page 49)
- Appendix 4: Fees and Charges (pages 50 to 74)
- Appendix 5: Risk Assessment (pages 75 to 77)
- Appendix 6: Sensitivity and Scenario Planning (pages 78 to 80)
- Appendix 7: Extract from the Overview and Scrutiny meeting of 16 October 2023 (pages 81 to 84)

## Contact Us

Email submissions and responses should be sent to [consultations@rother.gov.uk](mailto:consultations@rother.gov.uk).

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## Frequently Asked Questions from Those Answering the Consultations

### Q1: Why is the council in such a poor financial position?

**A1:** The local government sector has seen funding increases of around 33% over the last 8 years. However, central government has focussed a significant proportion of this increase on areas such as adult and children’s social care, which are not areas that the Council has responsibility for. Our funding increase has only been based on a 2.5% increase over the same period and represents a real term cut which, when coupled with high inflation, and increasing costs of providing services, means we face one of the most challenging financial situations for many years.

### Q2: Why don't you just use reserves to plug the gap?

**A2:** In the past, we have used our reserves to help fill gaps in our budget. However, whilst this does help in the short term, the strategy is not sustainable – once reserves are spent, they are gone. If savings are not delivered and reserves continue to be used, they will fall below our recommended minimum level of £5m.

### Q2: Are you going to cut services?

**A2:** The reality of the situation we face means that we will have to change the way we deliver some services, and we may have to reduce the level of others. Budget pressures including rising costs, inflation, and years of reductions in central government funding means that we face a scenario of trying to provide the same level of service with far less money.

### Q3: What services are going to be affected by cuts?

**A3:** The Council has a legal duty to provide certain services, such as waste collection and the payment of benefits, which are often described as statutory services. There are then also a range of services which the Council can choose to deliver or not, these are called non-statutory or discretionary services, and include things such as the provision of public conveniences, cultural activities and sport and leisure facilities. Unfortunately,

when reductions have to be made it is often the discretionary service areas which have to be reduced first as the statutory services are protected.

No decisions have been made, and any proposals will be worked up and subject to public scrutiny over the coming weeks and months before we finally set our budget for 2024/25 at our budget meeting in February next year.

**Q4: Does this mean you're going to increase council tax and charges?**

**A4:** We recognise that residents and businesses are struggling with the current cost-of-living crisis, so any future council tax increases, or raises in charging for services like garden waste for instance, will have to be very carefully considered before any decision is made.

**Q5: How is Council Tax divided up?**

**A5:** Although we collect your council tax, it is split between us, East Sussex County Council, the Sussex Police Crime Commissioner, the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and the town and parish councils. Less than nine pence in every £1 pound you pay in council tax goes towards Rother District Council services. An average household pays just 54 pence per day for all the services that Rother District Council provides.

**Q6: How much is Rother District Council's part of the Council Tax?**

**A6:** Currently, our element of the Council Tax is £198.60 which equates to £3.82 a week or £16.55 a month for Rother District Council services. A 2.99 per cent increase would add just over 11 pence per week to a Band D property, meaning that homes in Band D would pay less than 55 pence per day for over 60 services which the Council provides.

**Q7: Why can't you use the different government grants such as Levelling Up money, or Capital Programme funding to fill the void?**

**A7:** We've been extremely successful in gaining government grants for several exciting local projects, including the Levelling Up fund for the De La Warr Pavilion and Heart of Sidley initiatives, and Shared Prosperity Funding for various projects across the district. But these are ring-fenced grants that can only be used for these projects – we are not allowed to take any of the funding to use to offset budget shortfalls. We also have an ambitious Capital Programme designed to improve facilities and boost communities, but we are not allowed to use capital resources to help plug budget gaps.

**Q8: Why don't you just cut back-office management and staff costs?**

**A8:** To provide the services that the district needs, we need the right level of staff to help us. We are constantly looking to see if we can save money, reduce central costs and at the same time protect front line services. We'll continue with this strategy as we work to balance the books.

**Q9: Why don't you save money by sharing services with other councils?**

**A9:** Sharing services is already being used by the Council – for example we already share some services with Wealden District Council, and we’ve also proposed that some of our services are taken over by local town and parish councils. If we believe we can provide a high-quality level of service for local people at reduced costs by sharing that service, then of course we will look at that very seriously.

**Q10: Why does RDC insist on Bexhill Town Council being subject to the terms of a lease if taking over the running and maintenance of public toilets in Bexhill?**

**A10:** Assets owned by Rother District Council are generally subject to legal requirements when being operated to deliver a public service to residents.

When another body or a third party takes over the responsibility for the asset and for the delivery of the service, these legal obligations must be passed over to the third party to ensure they are upheld.

It is standard practise to agree a legal document called a licence or lease. This document makes sure that both parties are clear on their responsibilities and what is required from the service, both legally and in the running of the facility. Whether a licence or a lease is more appropriate will depend on each individual situation.

Both parties to the licence or lease agree the terms and length of period. The licence or lease will include names of the parties, obligations to hold insurance, pay utilities, health and safety aspects, start date and end date of responsibilities, details of the nature of the service, to name but a few.

The purpose is to protect all parties, especially the users of the asset or service, in the long term.

You might be interested in the minutes of the Bexhill Town Council meeting on 6 December when it discussed the recommendations of their Asset Transfer Committee. You can view the [Asset Transfer Committee minutes](#) on the Bexhill Town Council website.

**Further information on petitions received by the Council**

118. The Council received a printed document in the same bundle of papers for the manually signed petition sheets. That print out included a list of names. The printout was not labelled. We have assumed that this document was part of the petition for Devonshire Square public toilets.
119. We are aware there was an online petition on public toilets generated through the change.org website. We have not received any electronic petition material from this petition or anything identified as ‘signatures’ from this site unless that was the print-out referred to above.
120. Change.org provides a free petition generating and recording tool to help the public easily create and share an online petition.

121. However, the online petition has completely different wording and does not use the sentences at the head of the printed petition. What it has in common is referring to Rother, public toilets and human rights.
122. The covering or heading text (below) does not refer to any specific public toilet site.
123. It does have a photograph of a sign or notice. A member of the public familiar with Bexhill might be able to identify it as a notice, with map, placed on the Devonshire Square public toilets.
124. The online petition had the following text:

‘Reopen Rother District Council Public Toilets for Human Rights’

[Photograph of sign with text: ‘We apologize for any inconvenience. Rother District Council’s closest alternative public toilets can be found at Channel View East, Egerton Park and West Parade, shown on the map below.’ Map shows ‘You are here’ label on the location of Devonshire Square toilets (unnamed).]

‘Why this petition matters  
Started by [name available]

As a local resident of East Sussex, I am deeply concerned about the closure of public toilets by the Rother District Council. This decision has had a significant impact on our community, particularly affecting the elderly, families and people with a wide range of disabilities who rely on these facilities. It is not just an issue of convenience but one that touches upon basic human rights and dignity.

Public toilets are more than just amenities; they are essential for maintaining public health and hygiene. According to Age UK, over 50% of older people have underlying health conditions that necessitate frequent use of toilet facilities when out in public (source: Age UK). Furthermore, around 13.9 million people in the UK have a disability (source: Family Resources Survey), many of whom may require accessible toilet facilities when away from home.

The closure has put undue stress on these vulnerable groups in our society and infringes upon their right to participate fully in community life. We believe this action by the council is short-sighted and fails to take into account the needs and rights of all residents.

We call upon Rother District Council to reconsider its decision and reopen public toilets across East Sussex immediately. Your signature can help restore this essential service for those who need it most - sign today!

**Council Tax premium proposals**

125. As outlined within the main report above, following recent changes to government legislation the opportunity has arisen for the Council to consider changes to two areas which fall under the council tax legislation as follows:

- (a) To bring forward the period from two years to one year when an unoccupied and substantially unfurnished dwelling (empty dwelling) can be charged a premium of 100%. All other empty dwelling premiums remains unchanged and;
- (b) To enable the charging of a 100% premium for any dwellings which are:
  - no one’s sole or main residence; and
  - substantially furnished.

**Outcomes**

126. The expected outcomes of the recommendations are as follows:

- a) taxpayers will be encouraged, through the changes in discounts and the implementation of the premiums, to bring empty properties into use and to revert the use of second homes to primary residences;
- b) the reduction of empty homes and second homes within the district in line with the Council's Empty Homes Action Plan; and
- c) potential increased Council Tax income from empty homes and second homes.

**The current situation**

1. Currently, the Council has adopted the following level of discounts and premiums:

	Current policy
Second Homes No one’s sole or main residence and which is substantially furnished 28-day planning restriction <sup>1</sup> (Class A)	0% discount
Second Homes No one’s sole or main residence and which is substantially furnished No planning restriction <sup>2</sup> (Class B)	0% discount

<sup>1</sup> **restricted** by a planning condition preventing occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days

<sup>2</sup> the occupation of which is **not restricted** by a planning condition preventing occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in the relevant year

	Current policy
Class C (Unoccupied dwelling with is substantially unfurnished)	0% discount
Class D structural repairs (Unoccupied and substantially unfurnished) (Maximum 12 months)	0% discount
Premium - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty dwellings premium) After 2 years up to 5 years of becoming empty	100% premium
Premium - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty dwellings Premium) Dwellings empty between 5 years and up to 10 years	200% premium
Premium - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty dwellings Premium) Dwellings empty for 10 years or more	300% premium

2. Until the legislation changed in 2013, mandatory exemptions would have been granted in place of Class C and Class D discounts giving a period of no charge for six months and twelve months respectively. Since that time, the Council, along with most other billing authorities, has removed the 'discount' available.
3. The Council charges a 100% Council Tax on empty dwellings as well as second homes.
4. Premiums were also introduced by the Government in 2013 with a view to encouraging homeowners to occupy homes and not leave them vacant in the long term. Initially premiums could only be charged at 50% but legislation was subsequently changed to allow a progressive charge to be made as follows:
  - dwellings left unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for 2 years or more, up to 100%;
  - dwellings left unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for 5 years or more, up to 200%; and
  - dwellings left unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for 10 years or more, up to 300%.
5. The Council has adopted the maximum level of premium and it should be noted that premiums are charged in addition to the 100% Council Tax payable on empty premises.
6. Unfortunately, Government, together with local authorities, have still seen a rise in the number empty dwellings together with a growth in second homes. Inconsistencies in the legislation have also been identified, whereby a premium can be avoided by the taxpayer merely furnishing an empty premises, when it would become a 'second home' which currently has a maximum charge of 100%.

7. Sections within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 have been introduced to try to address the inconsistencies and to bring more dwellings into use.

### **Changes to empty dwelling premiums (From 1 April 2024)**

8. Section 79 of the Act permits billing authorities in England to impose an empty dwellings premium after one year instead of two.
9. Section 79 (1) (a) provides that billing authorities must have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State when deciding whether to implement an empty dwelling premium and it is expected that the current guidance drafted by Government in 2013 will be updated. Government is also expected to introduce regulations that will allow for some exemptions. This change will come into effect from the 2024/25 financial year.
10. In addition, Section 79 (2) of the Act provides that from 1 April 2024, a property can be charged an empty dwellings premium at 100% after one year, even if it became empty before 1 April 2024.

### **Introduction of premiums for second homes (From 1 April 2025)**

11. At present, English billing authorities may only impose an empty dwellings premium on properties that are 'unoccupied and substantially unfurnished'. This term is defined via case law, not in legislation. However, it does not cover dwellings that are no one's sole or main residence but are furnished. An empty dwellings premium could therefore not be imposed on properties that are maintained as second homes for regular use by their owners.
12. Section 80 Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 inserts a new section 11C into the Local Government Finance Act 1992. This will permit billing authorities to apply a premium to properties that have no resident and are "substantially furnished". The maximum Council Tax charge in these cases would be a standard 100% charge plus, if the recommendations are accepted by Council, a premium of 100% making a total Council Tax charge of 200%.
13. There would be no requirement for a property to have been used as a second home for a fixed period before the premium can apply.
14. Section 11C (3) of the act requires that the first decision to impose this class of premium must be taken at least 12 months before the financial year to which it would apply. In effect this means that premiums of this kind will not take effect until the 2025/26 financial year at the earliest. However, it is essential that a decision is made by Council before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 to give the required one-year notice.
15. The Act provides that a dwelling cannot be subject to both a second homes premium and an empty dwellings premium imposed under section 11B of the 1992 Act, and that an existing empty dwellings premium would cease to apply to a property which became subject to a second homes premium.



## Exceptions from the premiums (empty homes premiums and second homes premium)

16. For information, Government issued a consultation paper entitled; Consultation on proposals to exempt categories of dwellings from the council tax premiums in England. The consultation (which has now ended), sought views on possible categories of dwellings which should be dealt with as exceptions to the Council Tax premiums.
17. The consultation proposes that there will be circumstances where premiums will either not apply or be deferred for a defined period. These are as follows:
  - **Properties undergoing probate** - the Government proposes that these properties should be exceptions to both the second homes and empty homes premiums for twelve months. The exception would start once probate or letters of administration is granted. This does not affect the Class F exemption (**unoccupied property where the person who would normally pay the Council Tax has died**) or the ability for billing authorities to charge the normal rate of Council Tax following the expiry of the Class F exemption.
  - **Properties that are being actively marketed for sale or rent** - the Government proposes that this exception would apply for up to a maximum of six months from the date that active marketing commenced, or until the property has been sold or rented, whichever is the sooner. It will be essential that the Council will need to determine in its policy, what evidence will be required to support any exception.
  - **Empty properties undergoing major repairs** - time limited to six months - the Government proposes that empty properties undergoing major repair works or structural alternations should be an exception to the premium for up to six months once the exception has been applied or when the work has been completed, whichever is sooner. The exception could be applied at any time after the property has been empty for at least twelve months, so long as the Council is satisfied that the necessary repair work is being undertaken.
  - **Annexes forming part of, or being treated as, part of the main dwelling** - the Government proposes that such annexes should be an exception to the Council Tax premium on second homes.
  - **Job related dwellings** - currently, there is a Council Tax discount of up to 50% for properties which are unoccupied because the owner is required to live elsewhere for employment purposes. The discount applies where the dwelling is provided for the better performance of the duties of the employment, and it is the kind of employment where it is customary for employers to provide dwellings for employees. The Government proposes that the dwelling should also be an exception to the second homes premium. The exception will not apply to cases where someone chooses to have an additional property to be closer to work while having a family home elsewhere or where an individual is posted to a new location but maintain their previous address.

- **Occupied caravan pitches and houseboat moorings** - the Government proposes that these caravans and boats should be an exception to the Council Tax premium on second homes.
- **Seasonal homes where year-round or permanent occupation is prohibited or has been specified for use as holiday accommodation or prevents occupancy as a person's sole or main residence** - the Government proposes that properties that have restrictions or conditions preventing occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in any 12-month period, or specifies its use as a holiday let, or prevents occupancy as a person's sole or main residence, should be an exception to the second homes premium.

18. It is understood that regulations or guidance (which must be followed in accordance with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act) will be in line with the Government's proposals. In view of this, a draft Empty Homes and Second Homes Premium Policy has been produced and is detailed within Appendix f(b).

### **Safety net**

19. There may be circumstances, where the implementation of the proposed changes may cause exceptional hardship to a taxpayer. In such cases, the Council will consider applications for a reduction in liability under its Section 13A (1)(C) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 - Reduction in Council Tax liability policy.
20. Where such an application is received, it will be considered on an individual case basis taking into account the circumstances of the taxpayer and the situation regarding the level of Council Tax charged. Should the taxpayer be aggrieved by any decision of the Council, a further right of appeal will be with the independent Valuation Tribunal.
21. The award of any S13A(1)(C) (reduction in liability) is a general fund expense and would normally be met in full by the Council. However, since the additional funds from the changes in discounts and premiums proposed in this report are shared with major preceptors, it is proposed that the cost of any award is met from the Collection Fund.
22. It is recommended therefore that the Deputy Chief Executive is authorised to agree with the major preceptors the funding of any award under S13A(1)(C) (reduction in liability) from the Collection Fund.

