



# **Business Planning 2026-27:**

Engagement and Consultation surveys  
supporting information

# As we develop our plan for our future spending and savings, we want to hear your views on:



How we could increase our income to make further savings



Reductions in spending across our service areas



Council Tax

Therefore, we are engaging you in two phases between October 2025 and January 2026 so your views can help inform decision-making about our next Business Plan, which sets out our budget decisions for the next three financial years.

## Phase one

### **Engagement survey:**

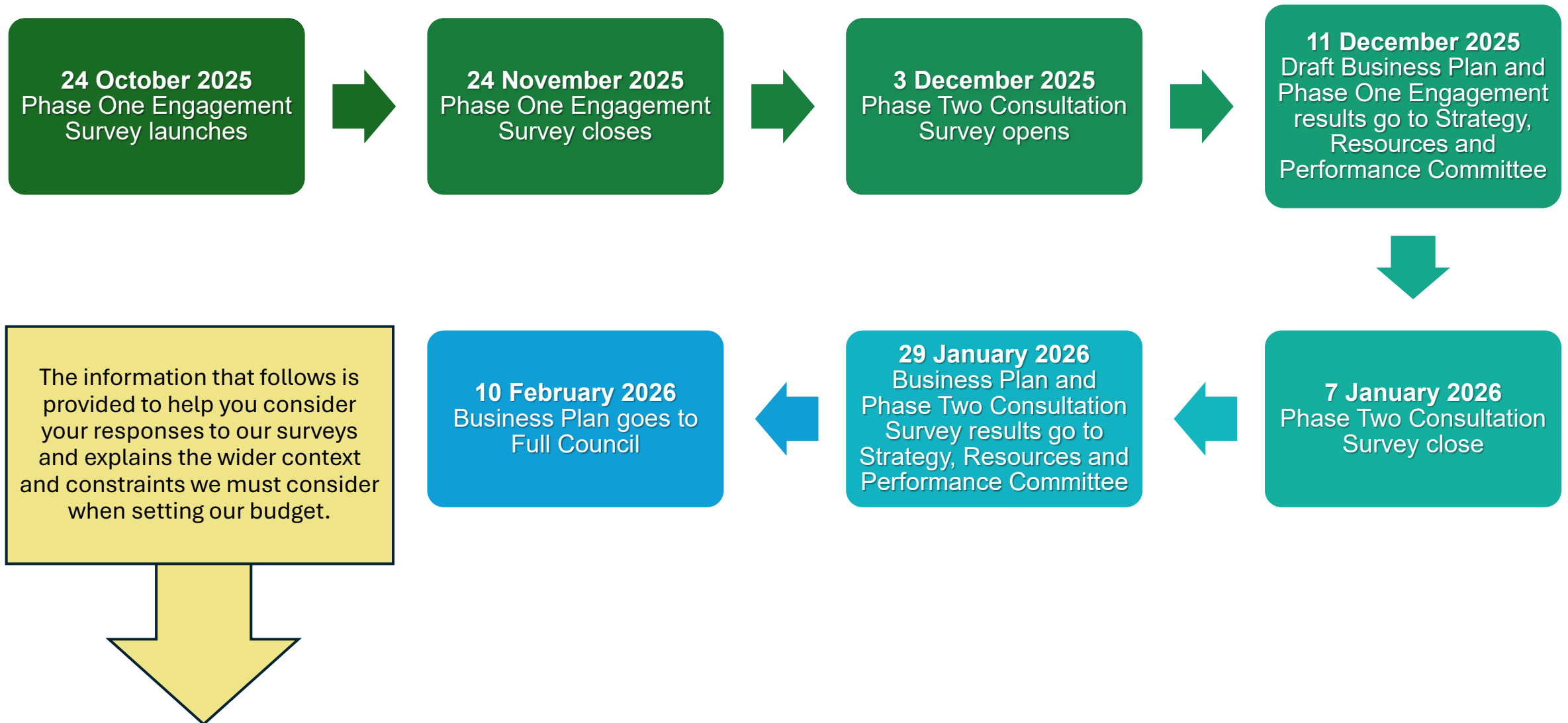
Seeking your views on our priorities and approaches to spending and savings

## Phase two

### **Consultation survey:**

Seeking your views on spending and savings options within our 2026-27 to 2028-29 draft Business Plan and Budget

The timeline below sets out the dates of these two surveys as well as the dates for reports on survey results and our Business Plan going to Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee and Full Council for formal approval.



