



Budget Planning 2024 - 2025



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What we do and where our money comes from

We provide essential support for those most in need and services for everyone to help make our borough a great place to live, work and study.

Along with most councils across the country, we are facing a huge challenge to find money to deliver current services, and the pressure is increasing.

More people, families and children are struggling and need help, while the costs of delivering services continue to rise. Currently 60p of every £1 of your council tax is spent on these services.

There is a set pot of money available to provide services and meet the increasing needs of families and individuals. The continuing cost of living crisis and our own rising bills, all put additional pressure on this. These pressures have widened the gap between the needs of people in the borough and the funding we have available.



60p of every £1

of your council tax goes to **supporting vulnerable adults and children.**

This does not include the costs of the human resources, IT, digital and finance support needed to deliver these services.

Support for vulnerable adults and children has to be a top priority. We have to focus on core services for the residents who need us most.

During the current financial year (2023/24), we have had £161m to run all of our services. The Local Government Association (LGA) estimates that by 2024/25 the rising cost of services and increasing demand will add £15 billion (almost 29%) to council costs nationally.

This comes on top of a 27% reduction* in the money available to councils to fund services since 2010, leaving them lacking the resilience to meet new challenges.

*After allowing for inflation.

This shows that the Government does not fund local authorities at a sufficient level to keep pace with the increase in costs of delivering services and the rising levels and complexity of need in our communities.

The majority of our core budget relies on what we receive from council tax and business rates.



Increased need for services

More people are in need of vital support. This need is particularly significant in social care for adults and children and in temporary housing.

The national housing crisis is in a critical situation with demand increasingly outstripping supply. We are now providing close to 1,000 families and individuals with temporary accommodation, who we have a legal duty to support. This is estimated to cost £5.2m this year, almost double last year's cost of £2.7m.

We are also supporting over 1,000 of Kingston's most vulnerable children. Demand for home to school transport for children with Special Educational Needs has increased by 15% and the associated costs by 26%.

This means we have to make very difficult choices to balance our budget and focus on ensuring we can deliver core services for those most in need.

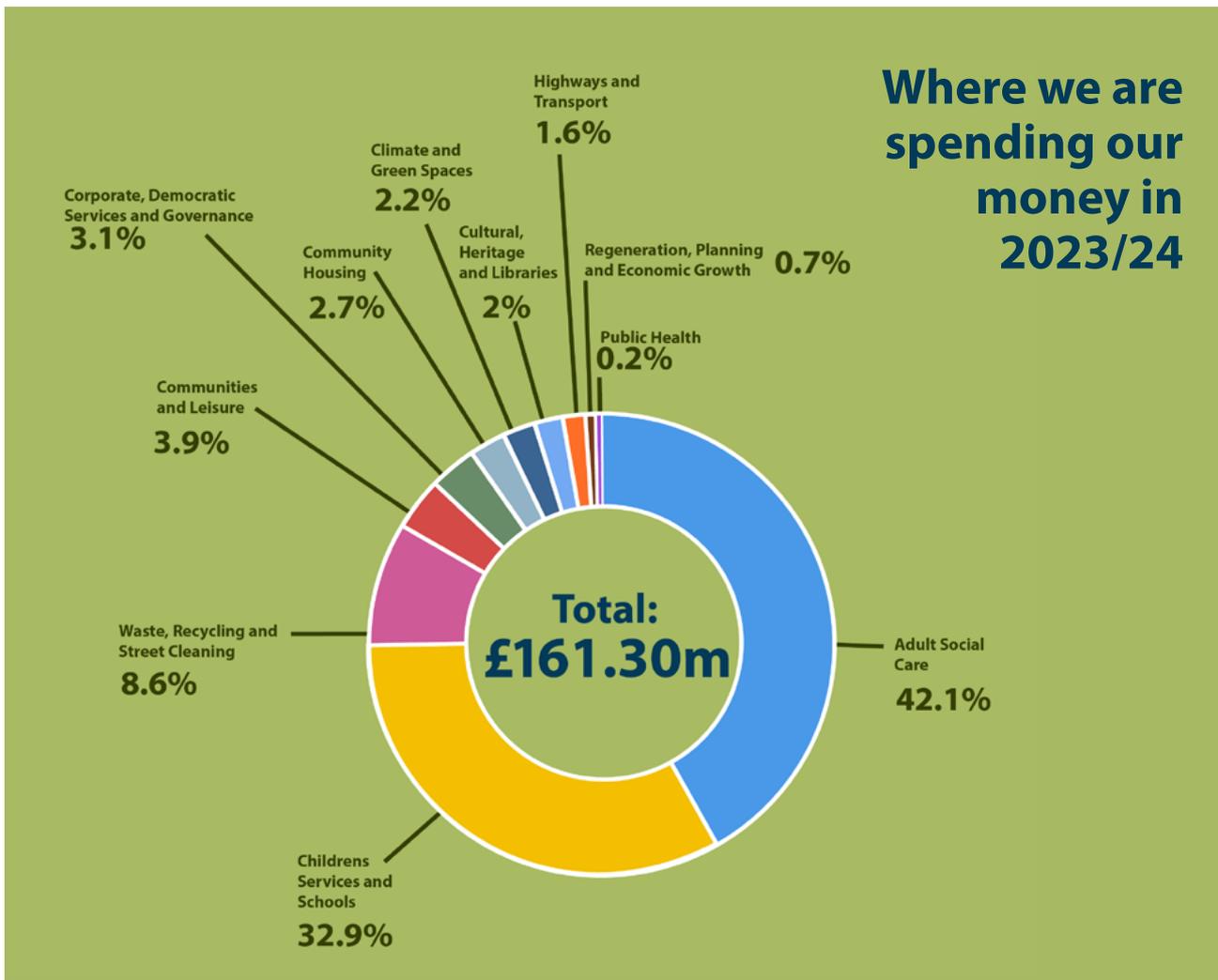
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What we spend our money on