### **Consultation**

23. There is no statutory requirement to consult on any matters contained within this report. However, the expected outcomes of the recommendations are in line with the Councils Empty Homes Action Plan that was consulted upon in 2020.

### **Financial Implications**

24. Based on the Council Tax Base (October 2023 CTB1) the authority has the following number of dwellings subject to an empty dwelling premium bringing in additional Council Tax income in the region of £360k.

The premium authority charges for dwellings that have been empty for between two and five years as of 2 October 2023.

Percentage Premium	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H	Total
100	17	7	28	4	6	2	4	0	68

The premium authority charges for dwellings that have been empty for between five and ten years as of 2 October 2023.

Percentage Premium	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H	Total
200	9	3	6	0	1	1	1	0	21

The premium authority charges for dwellings that have been empty for over ten years as of 2 October 2023.

Percentage Premium	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H	Total
300	9	4	1	3	0	0	0	0	17

25. Based on current data the estimate of the number of dwellings that could become subject to an empty dwelling premium after being unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for one year is as follows.

Percentage Premium	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H	Total
100	65	45	52	41	21	8	7	1	240

26. The proposed changes to the long-term empty premium are anticipated to initially generate approximately £0.53m in additional Council Tax income. However, this is expected to reduce as more properties are brought back into use.

- East Sussex County Council (75.5%) £0.40m
- Rother District Council (8.9%) £0.05m
- Police (10.7%) £0.06m
- Fire (4.6%) £0.02m

**Total £0.53m**

27. Based on the Council Tax Base (October 2023 CTB1) the authority has the following second homes which could be subject to a second homes premium, subject to any exemption.

Percentage Discount	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H	Total
0	170	188	213	257	151	83	80	12	1,154

28. We do not currently know how any exceptions will impact these figures or indeed the impact that any changes made by property owners will have (disposal of second homes etc) but assuming 500 properties were covered by the proposed premium this would generate approximately £1.1m per annum based on current values, split as follows.

• East Sussex County Council (75.5%)	£0.83m
• Rother District Council (8.9%)	£0.10m
• Police (10.7%)	£0.12m
• Fire (4.6%)	£0.05m
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1.10m</b>

### **Legal Implications**

29. The legislation that covers this report and the recommendations made is as follows:

- S11A & S11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;
- S11C of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as introduced by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023); and
- Sections 80 & 81 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

30. A resolution must be passed by full Council on or before the 31 March 2024 in order for the changes to be implemented with effect from 1 April 2024. In the case of second homes premium, a resolution made on or before 31 March 2024 will allow the premium to come into force from 1 April 2025 (its earliest commencement date).

31. Where the recommendations are accepted, and a resolution made by Full Council, the decision needs to be published in at least one local newspaper.

32. Due to the changes in the legislation, the Council will be required by statute to be mindful of any guidance issued by the Secretary of State or regulations laid.

### **Equalities Implications**

33. There are no anticipated impacts on protected groups with this report. The proposals do, however, include the potential generating of positive outcomes for local people who are struggling to secure sustainable accommodation in the district, as more accommodation should become available. An equality impact assessment (EqIA) has been completed and can be found within Appendix F(c).

**ATTACHED AT END OF DOCUMENT.**

**ATTACHED AT END OF DOCUMENT.**

127. As outlined within the main report above, the proposal for the 2024/25 financial year is to change the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) scheme from an 80% to a 100% funded scheme from April 2024.
128. The proposed changes will improve the overall maximum level of support to 100% for the lowest income and most vulnerable working age applicants and remove the £5 per week minimum payment.

## **Background**

129. Each year, the Council is required to review its CTRS in accordance with the requirements of the schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to either maintain the scheme or replace it.
130. As with many authorities within England, the Council needs to consider making changes to the CTRS for working age applicants to improve the overall level of support to low income and vulnerable working age applicants.
131. The changes proposed from April 2024 affect only applicants who are of working age and the scheme for pension age applicants is not affected in any way. The rules for all pension age applicants are prescribed by Central Government.
132. CTR was introduced by Central Government in April 2013 as a replacement for the Council Tax Benefit scheme administered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of the introduction, the Government:
- Placed the duty to create a local scheme for **Working Age** applicants with billing authorities.
  - Reduced initial funding by the equivalent of ten per cent from the levels paid through benefit subsidy to authorities under the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme; and
  - Prescribed that persons of **Pension age** would be dealt with under regulations set by Central Government and not the authorities' local scheme.
133. Since that time, funding for the CTRS has been amalgamated into other Central Government grants paid to Local Authorities and within the Business Rates Retention regime. It is now generally accepted that it is not possible to identify the amount of funding provided from Central Government sources.
134. The current CTRS administered by the Council is divided into two schemes, with pension age applicants receiving support under the rules prescribed by Central Government, and the scheme for working age applicants being determined solely by the local authority.
135. Pensioners, subject to their income, can receive up to 100 per cent support towards their council tax. The Council has no power to change the level of support provided to pensioners and therefore any changes to the level of CTRS can only be made to the working age scheme.

136. When CTR was introduced in 2013, for working age applicants, the Council broadly adopted the previous means tested Council Tax Benefit scheme as the basis of awarding support. Due to the reduction in funding from Central Government, the Council has, since that time, also required working age applicants, even those on the lowest income, to pay a minimum payment of 20%.
137. Significant improvements have also been made to the working age scheme with the introduction of an income banded approach which has both simplified the scheme for applicants and reduced the administration burden caused by the introduction of Universal Credit.
138. Consideration is now required to improve the scheme further given the financial pressures being experienced by low-income households. The proposed change from April 2025 will be to increase the potential level of support to working age applicants to 100% and remove the minimum payment requirement (currently £5 per week).
139. This would bring the Council's scheme in line with most other CTRS in East Sussex (Hastings, Wealden and Lewes currently apply a 100% working age scheme).
140. The following sections provide both the financial and administrative justification for increasing the support to low income working age households with effect from 1st April 2025.

#### **The issues with the current scheme.**

141. The key concern is the requirement for low-income households to pay a minimum of 20%, significantly increasing the financial pressure on low-income households, particularly given all the wider economic pressures around the cost-of-living crisis.
142. Since the introduction of Council Tax Reduction, most authorities have required all working age applicants to pay a minimum payment. Under the previous scheme (Council Tax Benefit) almost 75% of working age applicants would not have been required to pay any Council Tax and would have received full (100%) support.
143. At present, Rother and Eastbourne are the only Councils across East Sussex which have not reverted to a 100% scheme, so it is important that Members revisit the level of support provided, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis which have had a major effect on household incomes generally.
144. Whilst the principle of all working age households paying 'something' was initially thought to be an approach that would be central to the design of Council Tax Reduction, the reality is that, since its introduction, low-income taxpayers, the poorest households, have been unable to pay the balance leading to additional costs, court, and enforcement action.
145. Whilst the overall level of Council Tax collection has remained relatively stable at around 98%, the collection levels for working age Council Tax Reduction applicants is significantly lower at only 82.5%



**Table 1 – Collection Rates Working Age CTRS applicants.**

Financial Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021*	2022 *
Collection Rate	84.1%	85.9%	83.9%	84.5%	79.3%	81%	82.5%

146. The collection rate over the last three years has also only been maintained primarily due to central Government initiatives such as the Council Tax Hardship Fund and the Council Tax Support Scheme. (\* Indicates each of the years where government assistance has been given to taxpayers receiving Council Tax Reduction).
147. Without this additional support for those on low income, the collection rate for this cohort, is expected to reduce further. This is significant and increases the cost to the collection fund by the need to increase the Council's bad debt provision.

**Table 2 – Outstanding Arrears**

Arrears for all accounts		Working age CTR Recipients arrears		CTR recipients arrears as a % of total arrears	Arrears for accounts in receipt of 80% CTR as a % of all Working age CTR recipients arrears
2016/2017	137,988.92	2016/2017	14,985.02	10.86%	52%
2017/2018	197,058.62	2017/2018	27,080.27	13.74%	60%
2018/2019	281,837.59	2018/2019	44,582.72	15.82%	67%
2019/2020	466,365.99	2019/2020	83,347.64	17.87%	65%
2020/2021	740,379.15	2020/2021	122,516.04	16.55%	68%
2021/2022	832,846.26	2021/2022	173,942.61	20.89%	64%
2022/2023	1,401,800.31	2022/2023	272,105.25	19.41%	60%
Grand Total	4,058,276.84	Grand Total	738,559.55	18.20%	63%

148. The above shows 18.20% of all outstanding arrears since 2016 are for residents in receipt of working age CTRS, with 63% of these arrears for residents receiving the maximum 80% support.
149. Therefore, with the difficulties in collection experienced, the relatively high level of arrears and the administration costs, it may no longer make the amounts economically viable to collect, notwithstanding the negative effects to those poorest households.

### **The financial effect of Council Tax reduction on the taxbase**

150. Since its inception, the number of Council Taxpayers receiving Council Tax Reduction has reduced by approximately 27%. This is mainly due to the continued decrease in pensioner cases which has been reflected nationally.
151. In the case of the working age cases, the numbers did increase temporarily due to the COVID-19 crisis but they are also now also reducing year on year.

152. The costs of the CTRS have reduced as a percentage of the Council Tax Base since its inception in 2013 due to both the changes in caseload and the change in the Tax Base itself. Table 3 shows how the level of Council Tax Reduction, as a proportion of the Council Tax Base, has reduced most years whilst at the same time the actual base has increased:

**Table 3 – CTRS as a percentage of Council Tax Base**

	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Gross Tax Base	37,692	39,602	39,797	40,082	40,324	40,534	40,759	40,856	41,068	41,298
CTR	5,765	5,512	5,242	4,377	4,142	4,011	3,998	4,262	4,228	4,163
%age	15.3%	13.9%	13.2%	10.9%	10.27	9.9%	9.8%	10.4%	10.3%	10.1%

### The proposed scheme

153. The proposed changes to the scheme for 2024/25 are to increase the working age maximum to 100% and to remove the £5 per week minimum payment. Table 4 shows the proposed discount available with effect from 1 April 2024.

**Table 4 – Proposed Council Tax Reduction Income Bands**

Current Discount %	Proposed Discount %	Single	Couple	Family with One Dependant	Family with Two (or more) Dependents
80%	100%	£0 to £112.39	£0.00 to £159.72	£0 to £218.89	£0 to £278.05
60%	60%	£112.40 to £171.55	£159.73 to £218.89	£218.90 to £278.05	£278.06 to £337.21
40%	40%	£171.56 to £230.72	£218.90 to £278.05	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39
20%	20%	£230.73 to £289.90	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39	£396.40 to £455.55

154. These changes will allow low-income applicants to benefit from the increased support in accordance with their income level.
155. The current scheme costs the collection fund around £7.87m. The proposed changes, taking into account an estimated 5% overall increase in the Council Tax charge for 2024/25, will increase costs to around £9.29m.
156. For information, the cost of the scheme itself is borne directly in accordance with the percentage received from the collection fund. A comparison is shown below (Table 5) as to the relative costs for both the current scheme and the proposed new scheme.

**Table 5 - Increase in costs for proposed scheme (2023/24 & 2024/25 comparison)**

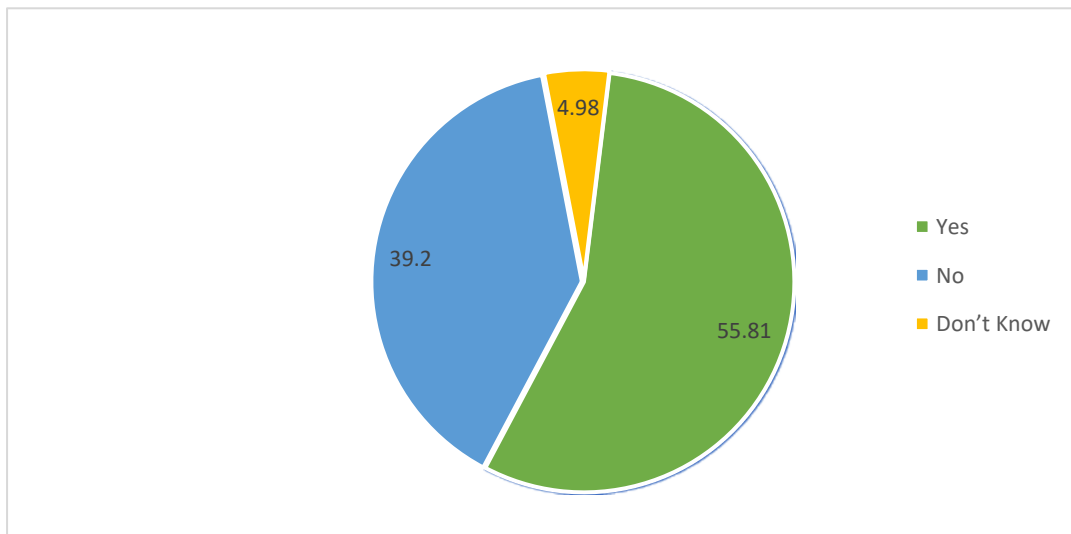
	Percentage from collection fund	Cost of CTR scheme 2024	*Cost of proposed CTR scheme 2025	Difference (increase)
	%	£m	£m	£m
<b>East Sussex County Council</b>	74.45	5.86	6.92	1.06
<b>Sussex Police</b>	10.55	0.83	0.98	0.15
<b>East Sussex Fire</b>	4.59	0.36	0.43	0.07
<b>Rother District Council</b>	8.73	0.69	0.81	0.12
<b>Parishes / Town (Example)</b>	1.68	0.13	0.15	0.02
<b>Total</b>	100	7.87	<b>9.29</b>	1.42

157. The proposal will increase the cost of the CTR scheme for 2024/25 however the general increase in the taxbase plus the potential additional income detailed below and improvements in collection due to the CTRS changes will help offset a significant proportion of the additional costs. The introduction of the proposed premiums on second homes from 2025/26 will also significantly offset the financial impact of this change across all preceptors.
158. With the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act gaining Royal Assent on 26 October 2023 the Council could now benefit from additional income being generated by:
- (a) reducing the minimum period for the implementation of a premium for empty premises from two years to one year; and
  - (b) Introducing a premium in respect of second homes (dwellings that are unoccupied but furnished), of up to 100%.
159. Full details of the changes to the Council Tax premiums including an estimate of the additional income that could be generated is included within Appendix F.

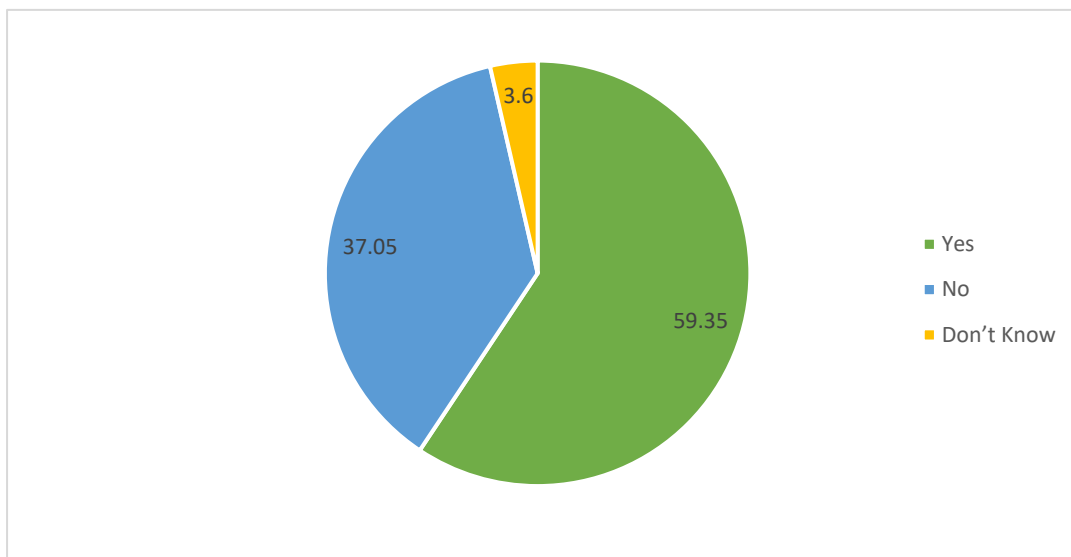
## **Consultation**

160. A consultation was undertaken between 11 November 2023 and 22 December 2023 in line with the statutory requirements. Each of the major preceptors were asked for their input and their responses are included within Appendix G (b).
161. The consultation asking several questions on the proposed changes was also open to members of the public. In total some 301 responses were received with the results of the two main questions shown below.