# Cambridgeshire population

Cambridgeshire is one of the fastest growing counties in the country, with an increasingly diverse population.

Cambridgeshire population was estimated to be 701,460 in 2023. Cambridgeshire's population is forecast to increase by 17.9% between mid 2023 and 2041. The 65+ age group is forecast to grow by 19.4% (an additional 25,755 residents aged 65 years and over), and the 80+ age group to grow by 31%, in this period.

The city of Cambridge is the fastest growing city by population. Between 2013 and 2023 the city saw population growth of 17.3%, rising to 149,963 residents.

The forecast population growth in Cambridgeshire districts between 2023-2031 ranges from:

- 6.7% (Cambridge City),
- 7.8% (Huntingdonshire),
- 8.6% (Fenland),
- 11.1% (East Cambridgeshire) to
- 15.8% (South Cambridgeshire).



# Create a **greener**, **fairer** and more **caring** Cambridgeshire



## We want to be 'greener', because

- The carbon footprint for Cambridgeshire in 2022 was 6.45 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e, with the largest share of this coming from the transport sector, followed by the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector.
- The net carbon footprint (all scopes including indirect emissions, excluding rural estates, and after reductions) for Cambridgeshire County Council as an organisation in 2023-24 was 103,255 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e, with the largest share of this coming from Waste.



## We want to be 'fairer', because

- Cambridgeshire has 16 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the 20% most relatively deprived nationally (as measured by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019), with 11 of these in Fenland, three in Cambridge, and two in Huntingdonshire.
- Life expectancy figures for males and females is differs across the county. The range for males is 78.5 years in Fenland through to 83.1 years in South Cambridgeshire. For females life expectancy is slightly higher than for males. However, there are still inequalities across districts, with Fenland at 82.2 years through to South Cambridgeshire at 85.9 years.



## We want to be more 'caring', because

- Around 4,000 carers were supported in 2024-25.
- There were 1,608 pupils in schools with caring responsibilities identified in January 2025.
- In January 2025, over 8,000 children were supported with Education and Care Plans (EHCPs) – an increase of 70% since January 2020.
- There were 11,886 pupils with special educational needs in schools who receive 'SEN Support' rather than having an EHCP reported in January 2025.
- During the financial year 2024-2025 we received around 6,400 referrals for Children's Social Care. In the same financial year we supported around 1,000 children with an identified disability, of which around 350 actively received support at any one time.
- There were around 4,600 Early Help assessments completed during the financial year 2024-2025.
- There were around 8,400 adults aged 18+ receiving long-term social care fully or partially funded by Cambridgeshire County Council in 2024-25.

Prior to our annual business planning engagement, we lead Cambridgeshire’s annual Quality of Life Survey to understand and track what matters most to people in the county. This helps us make sure our priorities reflect the people of Cambridgeshire’s, and it also guides us about where to focus our business planning engagement.



Key findings of the 2025 Quality of Life Survey include:

| Overall happiness is at its highest point since tracking began                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Residents are exhibiting some healthier behaviours this year                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | A sense of community and pride of place continues to be strong amongst residents                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Cost of living is continuing to put pressure on residents                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Perceptions of the council are most positive this year                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Awareness of Local Government Reorganisation is low; ultimately high-quality services matter most                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| <p>Happiness continues to be higher in Cambridgeshire than the UK overall.</p> <p>Despite this, 28% struggle with mental health and 30% feel lonely, consistent with previous years.</p> <p>Younger people continue to be more likely to struggle with mental health and loneliness than those older, reflecting national trends.</p> | <p>High levels of alcohol consumption (&gt;14 units) and smoking have dropped significantly, in line with national trends.</p> <p>However, there has been a drop in physical activity too. This might be partly due to rising costs – residents say more affordable fitness options would help them to stay healthy, along with more affordable healthy food.</p> | <p>Residents feel people from different backgrounds get on well (80%) and the majority continue to feel that they belong (76%).</p> <p>Residents feel safer in their area in 2025 compared with previous years.</p> <p>Cambridgeshire is considered a good place to raise children (79%) though concerns about children’s safety has increased.</p> | <p>Over half have taken action to cut back due to cost of living in the last year (55%). However, this has dropped since 2023.</p> <p>Some groups remain more likely to have to take action, including disabled residents, renters and those from lower Social Economic Grade, based on the employment status of household’s Chief Income Earner.</p> <p>Residents show increased concern about investment and jobs locally, reflecting a broader concern about the economy.</p> | <p>Residents are more likely than ever to trust Cambridgeshire County Council, agreeing that it offers value for money and that it acts on concerns.</p> <p>Satisfaction with libraries, registration services and park &amp; ride is also highest this year.</p> <p>Roads and pavement maintenance continues to be the lowest area of satisfaction, but satisfaction is higher this year than ever before.</p> | <p>Awareness of local government reorganisation is low, with almost half (46%) claiming to have never heard about it before.</p> <p>Whilst 82% claim to want to know who is accountable for delivering services, this doesn’t necessarily matter if services are delivered to a high quality.</p> |

