



## 2024/25 Budget - Leader's Speech

- I can't express how delighted I am to be here this evening presenting Adur's 2024/25 Budget.
- This is the **24th time** in a row I have made a budget speech and nothing was going to keep me away.
- You will be pleased to know that I am holding to tradition - so this will **not** be a short speech!
- It's been another busy year, with perhaps the greatest highlight for our nation being the **Coronation of King Charles the III and Queen Camilla and I personally wish him well with his fight with Cancer.**
- It's also been a year full of challenges. For example, whilst inflation is coming down the cost of living continues to affect everyone, including the council.

- We also have both a **war** in Europe and now conflict in the Middle East and all those affected remain in our thoughts and prayers.

Before I get started on the budget I would like to thank my hardworking and talented **Cabinet** colleagues for all they do. In particular Cllrs Angus Dunn who has stood in for me since before Christmas and Cllr Emma Evans who with my lovely wife Vicky stopped me working and anyone disturbing me.

- I would also like to thank the officers for all the work they have done in preparing the budget - especially **Emma Thomas and the Finance Team.**
- I would also like to thank our **Chief Executive, Directors and the dedicated staff of the council.** For all they do every day. A special mention is called for Mr Martin Randall for whom this will be his last Full Council believe it or not he is retiring. Martin and I go back years , he was working for Brighton and Hove, and I was Vice Chairman of the Area investment framework and Tony Blair was Prime minister. I will have more to say at the next JSC. However on behalf of the Council thank you for all your hard work. Also this week we find out Liz McCarthy is also retiring at the end of March, on everyone's behalf I wish her well.

- Despite challenges, Adur Council has achieved so much this year and through careful and prudent management, I am confident we will achieve even more in 2024/25.
- But the road before us again is not straightforward and we will need to be **both careful and bold** in the months ahead.
- I'm afraid there is no getting away from the **inflationary and service demand** pressures affecting us. The challenges and issues we face are described in detail in the budget report.
- The cost of living pressures not only affect the council of course - they continue to affect our residents and we will continue to do all we can to help those most in need at this difficult time.
- The good news is that despite these challenges our **local economy is stable** and the number of people who are unemployed is below the South East and National averages.
- Adur's economy is a success story.
- This Conservative Administration doesn't daydream or moan about how things could be.

- **It takes responsibility and sorts things out.**
- It listens to its residents, it sets clear priorities, it is not afraid to make difficult decisions and act when needed.
- Adur's economy is stronger because of the actions we have taken.
- We create opportunities for residents to thrive - **to get a job and find a home.**
- The budget presented to you this evening seeks to continue this successful approach - protecting services, supporting the economy and doing all of this within our means.
- I would like to quote **Margaret Thatcher** it summarises the **common sense approach** we are taking in Adur.
- She rejected all sorts of wishful leftie economic daydreaming saying -

**“Our policies are based on things I and millions like me were brought up with: an honest day's work for an honest day's pay; living within your**

**means; putting by a nest egg for a rainy day; paying your bills on time’.**

- Adur is in a better financial state than others east and west of us because of our wise and careful management of our residents’ money.
- Unlike the opposition - this Conservative Administration has **a plan that works.**
- As I said at the start - this is my 24th budget and this is also the 24th time we have had yet another set of **weak budget amendments** from the main opposition and nothing from the rest.
- Where is your vision? What is your alternative plan?
- Whilst the budget presented this evening sets out a number of savings, our ongoing prudent approach means the impacts of savings on services are minimised.
- We achieve this by generating income from services and investments but also through service redesign and the ongoing use of digital technology.
- Our **organisational design programme** for example will deliver significant savings.

- This approach is helping to ensure our budget is balanced, we are able to **replenish reserves** and we are able to deliver our ambitious plans.
- With plenty of challenges ahead, we are further investing in our **rapid improvement digital service** that is transforming and improving services.
- In addition, the recommendation is that **council tax will rise by an average of 2.99%** as this will ensure we are able to resource our plans for investment and recovery going forward, as part of our Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- For a Band D home this amounts to less than **19 pence a week rise** in council tax this year.

**Let's now look at our priorities around sustainability and protecting our environment.**

- This Administration has for many years been leading on sustainability and protecting the environment - it's good to see other councils finally joining in.
- The planet is our home and we need to take care of it.

- I believe a better world is the best gift we can give our future generations.
- Our budget and organisation redesign plans will enable us to continue this work.
- The budget includes supporting our DEFRA backed **Adur River Restoration project** which is a major strategic nature recovery initiative that also bolsters natural flood defences.
- This project is part of our wider **Sussex Bay** programme supported by Esme Fairbairn Foundation that is a leading project nationally for marine recovery.
- Through Sussex Bay we hope to restore kelp forest and improve local fishing stock and this work continues to go from strength to strength.
- In addition to these flagship projects, our **carbon reduction team** continues to drive a programme of works to decarbonise our buildings and fleet helping us to meet our next zero 2030 target.
- Through this work we have already installed heat pumps at the Shoreham Centre and at Shadwells Court and Tollbridge House, two Adur Homes properties.