**Do you agree with revising the income-based banded discount scheme?**



**Do you agree with removing the minimum Council Tax Reduction of £5 per week?**



162. Out of the consultees that did not support a change in the scheme most felt that all residents should pay something towards local services and therefore the scheme should not be changed.
163. A full breakdown of the public consultation results can see seen at **Appendix G (c)**. The results including details of specific comments made on the proposals will also be made available to Members.

**Summary**

164. In summary, the move to a 100% working age Council Tax Reduction scheme from April 2025 and the removal of the £5 per week minimum level, will inevitably lead to an increase in the cost to the Collection Fund and the major preceptors. However the increase in the tax base generally, the change to the empty property premiums and the new second homes premium will help to offset the majority of the additional costs.

165. The cumulative effect of the changes to premiums should more than compensate for the increase in costs to the taxbase through the alteration to the Council Tax Reduction scheme.

### **Legal Implications**

166. Schedule 1A(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, states before making a scheme, the authority must:

- consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it,
- publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
- consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

### **Equalities Implications**

167. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed on the proposed scheme changes and can be seen at [Appendix G \(d\)](#).

### **Human Resources Implications**

168. None.

### **Other Implications**

169. None.

**Katy Bourne** OBE  
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner

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**Sussex  
Police & Crime  
Commissioner**

Duncan Ellis  
Chief Finance Officer  
Rother District Council

VIA Email

19 December 2023

Dear Duncan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposed changes to the Rother District Council Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) which are as follows:

- Increasing the maximum award from 80% to 100% of a claimants Council Tax Liability, and
- To remove the £5 per week minimum payment

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex (PCC) has reviewed the proposed changes to your LCTRS. The PCC recognises that the requirement for low-income households to pay a minimum of 20%, increases the financial pressure on low-income households, particularly given all the wider economic pressures. The PCC also noted the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had on local communities, and that the emergency government funding that was provided in both financial years did cushion some of the financial impacts on individuals and the billing authority council tax collection fund.

No local authority including policing is now immune to the growing risk to their financial sustainability. As you will be aware, in common with other local authorities, the Sussex Police Fund already faces significant financial challenges due both to limits in Government funding, increases in precept and the impact of inflationary and other cost pressures. The PCC draft Medium Term Finance Plan identifies the potential need to make further savings of up to £30m to 2027/28 and this is in addition to the savings already delivered. Council Tax is an important funding stream for policing in Sussex (43% of the net budget is funded by council tax in 2023/24). The proposed change to LCTRS as described will lead to a permanent reduction in our council tax income from Rother District Council by an estimated further £140,000 which brings the total support to RDC LCTRS of £1 million. To put this into perspective £1 on the current tax base 2023/24 of Sussex creates receipts of £645,000 for the PCC.

The PCC and Sussex Police will need to take account of any further reduction in the council tax-base and the resulting income when considering options for achieving a balanced budget for 2022/23 and beyond. Given the scale of the financial challenge, which cannot be met by efficiencies alone, this would mean that the PCC will be unable to pass the resources to the Chief Constable for the policing of our local communities.

**Katy Bourne** OBE  
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner

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**Sussex  
Police & Crime  
Commissioner**

The PCC would also remind your members of the financial contributions that have been made in support of LCTRS which consisted of a one-off contribution of £14,637 to the Council Tax Hardship Fund in 2016/17 and an annual contribution towards staffing costs at the four East Sussex billing authorities, including RDC.


It is recognised that the changes proposed to empty home premiums and, if approved by RDC, the introduction of second home premium from 2025, could raise extra precept. However, the values are only estimates and likely will be subject to reduction if the policy aims of both which are to release housing supply to make up for stock shortfalls are met.

On this basis the PCC does not support Rother District Council proposals to change its LCTRS as described which will lead to a permanent reduction in the income for Sussex Police.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iain McCulloch'.

**Iain McCulloch**  
**Chief Finance Officer**

<b>Business Services Department</b>	County Hall St. Anne's Crescent Lewes East Sussex BN7 1UE  Telephone: 0345 6080 190 Website: <a href="http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk">www.eastsussex.gov.uk</a>	
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Mr D Ellis,  
 Deputy Chief Executive (Interim)  
 Rother District Council  
 Town Hall  
 London Road  
 Bexhill-on-Sea  
 TN39 3JX

when responding please contact

our ref

your ref

date

Ian Gutsell

13 December 2023

direct line

01273 481399

Dear Duncan,

The Leader Member for Resources and Climate Change, at his meeting on 12 December 2023, has approved the response below to Rother District Council's consultation on proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme:

"East Sussex County Council recognises the impact the ongoing cost of living crisis is having on local communities, particularly, those who are vulnerable, both financially and for other reasons.

As you will be aware, in common with all local authorities, the County Council continues to face significant financial challenges, with county council service departments projected to overspend by £24.8m in 2023/24. In the recent Autumn Statement, no additional funding was announced for local authorities beyond the increases that were already expected and included within our planning assumptions. Furthermore, the planned increase in the National Living Wage to £11.44 for workers 21 years and over will add significant financial costs to the wider social care provider market, increasing the financial pressure on Children's Services and Adult Social Care in the coming years.

As we wait for the government to provide further details of funding through the local government finance settlement for 2024/25, the authority's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) presents a deficit position by 2026/27 of £64.7m. Any loss of income from Council Tax arising from these proposed changes would only serve to increase the deficit and consequently adversely impact the level of services provided to residents.

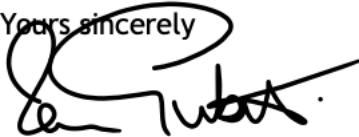
Council Tax is the County Council's most important funding stream (70% of net budget in 2023/24) and we rely on certainty of this income to enable us to effectively plan services for the future. The Council will need to take account of any further



reduction in the tax base on its income when considering options for achieving a balanced budget for 2025/26 and beyond. Any reductions in income from Rother District residents will be felt across the whole of East Sussex and potentially impact on the services on which the most vulnerable in the whole rely.

Thereby, East Sussex County Council can only support Rother District Council's proposals to change its LCTRS if every effort is made to implement and maximise income from the Council Tax flexibilities arising from the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act. It is also requested that Rother District Council provide East Sussex County Council, as the major precepting authority, with regular monitoring data that provides evidence of the actual impact of such changes."

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Gutsell', written over the words 'Yours sincerely'.

**Ian Gutsell**  
Chief Finance Officer

## *East Sussex Fire Authority response*

*East Sussex Fire Authority recognises the impact the ongoing cost of living crisis is having on local communities, particularly, those who are vulnerable, both financially and for other reasons.*

*As you will be aware, in common with all local authorities, the Fire Authority continues to face significant financial challenges, with a budget gap for 2024/25 of £3.4m and a further savings requirement forecast to be up to £2.9m by 2028/29. Any loss of income from Council Tax arising from these proposed changes would only serve to increase the financial challenge and consequently adversely impact the level of services provided to the community.*

*Council Tax is the Authority's most important funding stream (69% of net budget in 2023/24) and we rely on certainty of this income to enable us to effectively plan services for the future.*

*The Authority will need to take into account any further reduction in the tax base on its income when considering options for achieving a balanced budget for 2024/25 and beyond. Given this position, the Authority's view is that if Rother DC decides to approve the proposed changes to its LCTRS then it must make every effort to implement and maximise income from the Council Tax flexibilities arising from the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.*

*It is also requested that Rother District Council provides the Authority, with regular monitoring data that provides evidence of the actual impact of such changes.*

**1. I have read the background information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme: This question must be answered before you can continue.**

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	98.59%	350
2	No	1.41%	5
		answered	355
		skipped	51

**Part 1 – Increasing the level of support within the Income Grid scheme for all applicants of working age**

**2. Do you agree with revising the income-based banded discount scheme?**

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	55.81%	168
2	No	39.20%	118
3	Don't Know	4.98%	15
		answered	301
		skipped	105

**3. If you disagree with revising the income-banded scheme please explain why and what alternative would you propose?**

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	101
		answered	101
		skipped	305

**Part 2 - Removing the minimum Council Tax Reduction level of £5 per week**

**4. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?**

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	59.35%	165
2	No	37.05%	103
3	Don't Know	3.60%	10
		answered	278
		skipped	128

### 5. If you disagree please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	99
		answered	99
		skipped	307

### Alternatives to changing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

### 6. Please use this space to make any other comments on the proposed scheme.

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	98
		answered	98
		skipped	308

### 7. Please use the space below if you would like the Council to consider any other options (please state).

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	51
		answered	51
		skipped	355

### 8. If you have any further comments or questions to make regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme that you haven't had opportunity to raise elsewhere, please use the space below.

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	34
		answered	34
		skipped	372

### About You

### 9. Are you completing this form on behalf of an organisation or group?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	3.10%	8
2	No	96.90%	250
		answered	258
		skipped	148

### Questions for Individuals

### 10. Do you live in the Rother District Council area?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	97.62%	246
2	No	2.38%	6
		answered	252
		skipped	154

### 11. Are you currently receiving Council Tax Reduction?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	25.40%	63
2	No	65.73%	163
3	Prefer not to say	6.85%	17
4	Don't know	2.02%	5
		answered	248
		skipped	158

### 12. What is your current employment status? Please tick all that apply

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
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## 12. What is your current employment status? Please tick all that apply

1	Apprenticeship scheme/ training		0.00%	0
2	Employed / self-employed		33.20%	83
3	Employed fixed term		4.00%	10
4	Not employed and looking for work		2.00%	5
5	Not employed and not looking for work		2.80%	7
6	Retired		36.80%	92
7	Student		0.80%	2
8	Unable to work		12.40%	31
9	Prefer not to say		8.00%	20
10	Other (please specify):		4.00%	10
			answered	250
			skipped	156

## 13. Are you liable to pay Council Tax?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Yes	94.38%	235	
2	No	2.01%	5	
3	Don't know	0.00%	0	
4	Prefer not to say	3.61%	9	
			answered	249
			skipped	157

## 14. What is your sex?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Female	54.66%	135	
2	Male	31.98%	79	
3	Prefer not to say	12.15%	30	
4	Other (please specify):	1.21%	3	
			answered	247
			skipped	159

### 15. What is your age?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Under 18	0.00%	0
2	18-24	0.40%	1
3	25-34	1.20%	3
4	35-44	9.24%	23
5	45-54	24.10%	60
6	55-64	20.08%	50
7	65-74	21.29%	53
8	75-84	12.45%	31
9	85+	1.61%	4
10	Prefer not to say	9.64%	24
		answered	249
		skipped	157

### 16. Do you have an impairment, health condition or learning difference that has a substantial or long-term impact on your ability to carry out day-to-day activities? (tick all that apply)

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	31.73%	79
2	No	60.24%	150
3	Prefer not to say	8.03%	20
		answered	249
		skipped	157

### 17. If you have answered 'yes', please tick the box (s) that best describe your impairment(s). (This information helps us improve access and remove barriers to our services).

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Blind or visual impairment uncorrected by glasses	1.08%	1
2	Deaf or have a hearing impairment	13.98%	13
3	A long-standing illness or health condition e.g. cancer, HIV, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic asthma, epilepsy, cardiovascular conditions, sickle cell anaemia, motor neurone disease, some forms of dementia	52.69%	49
4	A mental health difficulty, e.g. schizophrenia, depression, anxiety disorder, some forms of dementia	32.26%	30

**17. If you have answered 'yes', please tick the box (s) that best describe your impairment(s). (This information helps us improve access and remove barriers to our services).**

5	A physical impairment or mobility issues, e.g. walking, dexterity, difficulty using your arms or using a wheelchair or crutches		45.16%	42
6	A social/ communication impairment, e.g. speech and language impairment or Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder		6.45%	6
7	A specific learning difficulty e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D		8.60%	8
8	An impairment, health condition or learning difference that is not listed above		9.68%	9
9	Prefer not to say		23.66%	22
			answered	93
			skipped	313

**To which of these ethnic groups do you feel you belong?**

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Asian or Asian British	0.00%	0	
2	Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	0.00%	0	
3	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	0.81%	2	
4	White	86.29%	214	
5	Other Ethnic Group	0.81%	2	
6	Prefer not to say	12.10%	30	
			answered	248
			skipped	158

**18. Asian or Asian British**

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Indian	0.00%	0



### 18. Asian or Asian British

2	Pakistani		0.00%	0
3	Bangladeshi		0.00%	0
4	Chinese		0.00%	0
5	Any other Asian background		0.00%	0
			answered	0
			skipped	406

### 19. Black, Black British, Caribbean or African

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Caribbean		0.00%	0
2	African		0.00%	0
3	Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background		0.00%	0
			answered	0
			skipped	406

### 20. Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	White and Black Caribbean		0.00%	0
2	White and Black African		0.00%	0
3	White and Asian		0.00%	0
4	Any other Mixed or multiple background		100.00%	2
			answered	2
			skipped	404

### 21. White

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
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## 21. White

1	English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British		95.26%	201
2	Irish		1.42%	3
3	Gypsy or Irish Traveller		0.00%	0
4	Roma		0.00%	0
5	Any other White background		3.32%	7
			answered	211
			skipped	195

## 22. Other ethnic group?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Arab	0.00%	0	
2	Any other ethnic group	100.00%	2	
			answered	2
			skipped	404



# EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Including Socio-Economic duty

## Title of EqIA: Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024

The purpose of an assessment is to understand the impact of the Council’s activities\* on people from protected and socio-economic disadvantaged groups and to assess whether unlawful discrimination may occur. It also helps identify key equality issues and highlight opportunities to promote equality across the Council and the community. The assessment should be carried out at the initial stages of the planning process so that findings can be incorporated into the final proposals, and where appropriate have a bearing on the outcome.

(\*Activity can mean strategy, practice, function, policy, procedure, decision, project, or service)

<b>Team</b>	Revenues and Benefits	<b>Assessment carried out by (name)</b>	<b>Chris Watchman</b>	<b>Is this a new or existing activity?</b>
Activity being assessed	Draft Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Date of Assessment	03 January 2024	<b>Existing</b>

### A. Initial assessment

<p>1) What is the aim/ objective of the activity being assessed? How do they link to wider council or strategic objectives?</p>	<p>Since 1st April 2013, the Council has maintained a local Council Tax Reduction scheme. This replaced the national Council Tax Benefit scheme, which ended on 31st March 2013. Council Tax Reduction helps provide support to Council Taxpayers who have a low income. It supports the taxpayers by providing a reduction in the actual amount in Council Tax payable.</p> <p>The Council has the ability to determine the level of support given to working age applicants only. The scheme for pension age applicants is determined by Central Government and therefore the</p>
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ability of the Council to vary that part of the scheme is limited and can only enhance the national scheme in any event.

#### The Current Scheme (2023/24)

The current income banded scheme was introduced in 2019 and has been successful in that it is easy to understand and administer.

All working age applicants are now required to pay a minimum of 20% towards their Council Tax and a minimum level has been set that prevents the granting of any reduction where the entitlement was less than £5 per week.

Where applicants suffer exceptional hardship, they may apply for additional support under the Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund which can grant additional Council Tax Reduction.