# Our vision and ambitions for Cambridgeshire



Our Strategic Framework sets out the seven ambitions that will help achieve our vision of a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire:

## Ambition 1

Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes



## Ambition 2

Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable



## Ambition 3

Health inequalities are reduced



## Ambition 4

People enjoy healthy, safe and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs



## Ambition 5

People are helped out of poverty and income inequality



## Ambition 6

Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised



## Ambition 7

Children and young people have opportunities to thrive



Our refreshed [Strategic Framework](#) highlights some of the progress we have made on each of these ambitions.

Whilst we are focused on delivering our ambitions for the people and places of Cambridgeshire, we understand the need to change by innovating and developing the way in which our services are delivered. We have invested around £15 million in change over the last five years, which has helped to reduce operating costs by £117 million annually and allowed us to continue to provide services to vulnerable people.

In recent years we have focused on being Closer to Communities, bringing our services closer to the communities they serve and giving people more say in how services are delivered. This ensures the right services are delivered in the right places. Going forward we want to continue making our services increasingly 'place-based' in this way, which includes new approaches to how our property assets are used.

However, we know that we will have to innovate in other ways to maintain the ability to deliver our ambitions and vision, and to maintain financial sustainability. This includes seeking more digital solutions to service delivery, collaborating more effectively with our partners, and designing our services to prevent the escalation of high need rather than just trying to meet increasing demand.

# The services we deliver

## Services for vulnerable adults

We deliver and commission services that help people stay independent, safe and well, enabling them to live as they choose. It supports adults needing assistance with daily living due to age, disability, or illness, by offering personal care, practical help, and activities that promote their wellbeing and independence. We work closely with health services from the public, independent and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sectors.



## Education services

We provide support for schools and education settings to deliver high quality education for children and young people across Cambridgeshire. This includes supporting schools by providing specialist services that enable improvement in specific areas such as inclusion of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and planning for future school places to meet the local population growth.



## Services for vulnerable children

Children's social care supports children, young people and families who need additional help to protect children and young people from harm and enable them to have safe and secure homes. This includes children and young people who are 'looked after' by the council, which operates as a Corporate Parent in certain circumstances.

# The services we deliver



## **Place and sustainability services (including highways, infrastructure, waste and environment)**

We are responsible for enhancing the county's infrastructure, stewarding the environment and sustainable development. This includes maintaining over 4,500km of roads, nearly 3,000km of footways, 550km of cycleways and 4,000km of public rights of way. We also deliver the guided busways and school street schemes, alongside supporting planning for housing, infrastructure and community safety.



## **Corporate services (including council committees ,customer services, HR, IT, finance, and property)**

These services enable us to carefully manage public funds, employ a skilled workforce and ensure there is effective democratic oversight and leadership by elected officials.

## **Public Health**

We are responsible for understanding the health, wellbeing and care needs of our local communities, commission preventative public health programmes and other actions to ensure health inequalities are tackled so we can help improve residents' health.

