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North Somerset Council faces challenging financial outlook

The local authority say they've been working hard to narrow the budget gap - but there's still more to be done



North Somerset Council

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North Somerset Council is warning more savings are still needed - as they face huge financial pressure over the next few years.



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There'll be a meeting next week to discuss a proposed plan before a final budget is published in February.

The picture has improved since their bleak outlook, when councillors last met to discuss the extent of the savings that need to be made, however.

They did face a £50 million budget gap between now and 2028 - but since then, they've narrowed that to just £13 million.

Just under £4 million of that needs to be found for the next financial year.

Cllr Mike Bell, Leader of the Council, said: "We've listened to what local people have been telling us over the past couple of months, and I hope everyone we've spoken to will recognise that.

"People told us that crime and community safety, services for vulnerable people, improving the condition of our roads and pavements, supporting our town and village centres and strengthening the availability of public services are all important to them. We have listened and will make sure that our budget will allow us to continue to focus on these areas.

"They also suggested ways we might be able to save money, and our savings proposals focus on making more efficient use of land and buildings, modernising working practices to cut costs and improve efficiency, targeting resources at the most vulnerable, and making use of technology to support delivery of services."

Executive councillors will meet next Wednesday (6 December) to discuss the progress with financial planning and to approve a draft savings plan ahead of a final budget, which is expected to go before Full Council next February.

Cllr Bell added: "We remain a low spending, low taxing council and we continue to deliver a wide range of services for our communities. However, like councils across the country, we face huge challenges meeting the needs of a growing community while costs go up and government funding goes down.

"We'd hoped for announcements in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement that would see the Government offer much-needed support to Local Government to address areas such as adult and children's social care, but none was forthcoming.

"This makes it incredibly hard for us to plan our budget with any degree of certainty. Our biggest single risk is not knowing how much funding we might get from central government in the next year and years ahead. In order to start to balance the books we've had to make some difficult decisions to increase our income or deliver services differently. Despite this, real challenges remain simply to maintain services at their current level, never mind fund the improvements many residents would like to see.

"We will continue to press government for fair funding in the coming weeks."

You will be able to watch the council meeting next week [here](#).

A public consultation was launched last week, aimed at getting views about what the council should prioritise over the coming years - which you can take part in [here](#).

Read more: [Autumn Statement: North Somerset Council give their reaction](#)

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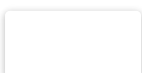
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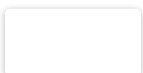
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