The current income banded scheme is shown below:

Band	Discount	Passported	Single (weekly net income )	Couple (weekly net income)	Family with 1 child (weekly net income)	Family with more than 1 child (weekly net income)
1*	80%	Relevant Benefit	£0 to £112.39	£0.00 to £159.72	£0 to £218.89	£0 to £278.05
2	60%	N/A	£112.40 to £171.55	£159.73 to £218.89	£218.90 to £278.05	£278.06 to £337.21
3	40%	N/A	£171.56 to £230.72	£186.78 to £239.23	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39

4	20%	N/A	£230.73 to £289.90	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39	£396.40 to £455.55
5	0%	N/A	Over £289.90	Over £337.21	Over £396.39	Over £455.55

### The Proposed Scheme (2024/25)

The proposed scheme basically introduces two changes only:

- a. To increase the overall level of support to working age applicants (up to 100%); and
- b. To remove the minimum reduction level so that **any** amount of reduction is will payable.

The proposed scheme grid is shown below;

Band	Discount	Passported	Single (weekly net income )	Couple (weekly net income)	Family with 1 child (weekly net income)	Family with more than 1 child (weekly net income)
1*	100%	Relevant Benefit	£0 to £112.39	£0.00 to £159.72	£0 to £218.89	£0 to £278.05
2	60%	N/A	£112.40 to £171.55	£159.73 to £218.89	£218.90 to £278.05	£278.06 to £337.21
3	40%	N/A	£171.56 to £230.72	£186.78 to £239.23	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39

<b>4</b>	20%	N/A	£230.73 to £289.90	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39	£396.40 to £455.55
<b>5</b>	0%	N/A	Over £289.90	Over £337.21	Over £396.39	Over £455.55

**2) Who is intended to benefit from it and how?**

Both working age and pension age applicants, who have a low level of income will benefit from the scheme.

The scheme for pension age applicants is determined by Central Government however the new scheme for working age applicants provides a higher level of support to those who have a low-level income or are on a legacy benefit such as Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) or Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based).

The maximum will increase to 100% of the person's Council Tax liability for working age applicants. Pension age applicants will continue to receive up to 100% discount under the prescribed scheme set by Central Government.

All working age applicants will have a greater certainty of entitlement with the removal of the minimum reduction level.

The scheme will still have, as an essential part, the provision to award additional support, where required, where exceptional hardship is proven.

**3) If your activity uses contractors, do you ensure that they comply with the Council's Equalities and Fairness policy and relevant legislation?**

N/A

<b>B. Engagement and Involvement</b>	
<p>4) What data do you have on how people (from different equality groups) would be affected by the activity?</p>	<p>Information held on the database is limited to that needed to process a claim for either housing benefit, CTR or both. The age of claimants and their gender can be obtained but not their race or details of their disability as this is not relevant to entitlement.</p> <p>There are 46,639 banded dwellings in the Rother District (as of January 2024). The total number of CTR claimants as of January 2024 is 6318 of whom 3584 are of working age and 2734 are pensioners. In percentage terms, 13.55% of households in Rother are claiming council tax reduction and of these claimants, 56.73% are of working age.</p>
<p>5) What information do you have from any previous consultations and/or local/national consultations, research, or practical guidance?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>6) Please list any current and planned engagement, methods used and groups you plan to engage with.</p>	<p>The legislation relating to Council Tax Reduction requires the authority to consult with major precepting authorities and the public.</p> <p>A consultation was undertaken between 11 November 2023 and 22 December 2023 in line with the statutory requirements. In total some 301 responses were received from members of the public and local support groups. Support organisations that responded included Citizens Advice 1066. HARC and the Local food banks.</p>

**C. Who will be affected? Review of equality analysis and potential actions**

<p>7) Will the impact on people due to their <b>racial group</b> be: a) <b>Positive</b> b) <b>Negative</b> c) <b>Neutral</b></p>	<p><b>Neutral</b> - The Council Tax Reduction scheme does not preclude people from receiving support based on their race. Under the current and proposed new scheme, entitlement is solely based on the applicant's income, household composition and liability to pay Council Tax.</p> <p>The new proposed scheme will provide more support to low income households and to those who receive only a small amount of reduction.</p> <p>.</p>
<p>8) Will the impact on people due to their <b>gender</b> be: a) <b>Positive</b> b) <b>Negative</b> c) <b>Neutral</b></p>	<p><b>Neutral</b> - The gender of the claimant is irrelevant when deciding a claim for and making an award of Council Tax Reduction.</p>
<p>9) Will the impact on people due to their <b>disability</b> be: a) <b>Positive</b> b) <b>Negative</b> c) <b>Neutral</b></p>	<p><b>Neutral</b> - The revised Council Tax Reduction scheme applies the basic principles as the previous scheme in that it disregards any disability related income</p>



<p>10) Will the impact on people due to their <b>sexual orientation</b> be:</p> <p>a) <b>Positive</b>  b) <b>Negative</b>  c) <b>Neutral</b></p>	<p><b>Neutral</b> - The Council Tax Reduction scheme does not exclude claimants on the basis of their sexual orientation</p>
<p>11) Will the impact on people due to their <b>age</b> be:</p> <p>a) <b>Positive</b>  b) <b>Negative</b>  c) <b>Neutral</b></p>	<p><b>Positive</b> - The Council Tax Reduction scheme is essentially made up of two parts. The scheme for working age is determined by the Council and the scheme for Pension Age applicants is determined by Central Government.</p> <p>By design the Council Tax Reduction scheme for pension age applicants is based largely on the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme. As such pension age applicants are protected from any changes or reductions in entitlement. The proposed changes increase potential entitlement for working age recipients.</p>
<p>12) Will the impact on people due to their <b>religious or other belief</b> be:</p> <p>a) <b>Positive</b>  b) <b>Negative</b>  c) <b>Neutral</b></p>	<p><b>Neutral</b> - The Council's Council Tax Reduction scheme does not preclude people from receiving support based on their religious belief. Under the scheme, entitlement is solely based on the claimant's income, household composition and liability to pay Council Tax.</p>
<p>13) Will the impact on people due to their due to them having <b>dependants/ caring responsibilities</b> be:</p> <p>a) <b>Positive</b>  b) <b>Negative</b>  c) <b>Neutral</b></p>	<p><b>Neutral</b> - The proposed changes maintain the level of support to both households with dependants and to carers. In reality it may increase support levels by removing the minimum levels and increasing the maximum support levels.</p>

<p><b>14)</b> Will the impact on people due to them being <b>transgendered or transsexual</b> be:</p> <p>a) <b>Positive</b>  b) <b>Negative</b>  c) <b>Neutral</b></p>	<p><b>Neutral</b> - The Council's Council Tax Reduction scheme does not preclude transgendered or transsexual claimants from receiving help towards paying their council tax.</p>
<p><b>15)</b> Will the impact on people due to them <b>being socio-economically disadvantaged</b> be:</p> <p>a) <b>Positive</b>  b) <b>Negative</b>  c) <b>Neutral</b></p>	<p><b>Positive</b> – The proposed scheme introduces two changes to the current CTR scheme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase the overall level of support to working age applicants (up to 100%); and</li> <li>• To remove the minimum reduction level so that <b>any</b> amount of reduction is will payable.</li> </ul> <p>The proposals are designed to increase CTR entitlement for working age residents on the lowest incomes therefore having a positive impact on those that are socio-economically disadvantaged.</p>
<p><b>D. Summary of findings</b></p>	
<p><b>1)</b> Is there any evidence that people from different groups may have different expectations of the activity being assessed?</p> <p>a) <b>Yes</b>  b) <b>No</b></p>	<p><b>No</b> The Council's Council Tax Reduction scheme applies to two distinct groups: pension age applicants and those of working age. The scheme for pension age applicant is determined by Central Government. The Council determines the level of income for working age applicants.</p> <p>With the proposed changes It is possible that working age applicants may receive the same level of support as pensioner applicants.</p>
<p><b>2)</b> Could the activity have an adverse impact on relations between different groups?</p> <p>a) <b>Yes</b>  b) <b>No</b></p>	<p><b>No</b> - The proposed changes align the potential (total) level of support for both working age and pension age.</p>

<p><b>3)</b> How can the negative impacts identified in <b>7-15</b> be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for another legitimate reason?</p>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p>
<p><b>4)</b> As a result of this assessment and available evidence collected, including consultation, do you need to make any changes to the activity?</p>	<p>No impacts identified to make changes.</p>
<p><b>5)</b> Assessment of overall impacts and any further recommendations</p>	<p>The impact of the proposed scheme changes will be the reduction in financial pressure on low income working age households by increasing CTR entitlement to those on the lowest income.</p>

**E. Action Plan of proposed changes**

Recommendation	Key Activity	Timeframe	Officer Responsible	Date Completed
1.	N/A			

**EqIA Sign off:**

Signed (Activity Lead Officer): Chris Watchman                      Date: 03 January 2023.  
 Position: Revenues and Benefits Manager

**EqIA review date: 01.01.2025**

Extract from the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting 22 January 2024

**OSC23/43 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2024/25**

(5)

Members considered the report of the Interim Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer on the draft Revenue Budget, which outlined the predicted financial position and key issues that Members needed to consider as part of the budget setting process. The Committee had been requested to consider the draft budget and make recommendations to Cabinet, to be considered at its meeting on 5 February 2024.

The following assumptions had been made in calculating the draft Revenue Budget:

- non-pay budgets had been set on a cash limited basis, with a 0% inflation increase applied, except for contracts where specific indices were relevant;
- with effect from September 2024, an increase of 2% had been applied to salaries and an allowance of 4.5% assumed for staff turnover;
- the use of transfers between existing budgets had been applied enabling funding to be re-directed into priority areas;
- where applicable, income budgets had been increased in line with the fees and charges proposed by Cabinet on 6 November 2023;
- where relevant, the prevailing Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) interest rates would be used for capital appraisals (currently c5%);
- returns on investment had been calculated using the following rates: Bank current and deposit accounts up to 5.35%; Investments with other institutions/local authorities – up to 4.50%; and Property Fund investments – 4.00%; and
- an assumed Council Tax collection rate of 98.3% (unchanged from last year).

The following key issues were highlighted:

- the draft Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) announced by Government on 18 December 2023 applied to 2024/25, did not guarantee any future funding streams beyond the following year and was again a further single year settlement. The Government had reaffirmed its commitment to undertake a Fair Funding review and a reset of the business rates system in the next Parliament;
- the Council's Core Spending Power (CSP) had been set at £12.9m, an increase of £0.6m from 2023/24, equating to 5.1%;
- the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) consisted of the Council's share of business rates income and Revenue Support Grant (RSG). The baseline funding figure had increased from the 2023/24 figure by £0.1m and there was also an increase of £0.1m due to the freezing of the business rates multiplier, taking this support to £0.5m. However, because the expected share of business rates income comfortably exceeded £3.0m, the Council yet again would not receive an RSG. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) had confirmed, in common

- with previous years, that councils would not be required to pay over negative RSG;
- the small Business Rates Multiplier for 2024/25 would remain frozen again at 49.9p, but councils would be compensated for any reduction in income because of this decision. The Government had committed to reimburse councils for any negative impact on its business rates income arising from the implementation of the 2023 revaluations;
  - the East Sussex Business Rates Pool for 2024/25 would be retained;
  - the Council Tax referendum principle for Rother would allow an increase in Council Tax by the higher of 3% or £5. Members could decide to set a higher increase but would need consent via a local referendum. A 3% increase would yield approximately £38k more than an increase of £5. It was assumed that the Council would increase Council Tax by the maximum allowed, which was 3% in this case;
  - for 2024/25, to ensure the Council remained within the referendum limit, an estimated increase to about £204.56 for an average Band D property was anticipated and this would be confirmed in phase three of the budgeting process. Including growth, this would generate c£0.368m extra income;
  - Members noted that the LGFS also included council tax setting flexibilities for precepting authorities, as outlined in the report;
  - the 2024/25 Council Tax base had been calculated at 39,197.50 and showed an increase of 676.70 Band D equivalents since December 2022, due to an increase in chargeable dwellings and eligible discounts, a continued post-COVID reduction in Council Tax Reduction Scheme claimants and estimated growth and associated discounts;
  - new Government funding streams in relation to 'Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging' Schemes had been rescheduled to October 2025. With the details of the new scheme being unknown at the time, no additional income had been factored into the estimates for 2025/26 and future periods;
  - a further round of New Homes Bonus (NHB) grants had been announced as part of the 2024/25 LGFS; the Council's allocation for the next financial year was £136k;
  - in response to inflationary pressures, the DLUHC would combine the NHB legacy payments with the Lower Tier Service Grant; the Council's allocation would be £778k;
  - service grants had been reduced to £15k for 2024/25;
  - to implement the requirements of the Elections Act 2022, the Council would receive £32k, as well as an unspecified amount to administer the impact of business rate revaluations (£20k had been included within the budget); and
  - the draft Revenue Budget for 2024/25 proposed the use of just over £0.6m (£2.2m originally budgeted for 2023/24) from Usable Revenue Reserves, which would reduce Reserves to £4.5m by 31 March 2025. There was a further reserve requirement of £30.1m in 2025/26 before contributions of (£1.0m) in 2026/27 and a further (£1.3m) in 2027/28, which would take reserve levels back up to around £6.7m.

The cost pressures that might affect the Council's finances were highlighted within the report and these included contractual inflation, homelessness demands, increased external audit fees, net financing costs, increased staffing costs and non-pay inflation.

As part of the production of the Medium Term Financial Strategy forecasts in November 2023, a detailed budget review took place to identify efficiencies, savings, and additional income to help support frontline services, to balance the budget, and make the Council's future financial position as resilient as possible. The draft proposals totalled £3.3m, with the efficiencies, income and savings identified coming from several areas, were detailed in the report, the Council's new 'Fit for the Future' financial resilience programme. Following more detailed work on the proposals, total savings of £3.1m had been included within the provisional budget figures.

The Council's auditors, Grant Thornton (GT), recommended that reserves needed to be at least 5% of net General Fund expenditure. However, it was the view of the Interim Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer that the GT recommended levels were not sufficient and that reserves in the region of £4m were more reasonable. Based on the Council's current budget forecasts, reserves were currently forecast to be about 31% of the Council's Net Revenue Expenditure by the end of 2024/25 and this was forecast to increase to 47% by the end of 2027/8.

There was currently a fundamental review of the capital programme being undertaken to ensure that capital schemes remained affordable and continued to deliver the outcomes originally anticipated. There were no new proposals or capital growth items included within the updated programme, found at Appendix D to the report, except for any recent Committee decisions regarding capital investment and budget levels.

The gross capital budget was £202m, with £33m having been spent in prior years, leaving a balance of £169m to be spent in the current and future financial years, with a forecast of £20m for 2023/24. The remaining £149m scheduled between 2024/25 and 2028/29 was subject to the ongoing capital programme review and business case re-appraisal.

The budget consultation closed on 17 December 2023, details of which could be found within Appendix E to the report. In general terms, respondents were supportive of the proposals.

Following the introduction of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, there were opportunities for the Council to consider changes to its approach relating to certain discretionary areas of the Council Tax to improve outcomes for residents, full details of which were contained within Appendix F to the report. The changes provided by the Act concerned empty properties and second homes; the former could be introduced by April 2024, the latter required the decision to be taken at least 12 months before the financial year to which it would apply, so would therefore not take effect until the 2025/26 financial year.