## **Community services (including registration and libraries)**

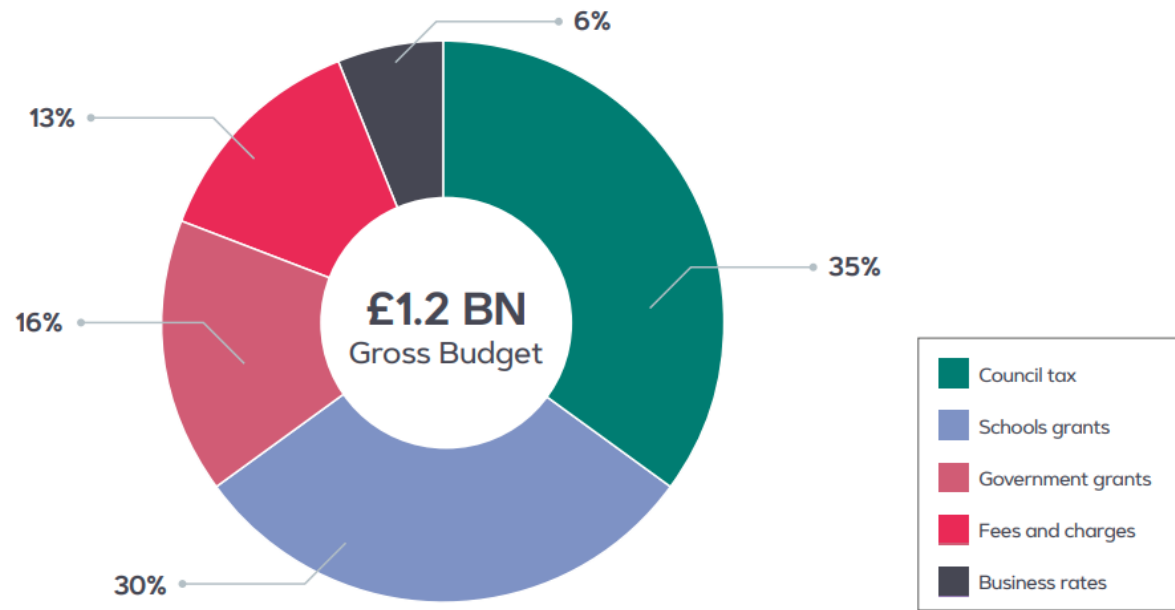
To support our communities, we provide libraries across the county. Our communities services support various community groups such as young people, Armed Forces, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and a unique High Impact User service.

# Our budget and financial challenges

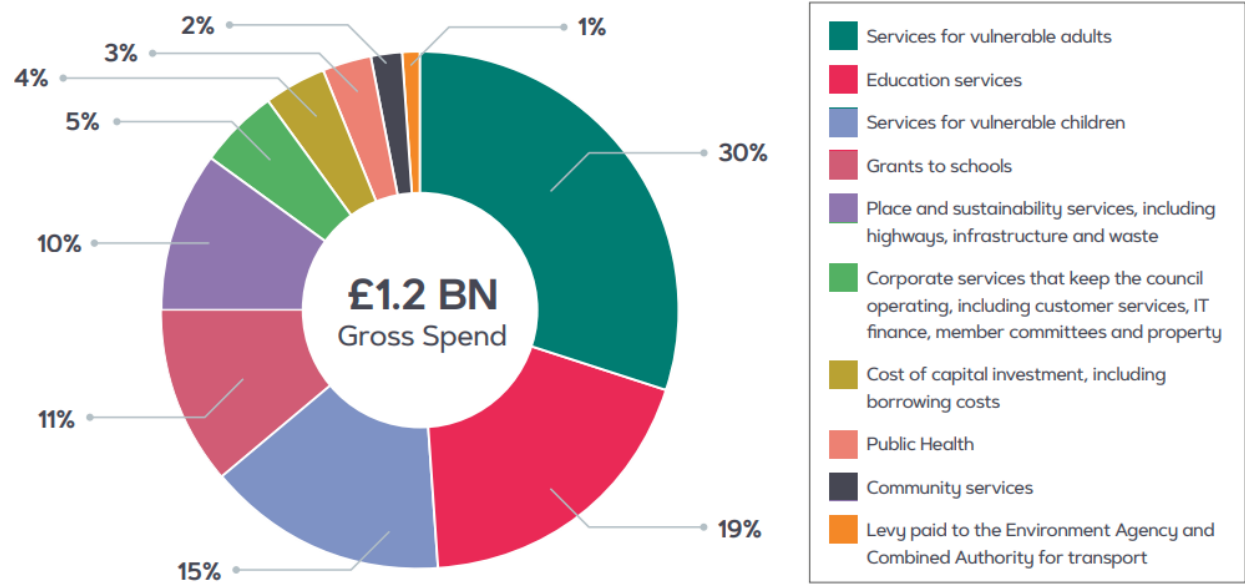


- We are legally required to set a balanced budget annually. This means we must balance our spending against the money that comes to us from Council Tax, a proportion of business rates, Government grants, and the fees and charges that people pay to use some of our services.
- We provide and deliver a wide range of highly valued services for the people of Cambridgeshire – some of which deliver statutory responsibilities (the things we must do) and some of which are discretionary (the things we choose to do). Our services include those related to adults’ and children's social care, education, libraries, highways and transport, environment, waste management, and the internal services that support these public-facing services.
- The following two charts summarise where our budget came from and how it is has been allocated for the current financial year:

