

# Tough budget decisions

## Adult social care savings consultation results

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The Council will have £40 million less to spend on adult social care services by March 2019. This is in addition to the £28 million that we have already saved from these services since 2013. We asked for people's views on how we were proposing to make the savings.

**Please note:** During the consultation period the Government announced that council's would have the option of adding a 2% social care precept to Council Tax.

The Council's Cabinet considered the savings proposals, consultation results and equality impact assessments on 26 January. The Full Council then considered the proposals on 9 February.

The approved budget will see £369 million spent on services in the coming financial year. To help lessen the strain on adult social care, Councillors voted to go ahead with the proposed council tax rise by 3.99%.

This newsletter summarises the consultation results. For more details on the approved savings please visit [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/ascbudget](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/ascbudget)

**Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their views with us.**

## Why we consulted

Over the next four years there will be less money for services in East Sussex, even though demand for them is rising. This is mainly because funding from central Government is shrinking.

We have to make savings of between £70 million and £90 million by March 2019. This is on top of £78 million we have already saved since 2010.

For Adult Social Care, we will have £40 million less to spend on services by March 2019. This is in addition to the £28 million that we have already saved from these services since 2013.

This means making difficult decisions about which adult social care services we continue to invest in. The consultation explained how we proposed to make the savings, providing detailed information on the three main areas of saving in the first year (2016/17) and a summary of savings over the following two years.

There are some services that we are required by law to provide. This limits our opportunities for making savings. The three main service areas where we thought the majority of savings would have to be made were:

- The Supporting People programme, which funds a range of services related to housing support.
- Support services, such as educational, occupational, leisure and activity-based services, which we fund the voluntary sector to provide.
- Drug and alcohol prevention services for adults and children.

We asked for people's views on how we were proposing to make the savings. The consultation started on 23 October 2015 and closed on 18 December 2015.

## How people took part

Over 1800 people took part in the consultation, although some people submitted responses more than once. People took part in many different ways:

- 949 people and organisations completed an online or paper survey
- Over 400 people attended one of the drop-in events
- 77 organisations commented (40 via letter/email and 37 via the survey)
- 35 groups or coordinated client responses were received (many of these included multiple responses)
- 365 individuals commented by letter (93), email (84), comment form (189), video (11) and phone calls (6).

There were also a number of petitions.

## What you told us: Key themes

The volume of responses received for the consultation showed the strength of feeling against the proposed savings. There were many responses from people and their families who use the Supporting People and the voluntary sector services that would be affected. Many respondents talked of the stress and worry caused just by the proposals. For the drug and alcohol preventative service proposals the majority of the comments talked about their or other people's need for support and the impact on the community of reducing the services, rather than the specific services covered by the proposal.

### The three main areas of savings

Survey responses showed that people generally disagreed with the three main areas of savings:

- **Supporting People:** 75% disagreed or strongly disagreed

- **Voluntary sector services we fund:** 71% disagreed or strongly disagreed
- **Drug and alcohol prevention services:** 52% disagreed or strongly disagreed

There was recognition of the pressures on the Council's budget and the difficult decisions that the organisation has to make. Many respondents commented on national policies and suggested savings relating to national policies or programmes. Even so, the vast majority of people who responded to the consultation were concerned about the long-term harm that would be caused to people and the services that support them.

People queried the proportion of savings that were coming from adult social care. Towards the end of the consultation period there were also increasing references to the social care precept for Council Tax, with most people urging the Council to adopt it in the county. Some respondents questioned whether the Council could retain its commitment to its stated priorities and whether adult social care would be able to meet its statutory duties if the savings went ahead as proposed. Of particular concern was the cumulative effect that people could experience if they lose support from multiple services at one time.

It was clear from the consultation that many respondents felt that if the adult social care savings went ahead as proposed it would cause serious and devastating harm to people who use the services, their carers and families. Linked to this, a significant number of comments said that lives would be at risk, either due to people not receiving the support they need or because of increased suicides.

Statutory and voluntary organisations would experience additional pressure on remaining services and the risk of closures to organisations, buildings and services would be very real. The cuts to the voluntary sector mean that it

would be less able to step into any gaps in service provision that would be created.

There was also a lot of concern about the community impact through increases in rough sleeping, anti-social behaviour and crime. People also worried about the economic impact on the county in terms of jobs and tourism.

Some people raised concerns about the consultation process, saying it was flawed for a number of reasons: lack of notice, length of the consultation, the complexity of the information, accessibility issues, and unsatisfactory drop-in events.

Many of the comments talked about:

- the fact that many of the services are preventative,
- the value of the services to them or to others,
- the impact on people of reducing or removing funding from services,
- related equality issues and the cumulative impact,
- the risk of closure of buildings, services and organisations, and
- the impact on the community of reducing or removing funding from services.

Download a copy of the full report here: [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/ascbudget](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/ascbudget)

## What happens next

The savings proposals were amended in response to what people told us through the consultation. Everything you told us in surveys, letters, emails and conversations was shared as part of the decision making process.

We will work closely with people to ensure that any changes to services are managed as sensitively as possible. For more information on the approved savings download a summary here: [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/ascbudget](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/ascbudget)