During the debate the following points were made:

- the leases on the public conveniences in Devonshire Square, Bexhill and Channel View East, Bexhill had been taken over by Bexhill Town Council (BTC);
- discussions were taking place with Pett Parish Council to share the cost of opening Pett Level public conveniences during the summer season;
- discussions were also taking place with the Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society, Sedlescombe Parish Council and various sports clubs concerning public convenience leases, and with Rye and Battle Town Councils on the devolution of further services;
- the proposed changes to Council Tax Premiums on second homes could double the income received;
- the Council's early vision to invest in its own temporary accommodation (TA) had saved approximately £8m. Homelessness equated to approximately 18% of the budget, which was less than many other local authorities;
- Members congratulated the Chief Executive and Interim Deputy Chief Executive on the savings plan that had been built into the budget;
- the Council continued to experience recruitment difficulties and Members felt uneasy about the pay award budget;
- the Council was undertaking a light touch capacity study to look at redeveloping the Town Hall site and developing a business plan proposal for the provision of residential accommodation, a recommendation that had originated from this Committee;
- DLUHC was exploring the possibility of additional capital flexibilities, one being the use of capital receipts to meet general budget pressures, of which Members raised concerns. A detailed plan to address budget challenges was required, as this was not sustainable;
- Members noted that the Council's CSP had only increased by £1m since 2015/16, representing an 8% increase over the entire nine-year period;
- the funding paid to the De La Warr Pavilion (DLWP), which was owned by the Council, brought in further funding which would be lost if the Council was to reduce its contribution;
- the current Service Level Agreement with the DLWP was due to expire in due course and discussions would be taking place concerning funding arrangements and the Council's requirements of the DLWP. Members agreed that the DLWP was an asset to the district; and
- a number of reports on the projects of the capital programme would be presented to Members over the coming year. The next Members' Briefing would include information on some of the schemes.

It was agreed that the above comments would be submitted to Cabinet.

## Executive Summary

### Why the Council Consults

170. All local authorities have a statutory duty to consult on its annual budget and to consult on any substantial change proposed for a service before it makes a decision. This proposal is to make a change in the service by moving cash payment from pay and display machines in the car parks to PayPoint payment machines in nearby shops.

### Who responded:

171. We had 582 individual responses from residents, visitors and local businesses. Our thanks go to all who participated.

### Main Response

172. Most of the respondents used cash payment as their prime and in many cases only method of payment. Most of these people did not wish to have that facility removed as it was more convenient to pay in the car park. Most of these respondents were referring to short-term parking from 1 to 2 hours in town centres and not long-term parking. People with other experience of using other payment methods (credit and debit cards, RingGo) were more prepared to use those methods.

173. Main concerns about using a PayPoint were difficulties walking to a PayPoint and concerns that the grace period would not be long enough to make a payment in time. Another concern was being required to go to a PayPoint in a different direction to their business in the area.

174. Main barriers were not having a smart phone to use the RingGo app, not wishing to add an app to their phone, not having a credit or debit card, concerns about the safety or security of card and phone payment methods, difficulty walking, RingGo additional charges, how easy it is to understand instructions to use other payment methods.



# Main Report

## Part One: Introduction and Background

### Why the Council Consults on its Budget

175. This council has a statutory duty to consult on its annual budget setting with local businesses and business groups. In addition, it is long established custom and practice to consult the residents, as payers of Council Tax, and a cross-section of community groups and organisations. The council has a statutory duty to consult on any substantial change proposed for a service. This is a proposal to cut or reduce the budget and, by doing so, to move a service from inside car parks to nearby shops.

### Scope of the Consultation

176. The Council was consulting on the proposal to save £30,000 a year as part of the overall savings of £3.8 million required to provide a balanced budget. Balancing the budget is a legal requirement for the council. This saving would be found by stopping the contract to collect cash from car park payment machines. As a consequence, the machines would not be able to accept cash payments, in this case coins, because the money would not be collected. Cash payments are possible at nearby PayPoints. Therefore, for those who could only pay by cash, the council would provide signs to find the nearest PayPoint.

177. The council already provides a 10-minute grace period to allow people to pay their car park charge. It had calculated that the nearest PayPoints are close enough for most people in most circumstances to pay at a PayPoint within the 10-minute grace period. The council already has an appeals mechanism if the customer has reasonable grounds for not being able to pay their parking in 10-minutes from leaving their vehicle.

### How We Consulted and Who was invited to Respond

178. We identified that the following groups would be impacted by the proposed budget.

- Car park users, especially those that preferred to pay by cash or had no option other than to pay by cash.
- Those with mobility difficulties as an identified barrier to leaving the car park to pay by cash.
- Nearby businesses and other organisations that might be impacted by changes in the

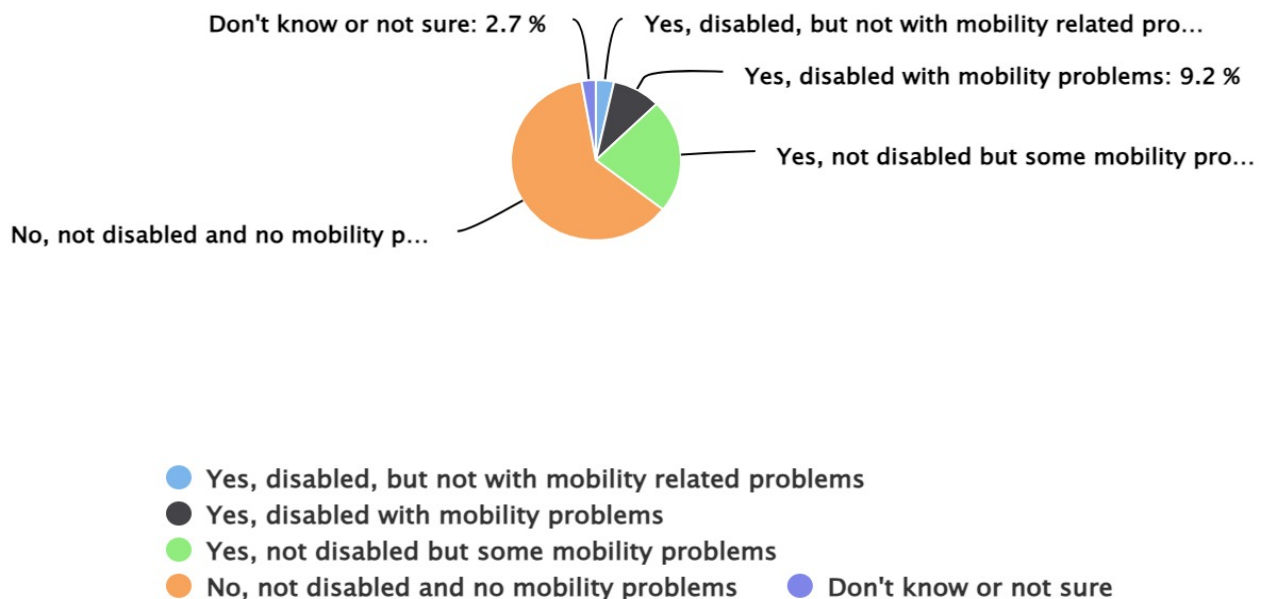
179. The opportunity to consult was communicated through social media (Facebook and X, formerly Twitter), through media releases and two articles in the My Alerts emails sent to over 37,800 residents' email addresses. We displayed a public notice about the consultation at all affected car parks, placed near to the payment machines.

### Respondents to the Consultation

180. We received a range of responses through a range of contact methods.
181. We received 566 completed online questionnaires, paper questionnaires and two letters from residents. This includes responses from 7 local businesses and one voluntary group or charity.
182. In addition, we received 16 emails. This includes an email from Camber Parish Council.
183. This gives us a total of 582 responses.

## Demographic Breakdown of Residents Who Responded

184. The following information was only asked of those using the online survey. We are satisfied that we have heard from a sufficient sample of car park users who have a disability or mobility problems. We have heard from 19 people who are disabled but don't have mobility problems. A further 51 people are disabled with mobility problems and then there were 127 people who do not consider themselves to be disabled but have some mobility problems. The remaining 342 had no mobility problems and 15 people didn't know or were not sure how to answer.



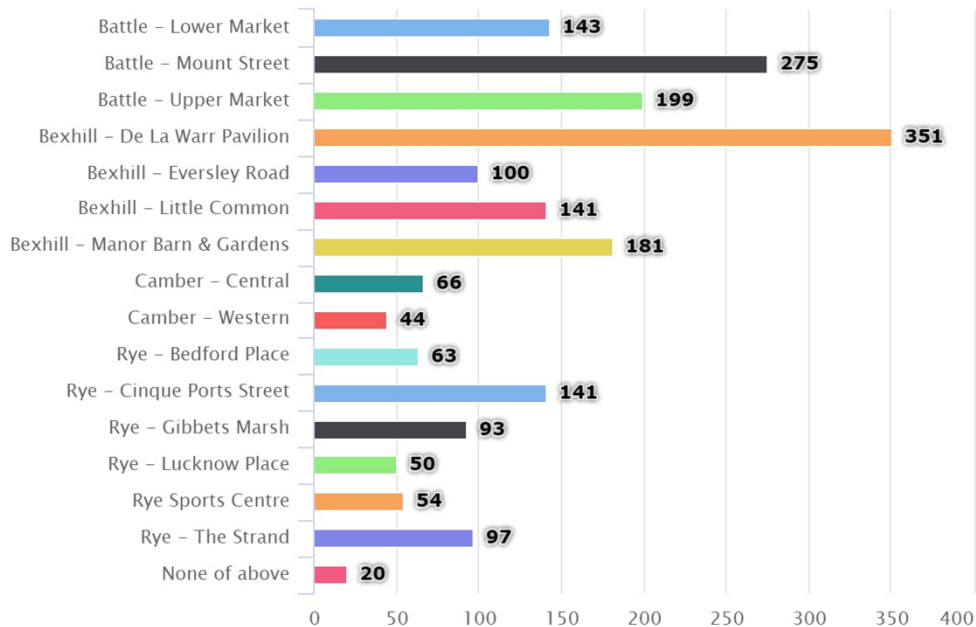
185. These are the listed reasons that residents have a problem with their mobility or would affect their ability to pay by cash at a PayPoint or another method:
- a. Breathing problems, lung condition, COPD, bronchitis, asthma, emphysema.
  - b. Back problems, bad back, herniated discs, nerve damage to spine.
  - c. Hip problems.
  - d. Old age reducing mobility, reducing ability to walk longer distances, makes walking slower.
  - e. Hearing loss resulting in not being able to use a mobile phone. Deaf: cannot hear recorded instructions from apps.
  - f. Chemotherapy – affecting joints. Cancer treatment leaving walking difficulties.

- g. Knee problems, needs, waiting for joint replacement, joint replacement still means walking problems.
- h. Wheelchair user, powerchair user.
- i. Rollator user, walking stick user, crutches user.
- j. Arthritis, osteo arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis.
- k. Blind or visually impaired, accommodation eyesight problems with optician advised not to use computers.
- l. Circulation issues, atrial fibrillation, heart problems, vascular degeneration, angina.
- m. Brain injury causing mobility problems
- n. Balance problems, dizziness, unsteadiness, prone to falls, Ménière's disease.
- o. Leg collapses, gives way, previous fracture lead to weakened knee joint that buckles without notice.
- p. Chronic severe cold urticaria leading to anaphylaxis is exposed to cold for a period of time.
- q. Multiple sclerosis.
- r. Chronic fatigue syndrome
- s. Polymyalgia
- t. Fibromyalgia
- u. Spinal stenosis, spinal curvature
- v. Dementia, memory loss, dyspraxia (involves remembering to go and pay)
- w. Not able to understand new technology options to pay.
- x. Parkinsons disease
- y. Ulcers on legs
- z. Ataxia affecting mobility and gait
- aa. Diabetes related neuropathy.

## **Part Two: Results to Key Questions**

### **Car Parks Used**

186. We wanted to be sure that we heard from people who had used the car parks. We asked which car parks respondents had used in the last two years. Nearly 63% of respondents used the de la Warr Pavilion car park in Bexhill and 50% used the Mount Street car park followed by 36% using the Upper Market car parks that are both in Battle. The Manor Barn car park in Bexhill had been used by 33% of respondents. Only Camber Western car park had a small sample of users at 40 people. We had 20 respondents who had not used any of the car parks affected by the proposed changes.



187. We asked respondents which car park was the one that they used the most frequently or most regularly in order to identify their main car park. Later in the questionnaire we asked questions about their main car park. One quarter of the respondents used the de la Warr Pavilion car park most frequently. This is followed by Battle Mount Street at 19% and no car park used frequently or regularly at 10%. Manor Barn Gardens car park was used as the main car park by 9% of respondents. No one selected Lucknow Place in Rye as their main car park.

188. We have a sufficient sample for analysis by the main car park for Mount Street, Upper Market, de la Warr Pavilion, Manor Barn and Cinque Ports Street.

189. We do not have a sufficient sample for analysis by the main car park for the following car parks –

- a. Lower Market (only 18 respondents)
- b. Eversley Road (23)
- c. Little Common (26)
- d. Camber Central and Camber Western (both 5)
- e. Bedford Place (8)
- f. Lucknow Place (0)
- g. Rye Sports Centre and The Strand (both 11)

### Main Method of Payment

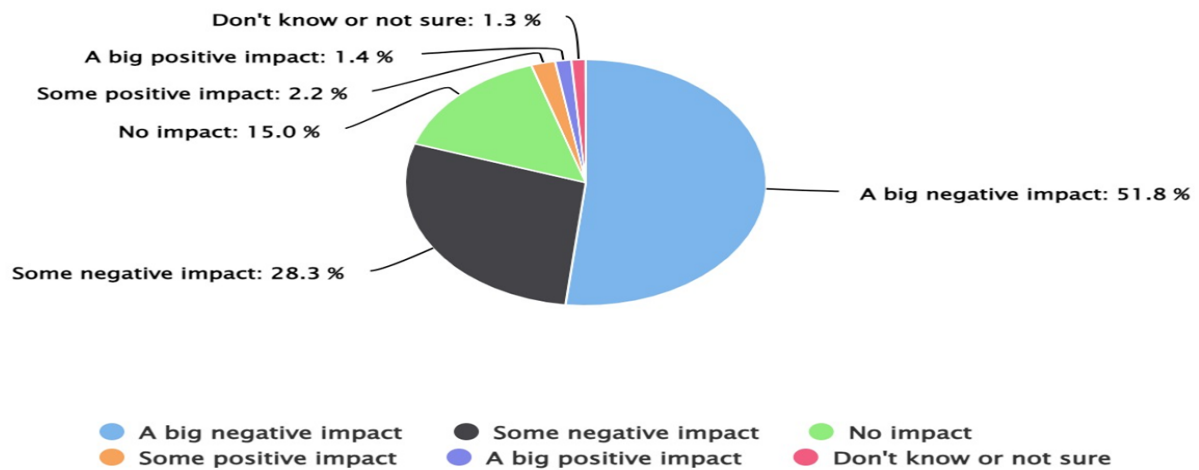
190. We asked respondents which is their main or most frequently used method of payment. We have a sufficient sample for cash users at 406 or 74% of respondents and for RingGo at 84 or 15% of respondents. We also have 53 or 10% who mainly used cards (credit or debit). Three people used the RingGo phonenumber and one person had a permit as their main payment methods. However, none of the respondents had used PayPoint as their main payment method.

191. It should be noted that this consultation was mainly marketed at those customers that used cash to pay for car parks. We expected and wanted a lot of participation from cash users.

192. We asked about other payment methods that respondents had used in the last 12 months. 268 or 51% said that they also used cash, and this is because some cash users said it was both their main method of payment and another method of payment. However, 136 or 26% had used a credit or debit card as a secondary method of payment and 90 or 17% of respondents had used the RingGo App as another payment method. A further 10 people had used the RingGo phonenumber as an alternative payment method and we had 8 further permit users. There was an option to select 'none of above' for those not using another payment method and that was selected by 112 respondents or 21%.
193. We asked businesses and local organisations which car parks were near to their premises. We had 5 businesses near to Upper Market and 4 near to Lower Market and Mount Street car parks in Battle. There were 2 businesses near to the de la Warr Pavilion and Eversley Road car parks. There was 1 business near to the Little Common car park. Three businesses were near to Manor Barn and Gardens car park in Bexhill. There was one business near to Gibbets Marsh car park in Rye.

### **Impact of Moving Cash Payments**

194. We asked whether participants would be impacted positively or negatively by moving cash payments from pay and display machines to PayPoints in local shops.
195. All residents and visitors who responded more than half, at 52% said there would be a big negative impact and 28% said there would be some negative impact for a total of 80% saying there would be a negative impact. There were 15% who said there would be no impact.
196. This is largely influenced by those that use cash as their main method of payment. For these people, 64% said a big negative impact and 29% some negative impact. Only 4% replied no impact at all.
197. We can compare this to those that use any other payment method as their main method of payment. For those people, 16% would find it a big negative impact, 28% some negative impact and 47% said it would have no impact at all.
198. Six of the businesses and local organisations that responded said that there would be a big negative impact. One said that there would be some negative impact. One business said that there would be no impact. None of them would have a positive impact.



