

Budget Summary

From Council Leader, Cllr Pete Marland

On your side in tough times

Milton Keynes City Council is there to serve and support our residents and businesses. The past couple of years have been very difficult, and now with rising prices, increasing energy bills and higher inflation, the next few years will be even harder for hardworking families, those on fixed incomes and for our economy.

We are therefore proposing a budget that ensures the council is on your side in these tough times, with three key themes:

Support for local people in tough times.

Investing in our local economy to ensure good jobs and secure employment.

Providing value for money, cutting waste not services.

Our challenges

Milton Keynes City Council has faced our own challenges for over a decade now, with reduced funding from central government and higher demand for services such as adult social care and child protection meaning we've had to make over £200m in cuts since 2010.

We now also face the problems that you face – such as higher energy costs and inflation – meaning that over the next few years our budget will be squeezed even further.

Next year Milton Keynes Council needs to make £11m in savings in order to balance our budget, with more to be found in 2024/25.

Tough choices

Unless we take action now, the level of savings required to pay to just maintain our statutory services such as social care will mean the council would have to make massive cuts to services such as charging for green waste, closing libraries and our children's centres and reducing the standards of services we provide, such as highways repairs, to balance the books.

Most other councils have already had to make these cuts, and it's getting harder and harder to avoid making them here unless we make some tough choices.

Cutting waste not services

We will always make sure that before we look at cutting frontline services, we get value for money from the council tax you pay us. That is why we are:

- Reducing the number of managers we employ to reduce costs;
- Making our services more efficient and reducing the number of staff we employ;
- Using our reserves to invest in new technologies to reduce our running costs.

We've made over half the savings we've needed by doing this.

Our council tax

Milton Keynes has the lowest council tax in the region, saving you on average over £200 compared to our neighbouring authorities, while still providing higher levels of services. In order to meet the funding challenges facing local authorities, the government has allowed councils to increase council tax by up to 5% in each of the next two years.

We have taken the difficult decision that in order to ensure our financial stability we will increase council tax by the 5% the government allows, which includes a 3% rise in general council tax and a 2% precept for adult social care.

We will also be increasing some fees and charges we make for services the council provides in line with inflation to meet the rising costs of providing them.

Supporting people in tough times

Looking after our finances properly and taking difficult decisions means that while other councils are making cuts, we will be able to use some funding to ease the pressure on hardworking families and those hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis. The budget therefore proposes:

- Support for those on the lowest incomes with an additional £500k.
- Help for working families introducing an Emergency Mortgage Interest Relief Scheme.
- Funding for local parishes, town councils and communities to support local residents.

Keeping our local economy strong

A strong, innovative and resilient economy that ensures well-paid jobs is vital to the future success of Milton Keynes. Milton Keynes City Council is therefore proposing to target support to our local businesses and entrepreneurs to make sure we retain jobs and help those who need support to find a new job by:

- Providing targeted support to keep our local high streets vibrant.
- Investing to attract new businesses to Milton Keynes and retain our major employers.
- Extending our support services that promote local start-ups and retrain those who need to find new employment.

Investing in our communities

We want to invest in services that reduce future costs and improves the lives of our residents at the same time. The budget therefore proposes:

- More funding for improving the maintenance of footpaths;
- Provide council funding for a new radiology unit at MK Hospital to reduce waiting times and allow more cancer treatment to take place locally;
- Additional investment in improving access to children's mental health support.

Protecting essential services

We will continue to do the essentials well and therefore:

- We will maintain weekly bin collections, roll out wheelie bins and continue to not charge for garden waste.
- We will continue to tackle fly-tipping and litter by maintaining our litter warden service.
- We are not proposing any closures of libraries or children's centres.