- The **heat pumps at Shadwells Court and Tollbridge House** are both keeping the bills down and reducing carbon emissions by 80%.
- Work continues with Greater Brighton and Shoreham Harbour on **Hydrogen Sussex**. to establish Adur as a future provider of low carbon green hydrogen.
- As part of this, with support from Ricardo, we are developing a **fleet strategy** to decarbonise and future proof our fleet, charging and maintenance facilities.
- The construction of new homes in Adur continues to unlock funding from developers to assist the design and delivery of **cycling links** through, primarily Lancing and Shoreham.
- The extra investment in cycling infrastructure - including **dedicated cycle lanes, cycle paths, new crossings and safety signs** - are designed to encourage more people to use two wheels to get around the district, improving people's health while cutting pollution caused by traffic. We will continue to work with Shoreham by cycle who keep us very much on our toes.



- Delivered in partnership with Worthing, we now have a **bike hire scheme** in Adur with over 25 bikes specifically based in the town centres and on the coastlines of Lancing, Shoreham and Southwick.
- We are also working in partnership with the County Council to install **EV** on-street charging points across Adur. Even if sometimes they go in the wrong place.
- In the past year we have **planted more trees** and created a new policy to protect trees in new developments.
- We have installed new **recycling bins** along the seafront from Shoreham to Lancing

## **Now onto our priorities around building new homes and improving housing.**

- While **Adur Homes** is funded via a separate Housing Revenue Account its transformation is a key priority for the council and so important to note here.

- A **safe and secure home** is essential for residents to thrive.
- Our commitment to improve the quality and quantity of housing provision in Adur remains a top priority for this administration.
- The work as part of the Adur Homes **Improvement Plan** following self referral to the Regulator of Social Housing is progressing positively.
- Significant capital funding investment will continue to be used to fund **health and safety** works and a rolling programme of home improvement works to ensure our homes meet **decent homes standards**.
- There are 970 people on our Council homes waiting list and we are using brownfield sites across the area to provide residents with quality new housing without the need to build on greenfield land.
- Adur Homes has a pipeline of delivery of new social housing with 14 new units occupied by the end of this financial year and a further **54 new units** estimated for completion in 2024/25.
- The Council continues to develop its **small sites programme** providing new homes at affordable

rent levels set at or below the Local Housing Allowance.

- The council is also undertaking feasibility and capacity studies for a number of other underutilised, brownfield sites which will potentially make up a second round of small sites development.
- The council's focus on reducing **rough sleeping** and homelessness has continued at pace as we seek to meet the challenges of increased demand.
- The council has recently relaunched the **Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Partnership**, bringing together key local partners focusing on how we can collaborate to address this issue.
- The council's approach to achieve an 'Everyone In' approach by working with a range of landlords to make offers of accommodation to everyone who is in need has progressed well.
- This approach is being actively supported by our "**Opening Doors**" scheme.
- The council is seeking to increase its stock of housing for **Emergency and Temporary**

**Accommodation** including the scheme planned for South Street, Lancing.

- In addition to all of this we are enabling a significant number of other developments providing much needed homes.
- At the **Southwick Estate**, in partnership with residents, we are actively looking at the best way forward to address housing issues on the estate and provide quality housing
- Development at **New Monks Farm** has reached an advanced stage with 174 new homes constructed and work underway on remaining phases underway. Phase 2 includes a country park, A27 improvements through Lancing, relocation and extension of the Withy Patch Gypsy and Traveller site, landscaping, two additional football pitches and a school.
- Work to progress the development of the **Western Harbour Arm of Shoreham Harbour** with Shoreham Port, West Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council has continued. A number of schemes are progressing to deliver homes for local people including 200 affordable

homes on Kingston Wharf and 587 new homes at Free Wharf.

- Following the granting of planning permission work is progressing at **West Sompting** to deliver 467 dwellings.
- Work to develop two new blocks of housing on **Albion Street** totalling 49 units has been delayed but through the work of the council is now back on track and will be completed in 2024.
- We have completed the sale of the **Civic Centre** site to Hyde for £6m, with revised plans accepted which provides 159 affordable homes and protects the **poplar tree**, which has now been granted a Tree Protection Order.
- More housing is of course needed but we need to balance the needs for new housing with the impacts on our communities.
- It was for this reason last year I asked for **a review of developments at Shoreham's Western Harbour Arm** and I'm pleased this is progressing well under the Cabinet member for Regeneration and Strategic planning. As part of this work we have set up new groups to ensure new developments at

Western Harbour Arm cause as little impact to residents as possible

- This important work is helping to better balance the number of new homes that are set to be built, along with how much open space and car parking will be provided. It will also examine the likely impact of the additional properties on local schools and ensuring the needed infrastructure is put in place for the community

### **Now onto our priorities around protecting jobs and creating opportunity**

- This year, to support our vision of opportunity, we will continue to invest in our regeneration budget as we **support jobs** and **grow the economy**.
- This work will build upon the support given to our local businesses where we have further developed our **Good Work Programme** that assists people back into work, whilst also helping to address wider wellbeing issues such as mental health, domestic violence, vulnerable housing and addiction.
- We have funded a **Youth Hub** helping young people to secure employment opportunities.