199. Residents with mobility issues are more likely to find this to have a big impact at 65% and some negative impact at 25%, for a total of 90% saying it would have a negative impact.
200. Jempsons in Battle responded that the council 'will be aware that we operate a system where by the customer gets the first hour's parking free in the upper & lower market car parks in Battle. A huge amount of customers are telling us that the want to pay cash and do not like queuing at the kiosk for the use of the pay point machine. You must remember it is a considerable walk from the car parks to our Battle store entrance. The walk is not level and involves inclines, something the elderly and infirmed find difficult. In addition to this, if you actioned this proposal, this would have a negative effect on our store and threaten its already precarious profitability. The store suffers badly from a lack of free car parking, something all large stores take for granted. We would therefore favour a retention of the payment by cash system, but in a worst case scenario would accept your option 2 on your website where cash is retained in the car parks adjacent to our store.'

### Car Park Permits

201. We asked what impact it would have if customers could buy a permit to park at the car park, instead of paying at the car park.
202. The main themes of the comments about permits from residents were:
- Not relevant to the customer: don't use regularly enough/intermittent/infrequent use, no need for it, no impact at all, not suitable for single visits.
  - Paying for parking as a disabled customer: a permit would be beneficial, give free parking to all Blue Badge holders, disabled parking over the years has become a discrimination against able bodied drivers,
  - More permit holders might mean busier car parks and more difficult to park. Would use up all the spaces. Lack of spaces for paying customers. Car parks filled with more static parking. (See the council's responses below.)
  - Cost concerns: would buy/consider if it is cheaper or saves money, without giving the cost difficult to answer, too expensive, another bill, economic crisis. Too much to pay hundreds of pounds in one go, beyond means of most residents and workers. 4 years ago this was nearly £1000 for an annual pass and don't have this sort of money. Very cheap short term one for visitors and

- long term one for locals. Favours the better-off who can afford the fee. Looked into permit and despite using car park 6 days a week the permit is more expensive than paying per visit.
- e. Use lots of different car parks so wouldn't be relevant if only permit for one car park. If could use in several car parks this would encourage using more car parks. More than one car park would be more useful.
  - f. Good idea for frequent users
  - g. Purchase process: Too much trouble, a hassle to apply, complicated, more digital exclusion for buying one, requires planning, good idea as long as process is not too complicated, more frustration regarding having to use computers or mobile phones to pay. Time taken. More rules and regulations than just paying for ticket as usual. Get rid of paying for emptying machines to employ people dishing out permits and postage costs. Can't print own permit as no printer. Disc to display. Buy in more than one location. What about purchasing 50 hours of car parking and have a system to notify usage. Monthly direct debit to permit an agreed number of hours a month with facility to roll over unused hours but not allowed to be overdrawn. Be able to order by phone.
  - h. Could it be used in more than one vehicle?
  - i. Would reduce queues in shops for payment.
  - j. A book of 2 hour tickets would be useful. Pre-payment cards purchased in advance and used at time of parking scratching off date and time of parking, using one or more cards to cover time and cost. Booklets of tickets for locals.
  - k. Still prefer to pay by cash.
  - l. Would have to relocate my job.
  - m. Will creating more permits still make savings or be lost in administrative costs?
  - n. Would be interested in a resident's permit, such as for Battle car parks, to encourage people to shop locally?
  - o. Some elderly people are afraid to get permits and afraid to use cards.
  - p. It would make it easier when I am alone.
  - q. Would be helpful with old/vintage vehicles, which RingGo does not recognise.
  - r. More convenient. A benefit. Good idea. Would help. I have a yearly permit for DLWP car park and it works very well.
  - s. Consider, if could be valid for street parking as well.
  - t. Could it cover Hastings car parks as well?
  - u. Would it be time limited?
  - v. A paper permit, printed, posted, a step back, better to be electronic only.

### **Council's Response to Some Arising Questions**

- 203. There appears some confusion that a pre-paid permit would book or reserve a car park space for the permit holder but this is not the case. Currently, some permits are taken up by residents who do not have parking available outside their homes. An example of this is the Manor Barn and Gardens car park located in Bexhill's old town. They are not guaranteed a parking space. But, the concerns of other car park users of permit holders not moving their vehicles or taking up the majority of spaces is noted.
- 204. In addition, a handful of respondents thought we were referring to on-street residents parking permits offered by the county council.
- 205. Blue Badge regulations regarding free parking only apply to on-street parking. They do not apply to off-street parking. Car park owners can and do charge for parking by vehicles used by disabled people. There are parking spaces marked for disabled users located near entrances and exits for the convenience of

disabled customers and, by limiting their use for the disabled, there is a higher chance of finding free spaces during busy periods. Displaying a Blue Badge indicates eligibility to use disabled parking spaces. Permits for free parking are limited to some Blue Badge holders because the permits are for people already medically assessed as having a high level of disability because they are in receipt of higher allowance PIP. (The council does not have the resources to make such an assessment.)

206. All permits from Rother District Council are specific to one car park. The council used to offer a permit for multiple car parks but it was not popular and was removed. A permit for multiple car parks would have to take into consideration several complex matters. Firstly, there is the difference in charges at different locations, especially for short and long stay use. We have £2 long-stay charges at some car parks on the edge of town centres compared to parking in Camber, which is high demand and more expensive. This would make it challenging to find a balance in the charge between the council not losing income and making it cost effective and affordable to purchase.
207. Others interpreted permit as some form of permission to park or restricting parking to permit holders. Some respondents were making an assumption that the council, by pointing out that it provided permits as a payment option, was suggesting a change to payment by permits only or mainly. This was not the case.
208. Businesses said:
- a. Hugely out of pocket.
  - b. Would lose business – people need an hour to cover time for a haircut. If they had to buy permits then I firmly believe people will be pushed away.
  - c. Keep cash.
  - d. Depends on cost. A permit for Hastings Country Park costs £55 annually, used maybe twice a week, each visit costs less than £1. Without it would be £3.50 a visit. Excellent value. A permit for Rye would have to be the same case. Gibbetts Marsh costs £2 a day so pro rata comparison to HCP permit would be £30 a year. If this was the case then it would be a benefit.
  - e. Adding more obstacles by adding permits.

### **Length of Permits**

209. We asked about what sort of permits, in terms of time, would suit needs. Again, 78% of the public said that a permit would not be suitable. Shorter term permits were much less popular than an annual permit (14%). The most popular shorter term permit was quarterly at 4% or 16 respondents.

### **Grace Period**

210. We explained about how the council gives a grace period of 10 minutes before issuing a penalty notice for unpaid parking, expired tickets, etc. The grace period would give customer time to go to the nearest PayPoint and pay. This assumes that they just left the car park before the ticket inspectors entered the car park to inspect vehicles for valid tickets. We did make it clear that there is no need to return to the vehicle or car park once having paid at the PayPoint. The ticket is recorded electronically.



211. We asked what respondents thought of the 10 minute grace period in terms of whether it was long enough to get a ticket. An interactive map was provided on the website article for each of the main towns that identified both the car park and the nearest PayPoint.
212. For the public, 61% said it was not enough time to get a ticket for the main car park that they used. 22% said it was enough time in most circumstances and 3% said it was more than enough time. The remaining 14% were not sure or didn't know.
213. For specific car parks (main car parks) those without enough time are below. Note that we only had a large enough sample size for 5 of the car parks. In error we omitted the Co-op in the High Street as the nearest PayPoint location to Mount Street. It is much closer than Jempsons. The website was corrected but early respondents would not have seen this.
- a. Mount Street – 65%
  - b. Upper Market – 53%
  - c. de la Warr Pavilion – 63%
  - d. Manor Barn – 53%
  - e. Cinque Ports Street – 70%
214. We asked respondents if there were any other car parks that they used, but not their main car park, where a 10 minute grace period would not be long enough. The public answered as follows, showing the percentage of all public respondents who felt that 10 minutes was not long enough to pay for parking at the nearest PayPoint:
- None – 37%
  - DLWP – 28%
  - Mount Street – 25%
  - Little Common – 16%
  - Manor Barn – 16%
  - Upper Market – 13%
  - Eversley Road – 12%
  - Lower Market – 11%
  - Gibbets Marsh – 11%
  - The Strand – 10%
  - Camber Central – 9%
  - Camber Western – 8%
  - Rye Sports Centre – 7%
  - Lucknow Place – 5%
  - Bedford Place – 5%
215. Please note that some car parks will be less well known to all Rother residents, such as those in Rye.

### **Reducing Barriers to Using PayPoints**

216. We asked if there was anything the council could do to reduce barriers regarding paying for car parking other ways or paying by cash at PayPoints. Responses about keeping cash in pay and display machines are not included because that point had been made elsewhere and was not related to reducing

a barrier to paying at PayPoints or by other methods. In addition, comments related to East Sussex County Council are not included (Devonshire Square, on-street parking & machines, etc.) The main themes of points made were:

- a. Remove all requirement to pay for any car parking. Make car parks free to use. **Council's response:** car parks are not free because they cost money to maintain, monitor or inspect for misuse, signage, etc. Where other councils provide free car parks the cost is passed on to their taxpayers. Just re-surfacing the car parks costs tens of thousands of pounds. For example, resurfacing one car park in Battle will cost the council £50,000.
  - b. Reduce RingGo charges, remove unjustified administration fee.
  - c. Better wi-fi connection, address lack of phone signal at some car parks, poor or non-existent internet strength for mobile phone users.
  - d. Better instructions and clearer signage. Explain better what is a PayPoint and how to use it. Parking charges clearer displayed. More signs in car parks on how to pay.
  - e. Improve problems with using RingGo such as renewing expired cards,
  - f. Ensure ticket machines easy to use and in good order. Ensure maintenance of PayPoint machines. Sun shining on machine displays make it difficult to read. Low resolution screens make navigation through instructions hard. Buttons sometimes difficult to work. Characters that don't work. No power. Buttons not suitable for someone with arthritis because you have to press very hard. No markings on some buttons.
  - g. Allow a 20-minute grace period. Have a 15-minute grace period. Allow half an hour to register a payment after parking, allow for queues, machines not working, difficulty walking, unfamiliar with area, etc.
  - h. Allow first 20-min free at Little Common. Free parking for half an hour. Free first hour.
  - i. Have PayPoints in the car parks.
  - j. Free parking for Blue Badge Holders.
  - k. Pre-purchase tickets with scratch off date. System in Brighton. Bring in parking season tickets. Credit card style permits.
  - l. More PayPoints available. Don't seem to be enough PayPoints. Need PayPoints accessible for those accompanied by pets (reference to Battle car park near a vet).
  - m. Make it possible to pre-pay online annual payment, daily, 2 hour, 4 hour permits for Bexhill, Battle, Rye or Camber. Internet account.
  - n. Remove requirement to check out by credit card when using machine. **Note:** this requirement has been removed some time ago.
  - o. Affordable permits.
217. Organisations said the following:
- a. Concerns about older people, people with young children and those with disabilities.
  - b. Concern that people would have to leave dogs in cars (Battle).
  - c. Keep cash at payment machines
  - d. Add 20 minutes free parking, encourages footfall in towns, easier for visitors and local to park and shop local.
  - e. Offer a large free car park to increase visitor numbers.
  - f. Offer Jempsons the opportunity to purchase collected coinage as have to pay for change from the banks. (Jempsons supermarket made this comment.)

### **Three Options**

218. We asked for final comments and the preferred option. Option one was to move cash payments to PayPoints. Option two was to move payments in most car parks except for the car parks that take the most cash payments. Option three was to retain cash payments at all pay and display machines or no change from the current arrangements.
219. Camber Parish Council emailed and expressed their preference for Option One. 'The majority of Councillors are in support of Option 1. A comment which we would like to be noted is that as part of the refurbishment of the Central car park toilet block and associated facilities that a PayPoint be made available in an appropriate part of that building so that those wishing to pay by cash can do so within Central car park.'
220. It was very clear that the greater majority of respondents supported option three, no change. From those that expressed a preference, 247 respondents said that they supported option three or no change, the retention of cash payments at pay and display machines. For the other options, 34 people explicitly supported option 2 for retaining cash payments at three car parks that had the highest cash use. 48 supported option 1 for moving cash payments to PayPoints.
221. A full list of all comments is available.

### **Conclusion**

222. We would like to thank all respondents who took the trouble to take part in this consultation.
223. We note that many people were concerned about the impact of not being able to pay by cash and the convenience of that option.

## Fees and Charges – 2024/25

## Appendix J

		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25 Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease) %
		Charge £	VAT £	Total Charge £	Charge £	VAT £	Total Charge £		
<b>Neighbourhood Services</b>									
<b>(D Keneally)</b>									
<b>Sports</b>									
Football pitch	Adult (over 18)	93.50	0.00	<b>93.50</b>	100.00	0.00	<b>100.00</b>		7.00%
	Youth (12-18)	20.25	0.00	<b>20.25</b>	21.75	0.00	<b>21.75</b>		7.40%
	Under 12s	16.00	0.00	<b>16.00</b>	17.00	0.00	<b>17.00</b>		6.30%
Cricket pitch	Adult (over 18)	90.00	0.00	<b>90.00</b>	96.00	0.00	<b>96.00</b>		6.70%
	Colts	19.75	0.00	<b>19.75</b>	21.00	0.00	<b>21.00</b>		6.30%
Stoolball Pitch	Casual games	31.25	0.00	<b>31.25</b>	33.25	0.00	<b>33.25</b>		6.40%
	Additional charges								
	- Showers	32.5	0.00	<b>32.50</b>	34.75	0.00	<b>34.75</b>		6.90%
	- Closed Gate	55.00	0.00	<b>55.00</b>	59.00	0.00	<b>59.00</b>		7.30%
	- Cancellation	26.50	0.00	<b>26.50</b>	28.25	0.00	<b>28.25</b>		6.60%
Tennis (Egerton Park)	All courts (April to September)								
	Member of the public	1.75	0.00	<b>1.75</b>	1.75	0.00	<b>1.75</b>		0.00%
	Coach	2.25	0.00	<b>2.25</b>	2.50	0.00	<b>2.50</b>		11.10%
	Bexhill Tennis Club - additional courts	1.75	0.00	<b>1.75</b>	1.75	0.00	<b>1.75</b>		0.00%
	All courts (October to March)								
	Member of the public	0.75	0.00	<b>0.75</b>	0.75	0.00	<b>0.75</b>		0.00%
	Coach	1.00	0.00	<b>1.00</b>	1.00	0.00	<b>1.00</b>		0.00%
	Bexhill Tennis Club - additional courts	0.75	0.00	<b>0.75</b>	0.80	0.00	<b>0.80</b>		6.70%
Coaches:									
	- Annual one-off administration fee	45.83	9.17	<b>55.00</b>	49.17	9.83	<b>59.00</b>		7.30%
Sports, fitness and activities sessions	Commercial sessions (hourly charge):								
	- Per session (up to 1 hour per day)	11.00	0.00	<b>11.00</b>	11.75	0.00	<b>11.75</b>		6.80%
	- Per session (more than 1 hour per day)	22.00	0.00	<b>22.00</b>	23.50	0.00	<b>23.50</b>		6.80%
	- Annual one-off administration fee	45.83	9.17	<b>55.00</b>	49.17	9.83	<b>59.00</b>		7.30%
	Charitable sessions (hourly charge):								
	- Per session (up to 1 hour per day)	3.25	0.00	<b>3.25</b>	3.50	0.00	<b>3.50</b>		7.70%
	- Per session (more than 1 hour per day)	5.50	0.00	<b>5.50</b>	5.75	0.00	<b>5.75</b>		4.50%
	- Annual one-off administration fee	9.17	1.83	<b>11.00</b>	9.79	1.96	<b>11.75</b>		6.80%