This year we have spent over £100m on social care for children and adults services and providing accommodation for the growing number of people needing temporary housing.

Continued investment in technology has been vital to make services more accessible, information easier to understand, and the exchange of information between care providers more efficient. Technology assists greatly with people’s independence with the provision of in-home equipment.

More complex demand, greater support required and increasing placement costs for children in care and children with additional needs and disabilities have impacted the costs in this area.



Construction began on Kingston's first social housing in a generation at Cambridge Road Estate. The regeneration will provide 2,170 sustainable homes, 871 of which will be council homes - 218 more than currently on the estate, adding vital new homes to our housing stock.

We are also providing 101 new sustainable council homes on four sites in the borough. Families have now moved into their new homes at Arun House in Kingston and more are about to move in at York Way in Chessington.

We continue to work with communities, and Kingston's amazing voluntary, third sector, faith groups and partners to find better, more effective ways to offer services. We are providing funding to help people in different and new ways that will not only meet immediate needs but also provide the infrastructure for the future and the early support to prevent demand in later years.

Together with partners we have been continuing to support residents and communities through the cost of living crisis. Our Community Resilience Fund has so far awarded over 70 grants totalling £567,000 to local groups and organisations supporting communities across the borough. A fund of over £400,000 is committed for grants and commissioning to enable the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector to provide information, advice and guidance services for the borough. Other community grants are distributed at borough, neighbourhood and ward level.

To date from a total fund of £196,000, over £139,000 has been awarded providing accessible activities or projects that benefit residents and make a difference to the local community.

We undertake 800,000 recycling and rubbish collections from homes each month with a recycle rate of 45.5% across the borough between January and September last year. We repaired 2,706 potholes, 3.8 km of roads and 1.5 km footpaths between April and December 2023.

Despite the financial challenges, we are continuing to deliver on our climate action commitments. We are one of the first councils in the UK to replace our waste fleet with 27 electric vehicles, removing 554 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, which is equivalent to taking 270 cars off the road.

We have upgraded 6,160 of 7,034 street lights, replacing them with modern LED bulbs which use half the power of the older street lights. This is saving £220,000 each year, based on current energy costs, and avoiding about 5,050 tonnes of carbon emissions over the next 25 years.

We are enabling residents to make the switch to more sustainable travel by installing 250 new electric vehicle charging points across the borough, and are continuing to improve our cycling network.

A total of seven permanent school street schemes and three trials are making it safer for over 4,500 school children to be more active and walk, cycle or scoot to school, breathing cleaner air on the way to the school gates. Continuing to plant new trees with a further 450 trees planted this winter.



Thanks to your council tax we've upgraded

6,160 street lights, saving **£220k** each year based on current energy costs, and reducing carbon emissions by around **5,050 tonnes** over the next 25 years.

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Our priorities

As the increased cost of living adds more pressure to our financial position, we have to find substantial additional savings. This is a real challenge and requires significant changes to the way to deliver services. It will also mean that some difficult decisions will need to be made about where we prioritise resources.

It isn't just the way our services are funded that has changed in the last few years, the type of support that Kingston's residents need has also changed and new partnerships have been developed to help meet those needs.

We continue to work collaboratively both internally and with our partners and communities to find ways in which we can deliver our services more efficiently. This includes a continued focus on providing support early and promoting health and wellbeing of people in the borough. This means that people can live more integrated and fulfilling lives with the aim of preventing and reducing the need for higher intervention services later on.

In March 2023 we published a four year plan setting out what we aim to achieve for the residents and communities of the borough. The plan was developed using feedback from many conversations with residents, businesses and communities.