Where our 2025-26 budget comes from:



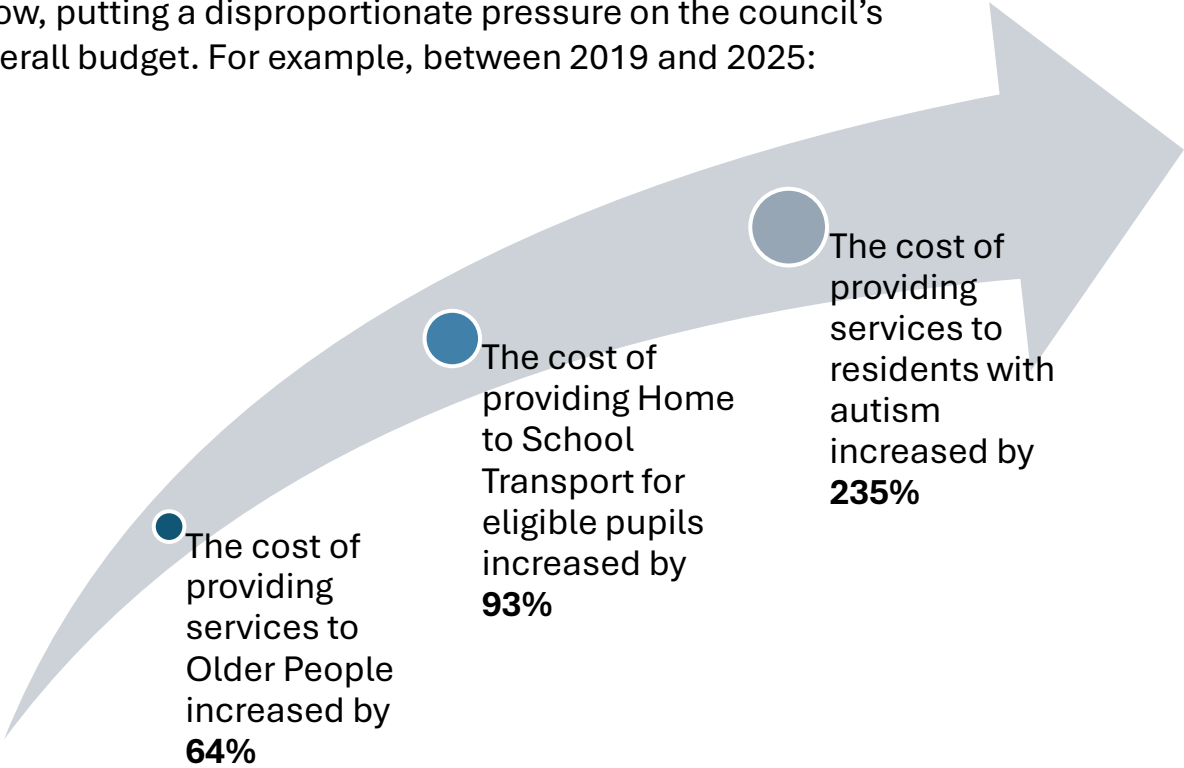
How our 2025-26 budget is spent:



In recent years demand for our services has increased, due to a rising local population and more people facing difficult circumstances. At the same time, increasing costs from inflation and broader restraint in public spending across the country have created an unfavourable financial situation. This means our service budgets have not kept pace with demand, and as a result we have had to make some difficult savings decisions.