		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease)
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	%
		£	£	£			£		%
<b>Neighbourhood Services (D Keneally)</b>									
<b>Parks and Seafront</b>									
Events and Fairs	Commercial event - Small	111.67	22.33	<b>134.00</b>	119.17	23.83	<b>143.00</b>		6.70%
	Commercial event - Medium	332.5	66.50	<b>399.00</b>	355.00	71.00	<b>426.00</b>		6.80%
	Commercial event - Large (per day, 1-4 days)	623.33	124.67	<b>748.00</b>	665.83	133.17	<b>799.00</b>		6.80%
	Commercial event - Large (per day, more than 4 days)	479.17	95.83	<b>575.00</b>	511.67	102.33	<b>614.00</b>		6.80%
	Charitable/Not for Profit event - Small	59.58	11.92	<b>71.50</b>	63.33	12.67	<b>76.00</b>		6.30%
	Charitable/Not for Profit event - Medium	185.00	37.00	<b>222.00</b>	197.50	39.50	<b>237.00</b>		6.80%
	Charitable/Not for Profit - Large (per day, 1-4 days)	341.67	68.33	<b>410.00</b>	365.00	73.00	<b>438.00</b>		6.80%
	Charitable/Not for Profit - Large (per day, more than 4 days)	272.50	54.50	<b>327.00</b>	290.83	58.17	<b>349.00</b>		6.70%
	Damage deposits - Small events	318.33	63.67	<b>382.00</b>	41.67	8.33	<b>50.00</b>	Event organisers are often unable to provide deposits. Most	-86.90%
	Damage deposits - Medium events	528.33	105.67	<b>634.00</b>	125.00	25.00	<b>150.00</b>	damage deposits are unused, or with a limited sum retained. See	-76.30%
	Damage deposits - Large events	1055.83	211.17	<b>1267.00</b>	208.33	41.67	<b>250.00</b>	commentary from the Head of Neighbourhood Services	-80.30%

		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease)
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	%
		£	£	£			£		%
<b>Neighbourhood Services (D Keneally)</b>									
<b>Cemeteries</b>									
Interments	The body of a child up to 18 years old	0.00	0.00	<b>0.00</b>			<b>no charge</b>		0.00%
	The body of a person over 18 years old. At 1.52m (5') deep	1101.00	0.00	<b>1101.00</b>	1176.00	0.00	<b>1176.00</b>	All fees to be doubled in the case of any person who at the time of death was not a council tax payer or resident of the Rother district and has not so resided at any time during the twelve months preceding his or her death	6.80%
	Each additional 0.61m (2') depth	440.00	0.00	<b>440.00</b>	470.00	0.00	<b>470.00</b>		6.80%
	Cremated remains	302.00	0.00	<b>302.00</b>	323.00	0.00	<b>323.00</b>		7.00%
<b>Exclusive right of burial at the time of interment, for 50 years (including preparation of the Deed of Grant)</b>									
	Full size plot (2.74m x 1.22m)	1101.00	0.00	<b>1101.00</b>	1176.00	0.00	<b>1176.00</b>		6.80%
	Small size plot (1.37m x 0.61m)	545.00	0.00	<b>545.00</b>	582.00	0.00	<b>582.00</b>		6.80%
	Garden of Remembrance at Rye (0.69m x 0.61m)	313.00	0.00	<b>313.00</b>	334.00	0.00	<b>334.00</b>		6.70%
					0.00	0.00			
<b>Plot reservation for 5-year period</b>									
	Full size plot (2.74m x 1.22m)	278.00	0.00	<b>278.00</b>	297.00	0.00	<b>297.00</b>		6.80%
	Small size plot (1.37m x 0.61m)	140.00	0.00	<b>140.00</b>	150.00	0.00	<b>150.00</b>		7.10%
	Garden of Remembrance at Rye (0.69m x 0.61m)	80.00	0.00	<b>80.00</b>	85.00	0.00	<b>85.00</b>		6.30%
					0.00	0.00			
<b>Other charges</b>									
	Use of Chapel	223.00	0.00	<b>223.00</b>	238.00	0.00	<b>238.00</b>		6.70%
	Transfer of burial rights	142.00	0.00	<b>142.00</b>	152.00	0.00	<b>152.00</b>		7.00%
	Search fees - 10 years to present	0.00	0.00	<b>0.00</b>			<b>no charge</b>		0.00%
	Search fee - before 10 years	142.00	0.00	<b>142.00</b>	152.00	0.00	<b>152.00</b>		7.00%
	Disinterring - double appropriate re-opening fees, plus any additional charges tp be determined							as required	

Grounds works (Bexhill cemetery)	Lawn sections - twice yearly planting with bedding plants	151.67	30.33	<b>182.00</b>	161.67	32.33	<b>194.00</b>		6.60%
	Lawn sections - for exclusive burial rights	2023.33	404.67	<b>2428.00</b>	2160.83	432.17	<b>2593.00</b>		6.80%
	Traditional sections - turfing of a grave space	206.00	0.00	<b>206.00</b>	220.00	0.00	<b>220.00</b>		6.80%
	Traditional sections - maintenance with twice yearly planting	544.00	0.00	<b>544.00</b>	581.00	0.00	<b>581.00</b>		6.80%
Memorials	Permission to erect a memorial (cemeteries only)	118.33	23.67	<b>142.00</b>	126.67	25.33	<b>152.00</b>		7.00%
	Permission to insert and additional inscription (cemeteries only)	47.50	9.50	<b>57.00</b>	50.83	10.17	<b>61.00</b>		7.00%
Commemorative Benches and Trees	Commemorative benches - 10-year scheme, including installation, plaque and 10-year maintenance	815.00	0.00	<b>815.00</b>	870.00	0.00	<b>870.00</b>		6.70%
	Cost of bench - current cost plus 5%								
	Replacement/Additional plaque (not including inscription)	0.00	0.00	<b>0.00</b>	0.00	0.00	<b>0.00</b>		0.00%
	Replacement/Additional plaque, including inscription (maximum four lines of text)	184.00	0.00	<b>184.00</b>	197.00	0.00	<b>197.00</b>		7.10%
	Commemorative trees - planting (including ground preparation, soil nourishment, stabilisation and protection of the sapling. Cost price plus 5% charge (excluding tree)	262.00	0.00	<b>262.00</b>	280.00	0.00	<b>280.00</b>		6.90%
	Cost of tree - current cost plus 5%								
	Commemorative trees - plaque (including four lines of inscription)	75.00	0.00	<b>75.00</b>	80.00	0.00	<b>80.00</b>		6.70%
	Commemorative trees - plaque installation and mount	220.00	0.00	<b>220.00</b>	235.00	0.00	<b>235.00</b>		6.80%
	Commemorative trees - additional line of engraving on plaque	8.50	0.00	<b>8.50</b>	9.00	0.00	<b>9.00</b>		5.90%
Book of Remembrance	Inscriptions (up to five lines)	251.25	50.25	<b>301.50</b>	268.33	53.67	<b>322.00</b>		6.80%
	Standard embellishments (extra)	381.67	76.33	<b>458.00</b>	407.50	81.50	<b>489.00</b>		6.80%

		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease)
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	%
		£	£	£			£		%
<b>Neighbourhood Services (D Keneally)</b>									
<b>Beach and Coastal Management</b>									
Beach Huts	Site licences - East/West Parade	541.67	108.33	650.00	578.33	115.67	694.00		6.80%
	Site licences - Glyne Gap	541.67	108.33	650.00	578.33	115.67	694.00		6.80%
	Site licences - Tents (seasonal, six months only)	373.33	74.67	448.00	398.33	79.67	478.00		6.70%
	Site transfer fee (£2,000 or 10% of sale price, whichever is higher)	2000.00	400.00	2400.00	2135.83	427.17	2563.00		6.80%
Foreshore licences	One boat site	70.83	14.17	85.00	75.83	15.17	91.00		7.10%
	Winches	41.67	8.33	50.00	44.17	8.83	53.00		6.00%
	Equipment box	41.67	8.33	50.00	44.17	8.83	53.00		6.00%
	Sailing/Angling boat site	46.67	9.33	56.00	50.00	10.00	60.00		7.10%
	Commercial fishing boat site	350.83	70.17	421.00	375.00	75.00	450.00		6.90%



		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease)
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	%
		£	£	£			£		%
<b>Neighbourhood Services (D Keneally)</b>									
<b>Contracts</b>									
Car Park Permits	Nominated Permit - One car - single, named car park (locations: De La Warr, Eversley Road, Galley Hill Top/Bottom, War Mamorial, Egerton Park, Manor Barn and Gardens, Mount Street, Bedford Place, Lucknow Place - per annum	416.67	83.33	500.00	500.00	100.00	600.00		20.00%
	Nominated Permit - One car - single, named car park - 6 months (182 days)	291.67	58.33	350.00	370.83	74.17	445.00		27.10%
	Nominated Permit - One car - single, named car park - 3 months (90 days)	166.67	33.33	200.00	211.67	42.33	254.00		27.00%
	Nominated Permit - One car - single, named car park - 1 Calendar month	62.50	12.50	75.00	79.17	15.83	95.00		26.70%
	Nominated Permit - One car - single, named car park - 1 week	16.67	3.33	20.00	21.25	4.25	25.50		27.50%
	Long stay permit - Wainwright Road, Lower Market, Gibbets Marsh, Little Common - per annum	291.67	58.33	350.00	370.83	74.17	445.00		27.10%
	Long stay permit - Wainwright Road, Lower Market, Gibbets Marsh, Little Common - 6 months	166.67	33.33	200.00	211.67	42.33	254.00		27.00%
	Long stay permit - Wainwright Road, Lower Market, Gibbets Marsh, Little Common - 3 months (90 days)	83.33	16.67	100.00	105.83	21.17	127.00		27.00%
	Long stay permit - Wainwright Road/Gibbets Marsh - 1 month	33.33	6.67	40.00	42.50	8.50	51.00		27.50%
	Long stay permit - Lower Market - 1 month	41.67	8.33	50.00	53.33	10.67	64.00		28.00%
	Long stay permit - Wainwright Road/Gibbets Marsh - 1 week	8.33	1.67	10.00	10.63	2.13	12.75		27.50%
	Long stay permit - Lower Market - 1 week	12.50	2.50	15.00	15.83	3.17	19.00		26.70%
	Annual Permit - Western Road, Bexhill	691.67	138.33	830.00	830.00	166.00	996.00		20.00%
	Annual - per car - The Strand, Rye	632.5	126.50	759.00	759.17	151.83	911.00		20.00%
	Annual - per car - Gun Gardens, Rye	1053.33	210.67	1264.00	1264.17	252.83	1517.00		20.00%
	Annual - per car - Camber Central, Rye	541.67	108.33	650.00	650.00	130.00	780.00		20.00%
	Concessionary Permit (eligibility criteria apply)	16.67	3.33	20.00	17.50	3.50	21.00		5.00%

		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25 Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease) %
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge		
		£	£	£	£	£	£		
Car parking tariffs	Camber Summer Tariffs - Central and Old Lydd Road (1 April to 30 September):							Other tariffs and pay and display charges - see <a href="http://www.rother.gov.uk/carparks">www.rother.gov.uk/carparks</a>	
	- Up to 1 hour	3.33	0.67	4.00	5.00	1.00	6.00	See separate appendix on Camber Sands	50.00%
	- 1 to 3 hours	6.67	1.33	8.00	10.00	2.00	12.00		50.00%
	- 3 to 6 hours	13.33	2.67	16.00	20.00	4.00	24.00		50.00%
	- Over 6 hours	16.67	3.33	20.00	25.00	5.00	30.00		50.00%
	Camber Summer Tariffs - Western (1 April to 30 September):								
	- Up to 1 hour	3.33	0.67	4.00	3.33	0.67	4.00		0.00%
	- 1 to 3 hours	6.67	1.33	8.00	6.67	1.33	8.00		0.00%
	- 3 to 6 hours	13.33	2.67	16.00	13.33	2.67	16.00		0.00%
	- Over 6 hours	16.67	3.33	20.00	16.67	3.33	20.00		0.00%
	Mount Street (Battle), Egerton Park, Eversley Road, Galley Hill (Top and bottom), Manor Gardens, Town Hall (Front, weekends and bank holidays only), War Memorial (all Bexhill), Bedford Place and Luknow Place (all Rye)								
	- Up to 1 hour	0.83	0.17	1.00	1.08	0.22	1.30		30.00%
	- 1 to 2 hours	1.67	0.33	2.00	2.17	0.43	2.60		29.70%
	- 2 to 4 hours	3.33	0.67	4.00	4.25	0.85	5.10		27.60%
	- Over 4 hours	4.17	0.83	5.00	5.33	1.07	6.40		27.90%
	Upper Market (Short Stay) (Battle)								
	- Up to 1 hour	0.83	0.17	1.00	1.08	0.22	1.30		30.00%
	- 1 to 2 hours	1.67	0.33	2.00	2.17	0.43	2.60		30.00%
	- 2 to 4 hours	3.75	0.75	4.50	4.75	0.95	5.70		26.70%
	Lower Market (Long Stay) (Battle)								
	- All day	2.50	0.50	3.00	3.17	0.63	3.80		26.60%
	De La Warr Pavilion (Bexhill)								
	- Up to 1 hour	1.25	0.25	1.50	1.58	0.32	1.90		26.70%
	- 1 to 2 hours	2.08	0.42	2.50	2.67	0.53	3.20		28.00%
	- 2 to 3 hours	2.50	0.50	3.00	3.17	0.63	3.80		26.60%
	- 3 to 5 hours	3.75	0.75	4.50	4.75	0.95	5.70		26.70%
	- Over 5 hours	4.17	0.83	5.00	5.33	1.07	6.40		28.00%
	Little Common (Bexhill)								
	- Up to 4 hours	0.83	0.17	1.00	1.08	0.22	1.30		30.00%
	- Over 4 hours	1.67	0.33	2.00	2.17	0.43	2.60		30.00%

		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25 Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease) %
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge		
		£	£	£	£	£	£		
	Cinque Ports and The Strand (Rye)								
	- Up to 1 hour	0.83	0.17	1.00	1.08	0.22	1.30	30.00%	
	- 1 to 2 hours	1.67	0.33	2.00	2.17	0.43	2.60	30.00%	
	- 2 to 4 hours	3.75	0.75	4.50	4.75	0.95	5.70	26.70%	
	- Over 4 hours	5.83	1.17	7.00	7.42	1.48	8.90	27.20%	
	Gibbet Marsh (Rye), Wainwright Road (Bexhill)								
	- All day	1.67	0.33	2.00	2.17	0.43	2.60	30.00%	
	Rye Sports Centre Car Park (Rye)								
	- Up to 1 hour	2.08	0.42	2.50	2.67	0.53	3.20	28.00%	
	- 1 to 2 hours	2.92	0.58	3.50	3.75	0.75	4.50	28.60%	
	- 2 to 4 hours	5.83	1.17	7.00	7.42	1.48	8.90	27.10%	
	- Over 4 hours	8.33	1.67	10.00	10.58	2.12	12.70	27.00%	
	Camber Central, Old Lydd Road and Western (Winter: 1 October to 31 March):								
	- Up to 1 hour	0.83	0.17	1.00	1.08	0.22	1.30	30.00%	
	- 1 to 3 hours	2.50	0.50	3.00	3.17	0.63	3.80	26.70%	
	- 3 to 6 hours	4.17	0.83	5.00	5.33	1.07	6.40	28.00%	
	- Over 6 hours	5.00	1.00	6.00	6.42	1.28	7.70	28.30%	
	Western (Rye) - Coaches								
	- Per hour	2.92	0.58	3.50	3.75	0.75	4.50	28.60%	