- Regeneration of the Western Harbour Arm is vital for the well being of **Shoreham Port** and our work is unlocking the opportunity for major industrial and commercial activity to locate on the south eastern arm where facilities for modern shipping are more readily provided.
- The council, in partnership with WSCC, have delivered an upgraded public realm at **Southwick Square** that is benefiting both residents and local businesses.
- We have continued to work hard to support our **local markets**. The Markets in Adur, including Shoreham Farmers Market, continue to deliver a vibrancy to our high streets each month, whilst also providing local businesses the opportunity to trade.
- We will also continue to develop our programme of events to add interest and difference across Adur. In 2023, 37,500 people attended over 58 events across Adur including events supported by a dedicated grant scheme to celebrate and mark the Coronation.
- In **Lancing** the ‘meanwhile use’ for the Old police Station called Fabric has supported ‘**Lancing Now and into the Future**’, a resident engagement process that has created a report and number of

aspirations for Lancing. These aspirations are now being used to help guide renewal and regeneration projects for the village and associated funding applications including the Growth Deal in partnership with the county.

- The budget presented to you this evening enables us to progress with these and a number of additional major projects that invest in ideas and back business including the continued development of our **Citizen WiFi** aiming to make Adur one of the most digitally connected places in the south east.

**I'd like to end now on the investments we are making to directly support our communities.**

- A very significant focus of the council has been to respond quickly and effectively to rises in the **cost of living** affecting every household in the district.
- During 2022 and 2023 inflation has been very high and most visibly seen in energy bills and food prices.
- Whilst many households and businesses have been struggling, the living standards and wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents has been prioritised by



the council through our 'Cost of living Roadmap' including:

- Enabling residents to access **No Interest Loans through community banking.**
  - Supporting our **food banks** as the frontline of community action.
  - Supporting the provision of **warm spaces** as accessible spaces for residents to use over the winter months.
  - Keeping people in their **homes** safely.
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- The council has maintained its commitment to providing **Council Tax Support** for the poorest, combined with other improvements including changes to make it easier for residents to claim Council Tax support when they apply for Universal Credit.
  - This work has delivered meaningful financial support for our low income and most vulnerable residents.
  - Work to implement the revised **corporate debt policy** is ongoing, improving support for residents experiencing financial vulnerability by creating fair debt recovery arrangements, and effective signposting for those in need of further support.

- The budget presented to you this evening supports this work and also ensures:
  - The delivery of our **Health and Wellbeing Plan** that aims to help those most in need. This work includes helping residents to access support and advice around mental health, weight management, addiction and social isolation.
  - Our continued support for the **Third Sector**, including **Citizens Advice**, and other local charities and community groups helping the most vulnerable.
  - Our continued investment in our **Safer Communities Team** working with partners to reduce crime, support and help the victims of crime and improve pathways out of offending and reoffending.
  - Continuing our support for residents struggling with their finances through our **Proactive Project**.
  - Through this work we are able to identify households who are struggling and try to help them increase household income, reduce household debt and also address depression, anxiety and loneliness that often accompany financial exclusion.

- The council will continue to work in partnership with **South Downs Leisure Trust** to improve the facilities and opportunities available at our two sports centres and Adur's Swimming Pool.
- Work will also continue to support community groups, clubs and societies in the provision of leisure and sports facilities across our parks and open spaces.
- Other work in our parks and open spaces that will continue include helping with the plan to regenerate the **Southwick FC** site, the improvements at **Buckingham Park's tennis courts** and working with the community to come up with a new plan for an activity site for **Adur Rec**.
- The council is also continuing to work with the **Russell Martin Foundation** to bring **Southwick Football Club site** back into use as an important local facility.
- **Finally and proudly** - Adur District Council has had a longstanding ambition to create a new sports facility for **Buckingham Park**. In order to create capacity to progress this work I'm delighted to say

£1.65m prudential borrowing has been assumed within the 2024/25 budget to support this project.

**In conclusion**, I would like to remind members that this short introduction to the budget represents just some of the key areas in which we will deliver quality public services and make investments for our residents in 2024 / 25.

- The budget challenges and service delivery challenges are real - and I assure you this council is more than up to the challenge.
  
- This Conservative Administration gets things done and in 2024/5 we will:
  - **Deliver on our priorities providing excellent public services and value for money**
  - **Take care of our precious environment and deliver Sussex Bay**
  - **Create jobs and support businesses including Shoreham Port**
  - **Build new homes and improve housing across the district**

- **Help our communities to thrive and as part of this create a new sports facility for Buckingham Park**
- In the face of national and global challenges Adur District Council has and continues to buck the trend and thrive.
- We are sticking to our **common sense plan** that is working: building homes, securing our environment, growing our economy and developing opportunities for all of our residents to thrive.
- I urge you to support this budget and I move the recommendations.

Thank you