Our priorities have four themes - **Fairer, Safer, Greener** and **Together**. We also have a Future Council commitment to ensure the council is managed effectively and responsibly in the best interests of communities and delivery is supported by high quality services.



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Our approach to budget setting and delivery for 2024/25

We are working harder than ever to find even more cost effective and innovative ways of delivering the best possible services for residents. We do not have the money to continue to deliver services in the same way. Our work with partners and communities to do things differently is more important than ever.

We are taking an approach that aims to transform how we deliver services before we need to make cuts or reductions. By doing this we are looking to maintain the best outcomes possible for communities and residents. We are focusing on a preventative approach that seeks to increase early help and support for people within communities and reduces the need for more intensive support later on.

We use data and insight to identify opportunities for improvement as well as working collaboratively with partners and communities and other public sector organisations to find solutions.

We will continue working alongside all partners to respond to community needs, while prioritising our spend, maximising efficiency and empowering community groups.

In 2024/25 we need to find an extra £15.65m to meet the rising costs of and increasing demand for vital services, to ensure we are in a position to transform to meet the needs of those who rely on us most and deliver to our priorities.

That does mean that in order to balance the books, we also need to make savings totalling £8.30m.



COUNCIL TAX

As Kingston's grant funding from central Government is minimal, council tax is a critical part of our income to provide services. Councils can increase council tax by a maximum of 2.99% without the need to hold a public referendum. The threshold at which councils can levy a Social Care Precept (to help cover the cost of providing care services) also remains at 2% for 2024/25. So the total maximum increase without a referendum is 4.99%.



Along with many councils we are proposing increasing council tax to help meet the financial pressures of increasing demand and rising costs.

We understand that any increase will have an impact on residents. However there is a need to balance this with the need to protect services and continue to provide support, advice and care for the most vulnerable people across the borough.

Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to claim an exemption or discount on your council tax. We are currently helping over 7,700 working age and pension age residents with financial support to pay their council tax. You can find out more by visiting [kingston.gov.uk/CouncilTax-exemption](https://www.kingston.gov.uk/CouncilTax-exemption)

While we have been able to balance the budget for 2024-25, this has been even more difficult to achieve than last year. As well as delivering next year's budget commitments, we must continue to take a long term approach to manage the significant budget gap between the money we receive and the cost of delivering services for future years. It is crucial that we keep pace with our budget planning.

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Working with you to shape the future

We have used feedback and insight from residents and communities gathered throughout the year, including our recent cost of living survey, to inform the budget setting process.



To help people across the borough who might be struggling the council's budget will continue to provide;

- financial support to working age and pension age residents with paying their council tax
- community hubs, family hubs and spaces for residents to find support
- grants to the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector enabling them to support communities
- signposting to other organisations that may be able to provide support
- working with partners to provide food banks, community kitchens and other essential supplies
- financial support from the Household Support Fund until March 2024
- ongoing cost of living advice and guidance

Have your say on future budgeting

We are committed to minimising the impact to services through different ways of delivery, working with our partners and communities to save money and identifying reasonable opportunities to generate income.

We will continue to listen to your feedback and provide opportunities for you to have your say as we deliver on the 24/25 budget and continue to move forward with longer term budget setting over the coming months. We are keen to hear your views on how we plan our finances over the next three years.

If you would like to share your views about how you think we should plan our budget and set priorities for the longer term, please visit kingstonletstalk.co.uk/finance/budget-planning-2025-2028 or email engagement@kingston.gov.uk

There are lots of other topics we would like to hear your views on. We use your feedback to change the way we're delivering services and understand what we should prioritise. This has a real impact on the borough, and is part of an important conversation we're building with local communities on Kingston's future. Take a look at kingstonletstalk.co.uk to see the current topics we'd like your views on and the actions we've taken as a result of your feedback.

You can also join our new Kingston Let's Talk Residents' Panel, used as a way to consult with, carry out research and inform people on matters of local interest and importance. Find out more on here kingstonletstalk.co.uk/engagement/kingston-panel



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What's next for the 2024/25 budget?

Full budget proposals will be presented and discussed at:

- People Committee - 6 February 2024
- Place Committee - 8 February 2024
- Corporate and Resources Committee - 20 February 2024
- Budget Council - 29 February 2024

All committees start at 7.30pm and can be watched online at **kingston.public-i.tv**

Information on committee dates, publication of papers and how to submit questions can be found on our website **kingston.gov.uk/committees**

To keep up to date with all the latest news and updates you can sign up for the monthly Your Kingston e-newsletter **kingston.gov.uk/newsletter**

DO YOU NEED ASSISTANCE?

If you need this information in an alternative format (e.g. large print, in another language or an easy read version), please get in touch to let us know via phone 0208 547 5000 or email engagement@kingston.gov.uk

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