		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25 Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease) %
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge		
		£	£	£	£	£	£		
<b>Neighbourhood Services (D Keneally)</b>									
<b>Beach and Coastal Management</b>									
Filming - Still photography	All locations (except Camber Sands):							Filming charges are set by Hastings BC, who run the service on behalf of both councils (as the 1066 Film Office). The council will liaise with Hastings BC as part of their budget setting for filming. See separate report from the Head of Neighbourhood Services	
	- Student - per 12 hour day	50.00	10.00	60.00			TBC		
	- Small scale (unbranded editorial or small private/start up production company/photographer) - per 12 hour day	550.00	110.00	660.00					
	- Small scale (unbranded editorial or small private/start up production company/photographer) - per half day	325.00	65.00	390.00					
	- Medium scale (nationally known newspapers/magazines, mid-famous brands TV programmes and documentaries - per 12 hour day	850.00	170.00	1020.00					
	- Medium scale (nationally known newspapers/magazines, mid-famous brands TV programmes and documentaries - per half day	425.00	85.00	510.00					
	commercial for large famous brand) - per 12 hour day (Range between £1500 and £2500	2500.00	500.00	3000.00					
	- Large scale (major feature film, commercial for large famous brand) - as above, per half day	1250.00	250.00	1500.00					
	Camber Sands:								
	- Student - per 12 hour day	50.00	10.00	60.00					
	- Small scale (unbranded editorial or small private/start up production company/photographer) - per 12 hour day	600.00	120.00	720.00					
	- Small scale (unbranded editorial or small private/start up production company/photographer) - per half day	425.00	85.00	510.00					
	- Medium scale (nationally known newspapers/magazines, mid-famous brands TV programmes and documentaries - per 12 hour day	1000.00	200.00	1200.00					
	- Medium scale (nationally known newspapers/magazines, mid-famous brands TV programmes and documentaries - per half day	500.00	100.00	600.00					
	- Large scale (major feature film, commercial for large famous brand) - per day	3000.00	600.00	3600.00					
	- Large scale (major feature film, commercial for large famous brand) - as above, per half day	1500.00	300.00	1800.00					

		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease)
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	%
		£	£	£			£		
Live filming or video	All locations (except Camber Sands):								
	- Student - per 12 hour day	50.00	10.00	60.00					
	- Small scale (unbranded editorial or small private/start up production company/photographer - per 12 hour day (Range £650-850 plus VAT; additional hours charged extra)	850.00	170.00	1020.00					
	- Small scale (unbranded editorial or small private/start up production company/photographer - per half day	325.00	65.00	390.00					
	- Medium scale (nationally known newspapers/magazines, mid-famous brands TV programmes and documentaries - per 12 hour day (Range £1000-£1700 plus VAT; additional hours charged extra)	1700.00	340.00	2040.00					
	- Medium scale (nationally known newspapers/magazines, mid-famous brands TV programmes and documentaries - per half day	500.00	100.00	600.00					
	- Large scale (major feature film, commercial for large famous brand) - per 12 hour day (Range £2000 to £5000 plus VAT; additional hours charged extra)	5000.00	1000.00	6000.00					
	- Large scale (major feature film, commercial for large famous brand) - as above, per half day	2500.00	500.00	3000.00					
	Camber Sands:								
	- Student - per 12 hour day	50.00	10.00	60.00					
	- Small scale (unbranded editorial or small private/start up production company/photographer - per 12 hour day	850.00	170.00	1020.00					
	- Small scale (unbranded editorial or small private/start up production company/photographer - per half day	425.00	85.00	510.00					
	- Medium scale (nationally known newspapers/magazines, mid-famous brands TV programmes and documentaries - per 12 hour day	1500.00	300.00	1800.00					
	- Medium scale (nationally known newspapers/magazines, mid-famous brands TV programmes and documentaries - per half day	850.00	170.00	1020.00					
	- Large scale (major feature film, commercial for large famous brand) - per 12 hour day (Range £3000 to £5000 plus VAT; additional hours charged extra)	5000.00	1000.00	6000.00					
	- Large scale (major feature film, commercial for large famous brand) - as above, per half day	2500.00	500.00	3000.00					

		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease)
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	
		£	£	£			£		%
<b>Neighbourhood Services (D Keneally)</b>									
<b>Waste Charges</b>									
Bulky waste	Up to 3 items	40.00	0.00	<b>40.00</b>	42.75	0.00	<b>42.75</b>		6.90%
	4-6 items	79.00	0.00	<b>79.00</b>	84.00	0.00	<b>84.00</b>		6.30%
	7-9 items	118.00	0.00	<b>118.00</b>	126.00	0.00	<b>126.00</b>		6.80%
	Additional items, per 3 items	40.00	0.00	<b>40.00</b>	42.75	0.00	<b>42.75</b>		6.90%
Garden waste	Annual charge (per container)	55.00	0.00	<b>55.00</b>	81.00	0.00	<b>81.00</b>	To bring this in line with neighbouring councils. See separate report from the Head of Neighbourhood Services	47.30%
	Annual charge (second bin)	55.00	0.00	<b>55.00</b>	66.00	0.00	<b>66.00</b>	To offer a discount for additional green waste bins to households who require more than one.	20.00%



		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25	
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease)
		£	£	£			£		%
<b>Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety</b>									
<b>(R Parker-Harding)</b>									
<b>Food Safety</b>									
Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS)	First request for an inspection for FHRS scoring within three months of a planned inspection	146.67	29.33	176.00	156.67	31.33	188.00		6.80%
	Futher request for an inspection for FHRS scoring within three months of a planned inspection	195.00	39.00	234.00	208.33	41.67	250.00		6.80%
	First request for an inspection for FHRS scoring after three months of a planned inspection			no charge				No charge is made for this service	0.00%
	Further request for an inspection for FHRS scoring after three months of a planned inspection	195.00	39.00	234.00	208.33	41.67	250.00		6.80%
	Replacement FHRS sticker	24.17	4.83	29.00	25.83	5.17	31.00		6.90%
<b>Health certificates (for food exported)</b>									
	Export health certificates for fish and molluscs (including inspection):								
	- first hour (minimum charge)	100.00	20.00	120.00	106.67	21.33	128.00		6.70%
	- subsequent hours (or part therof)	83.33	16.67	100.00	89.17	17.83	107.00		7.00%
<b>Health certificates (for other food exported)</b>									
	First certificate issued	68.33	13.67	82.00	73.33	14.67	88.00		7.30%
	Subsequent certificates issued on the same working day (same batch)	16.67	3.33	20.00	17.71	3.54	21.25		6.20%
	(Including withdrawn applications, photocopying and scanning)	25.00	5.00	30.00	26.67	5.33	32.00		6.70%
<b>HMO Licences (5 years)</b>									
	Initial (first) application fee	766.67	153.33	920.00	819.17	163.83	983.00		6.80%
	Initial issuing fee	41.67	8.33	50.00	44.17	8.83	53.00		6.00%
	Combined fee (if paid at same time)	791.67	158.33	950.00	845.83	169.17	1015.00		6.80%
	Additional fee if premises inspected and found not to be licensed	250.00	50.00	300.00	266.67	53.33	320.00		6.70%
	Renewal application fee	541.67	108.33	650.00	578.33	115.67	694.00		6.80%
	Renewal issuing fee	41.67	8.33	50.00	44.17	8.83	53.00		6.00%
	Renewal combined fee (if paid at the same time)	566.67	113.33	680.00	605.00	121.00	726.00		6.80%



Caravan Sites (Mobile Homes)	Annual fee - 2-5 units on site	0.00	0.00	<b>0.00</b>				no fee charged	0.00%
	Annual fee - 6-24 units on site	154.17	30.83	<b>185.00</b>	165.00	33.00	<b>198.00</b>		7.00%
	Annual fee - 25-99 units on site	179.17	35.83	<b>215.00</b>	191.67	38.33	<b>230.00</b>	Plus £0.50 per unit for registration of fit and proper person	7.00%
	Annual fee - 100+ units on site	237.50	47.50	<b>285.00</b>	253.33	50.67	<b>304.00</b>	Plus £0.50 per unit for registration of fit and proper person	6.70%
	Annual fee - Single unit and family sites	0.00	0.00	<b>0.00</b>				no fee charged	0.00%
	Initial application to be registered as fit and proper person	75.00	15.00	<b>90.00</b>	80.00	16.00	<b>96.00</b>		6.70%
	Appointed manager fee	83.33	16.67	<b>100.00</b>	89.17	17.83	<b>107.00</b>		7.00%
Scrap metal dealer licence (3 years)	New application	416.67	83.33	<b>500.00</b>	445.00	89.00	<b>534.00</b>		6.80%
	Renewal	333.33	66.67	<b>400.00</b>	355.83	71.17	<b>427.00</b>		6.80%
	Variation	58.33	11.67	<b>70.00</b>	62.50	12.50	<b>75.00</b>		7.10%
Other fees	Serving of Housing Act Notice	325.00	65.00	<b>390.00</b>	347.50	69.50	<b>417.00</b>		6.90%
	Temporary Road Closure (excluding Remembrance Day and additional bank holiday weekends associated with Royal events)	91.67	18.33	<b>110.00</b>	97.50	19.50	<b>117.00</b>		6.40%
	Environmental information request	87.50	17.50	<b>105.00</b>	93.33	18.67	<b>112.00</b>		6.70%
	Pavement licences	166.67	33.33	<b>200.00</b>	178.33	35.67	<b>214.00</b>		7.00%
	Administration fee if an application withdrawn (minimum)	83.33	16.67	<b>100.00</b>	89.17	17.83	<b>107.00</b>		7.00%

		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease)
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	%
		£	£	£			£		%
<b>Digital and Customer Services</b>									
<b>(M Adams)</b>									
<b>Customer Services</b>									
Other fees	Proof of life verification for foreign pensions	20.83	4.17	25.00	20.83	4.17	25.00	With a limited number of requests (c 100 per annum) and evidence that the charge is higher than many other authorities, it is proposed that the charge remains unchanged at £25 in 2024/25.	0.00%

		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease) %
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	
		£	£	£			£		
<b>Planning Service (K Erifevieme)</b>									
<b>Development Management</b>									
Planning Fees								Planning fees are set and reviewed annually by the Government. Current fees applicable can be accessed via the link below. <a href="http://planningportal.co.uk">A Guide to the Fees for Planning Applications in England (planningportal.co.uk)</a>	
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	Residential - Zone 1 Battle, Rural north and west	258.18	0.00	258.18				The Adopted CIL Charging Schedule came into effect on 14 April 2016 and is indexed on 1 January each year according to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) CIL index. The indexation for 1 January 2024 will be published on or around 1 November 2023.	
	Residential - Zone 1 Sheltered/Retirement homes (C3)	180.73	0.00	180.73					
	Residential - Zone 2 Rye, Hastings fringes and rural east	174.27	0.00	174.27					
	Residential - Zone 3 a) Bexhill - Urban	64.55	0.00	64.55					
	Residential - Zone 3 b) Bexhill - Rural	219.45	0.00	219.45					
	Residential - Zone 3 c) Bexhill - Strategic urban extensions	96.82	0.00	96.82					
	Extra care housing (throughout district)	32.27	0.00	32.27					
	Retail - in centre convenience	129.09	0.00	129.09					
	Retail - out of centre convenience	154.91	0.00	154.91					
	Retail - out of centre comparison	322.73	0.00	322.73					
	All other forms of development	0	0.00	0.00					

		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease)
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	%
		£	£	£			£		
<b>Planning Service</b>									
<b>(K Erifevieme)</b>									
<b>Land Charges</b>									
Search fees (most frequently requested)	Full search - Forms LLC1 and CON29	125.67	25.13	<b>150.80</b>	154.17	30.83	<b>185.00</b>	Planning fees have not been regularly updated to reflect changes in the CPI since the early 2010's and have fallen behind the stated objective of recovering the costs of the associated activities. Consequently, CPI inflation increases of 24.4% are proposed in respect of local land charges (LLC1) and 22.3% in respect of CON29R and CON290 search enquiry charges. It should be noted that these increases take account of any one-off increases during the period when charges were not regularly reviewed, to avoid double-counting.	22.70%
	Form LLC1 only	24.20	0.00	<b>24.20</b>	30.00	0.00	<b>30.00</b>		24.00%
	Form CON29R only	105.50	21.10	<b>126.60</b>	129.17	25.83	<b>155.00</b>		22.40%
	Each optional enquiry in Form CON 290	25.50	5.10	<b>30.60</b>	31.25	6.25	<b>37.50</b>		22.50%
	Each additional enquiry	19.80	3.96	<b>23.76</b>	24.17	4.83	<b>29.00</b>		22.10%
	Each additional parcel of land - LLC1 and CON 29R	12.28	1.54	<b>13.82</b>	14.17	2.83	<b>17.00</b>		23.00%
	Each additional parcel of land - LLC1 only	4.58	0.00	<b>4.58</b>	5.75	0.00	<b>5.75</b>		25.50%
	Each additional parcel of land - CON 29R only	7.70	1.54	<b>9.24</b>	9.38	1.88	<b>11.25</b>		21.80%
Search fees -other	Inspection of documents filed under Rule 10 in respect of each parcel of land							price on application	
	Official search in any one part of the register	4.58	0.92	<b>5.50</b>	5.63	1.13	<b>6.75</b>		22.70%
	Fees in respect of each additional parcel of land included in the same requisition	4.58	0.92	<b>5.50</b>	5.63	1.13	<b>6.75</b>		22.70%
	Personal search of the whole or any part of the Register	0.00	0.00	<b>0.00</b>				no charge for this service	0.00%
	Official search of the Local Land Charges Register (including issue of an official certificate of search) in respect of one parcel of land in the whole of the Register	24.20	0.00	<b>24.20</b>	30.00	0.00	<b>30.00</b>		24.00%
	Each additional enquiry	25.50	5.10	<b>30.60</b>	31.67	6.33	<b>38.00</b>		24.20%

		2023/24			2024/25			Commentary on proposed charges for 2024/25	Proposed Increase/ (Decrease) %
		Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Charge	VAT	Total Charge	Adjusted (to nearest £0.25 if under £50, to nearest £1.00 if over £50) (Except car parking tariffs, which are to the nearest £0.10)	
		£	£	£	£	£	£		
<b>Planning Service</b>									
<b>(K Erifevieme)</b>									
<b>Land Charges</b>									
Search fees - individual CON 29R enquiries									
1.1 (a-i) Planning History		0.00	0.00	0.00				no charge for this service	0.00%
1.1 (j-l) Building regulations		7.70	1.54	9.24	9.38	1.88	11.25		21.80%
1.2 Planning designations and proposals		3.30	0.66	3.96	3.96	0.79	4.75		19.90%
3.1 Land required for public purposes		2.00	0.40	2.40	2.50	0.50	3.00		25.00%
3.5 (a,b) Nearby railway schemes		3.30	0.66	3.96	3.96	0.79	4.75		19.90%
3.7 Outstanding notices		16.50	3.30	19.80	20.21	4.04	24.25		22.50%
3.8 Contravention of building regulations		6.60	1.32	7.92	8.13	1.63	9.75		23.10%
3.9 Notices, orders, directions and proceedings under planning acts		6.60	1.32	7.92	8.13	1.63	9.75		23.10%
3.10 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)		13.20	2.64	15.84	16.04	3.21	19.25		21.50%
3.11 (a,b) Conservation area		3.00	0.60	3.60	3.75	0.75	4.50		25.00%
3.12 Compulsory purchase		6.00	1.20	7.20	7.29	1.46	8.75		21.50%
3.13 (a,b,c) Contaminated land		3.30	0.66	3.96	3.96	0.79	4.75		19.90%
3.14 Radon gas		3.30	0.66	3.96	3.96	0.79	4.75		19.90%
3.15 Assets of community value		13.20	2.64	15.84	16.04	3.21	19.25		21.50%
<b>Planning Service</b>									
Building Control								The Building Control service is operated by the extended East Sussex Building Control Partnership, which serves the district councils of Wealden and Rother and the borough councils of Eastbourne and Hastings. Current fees and charges are available on their website: <a href="#">East Sussex Building Control Partnership</a>	