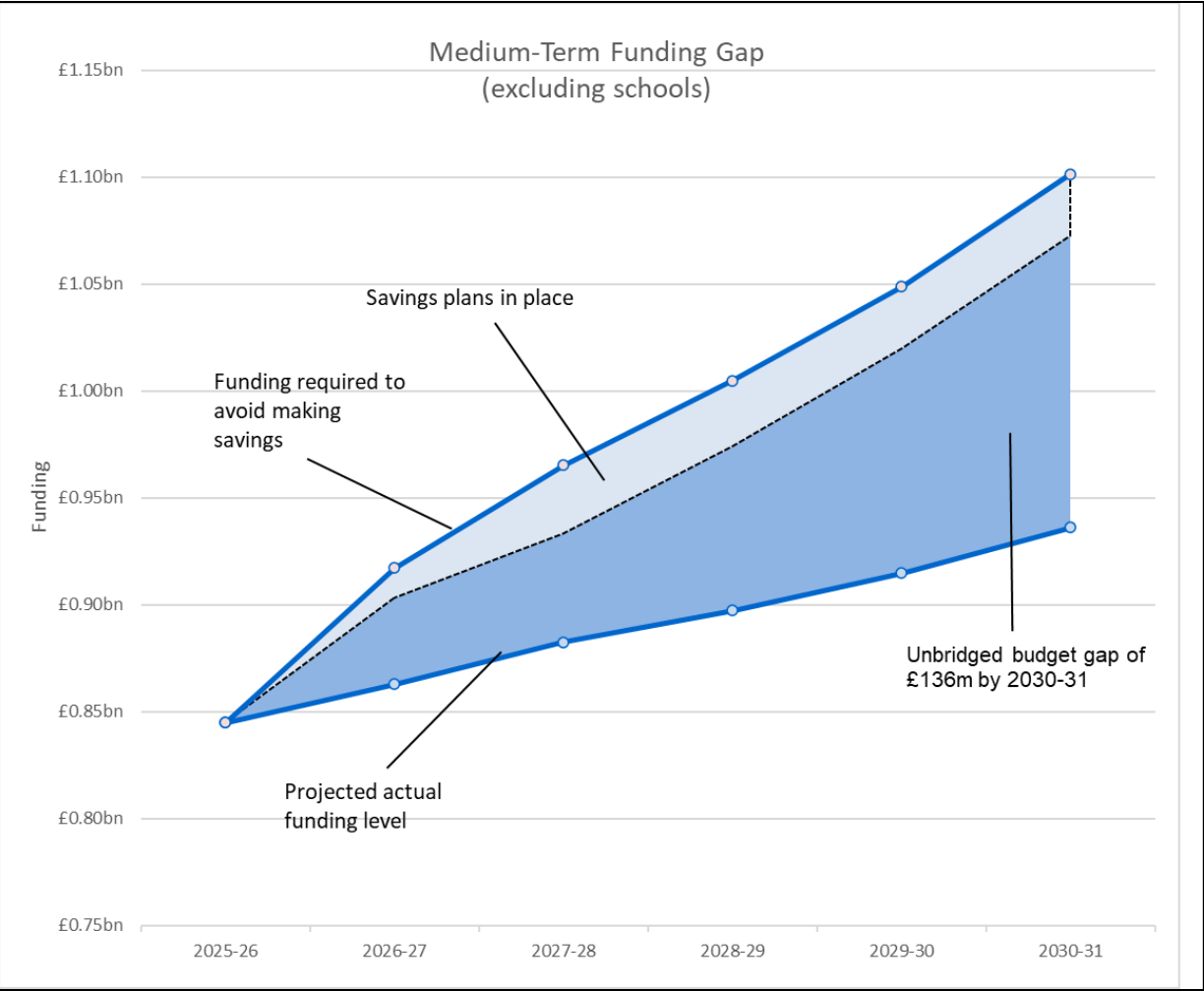


Several service areas are especially seeing their budgets rapidly grow, putting a disproportionate pressure on the council’s overall budget. For example, between 2019 and 2025:



With these pressures, limited annual Council Tax rises alongside the uncertainty of central Government funding currently under review create an environment where we cannot achieve financial sustainability. Without further action at Cambridgeshire County Council over the coming years, we face a £136 million budget gap by 2030-31. Even with current savings identified, we are projected to have an average budget gap of almost £26 million in each of the next four financial years.

The chart below illustrates the gap between our projected funding and the demand on services:



# Looking ahead

We currently have a projected budget gap for each of the next three financial years. We are legally obliged to set a balanced budget each year, and therefore we must close this gap.

Our options for closing the current budget gap are a balance between:

Increasing our income through Council Tax or charging more for our services that people pay to use



Decreasing our spending through efficiencies or reducing some of our services

In the current financial climate, we are aware that many of our residents are struggling with existing costs, as our Quality of Life Surveys from 2023-2025 highlighted.

Over the last few years, we have done a lot to become a more efficient organisation and make sure our services are reaching those who need them the most. However, we still need to do more.

For every 1% that we increase Council Tax, we can increase our income by £4 million.

We are seeking to understand your priorities and opinion about raising Council Tax. This will support our planning and decision making. By completing our survey and sharing your views, you will support us to plan for the future, close our budget gap, and create a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire.