

# News Release

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Cabinet plans Budget for local priorities**

A report to next week's Cabinet meeting (13 November) identifies the challenges the Council faces in closing a budget gap projected to be £9m next year and £37m by 2022/23.

Bexley is developing financial plans that will enable it to transform services and deliver its priority programmes within available resources. These programmes include investing in services for the vulnerable, intervening to help prevent the avoidable escalation of people's care needs and delivering new homes and jobs through economic growth and will involve a closer partnership with its partners and residents.

In common with other councils, Bexley has seen a steady decline in its government funding since the mid 2000s, with more significant reductions since 2011/12. This has now reduced by more than 50% since 2010.

Over this period, the Council has worked hard to reduce its operating costs, by innovating, transforming its services and reducing its costs.

Bexley will be launching a consultation after the Cabinet meeting to collect peoples' views on 11 proposals designed to help close the budget gap in 2019/20. They are needed – together with a range of efficiency savings and improved ways of working - to meet the Council's legal responsibility to balance its budget.

"We have a good track record of managing with a budget that is steadily reducing, but this always involves difficult choices," says Council Leader, Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE. "We hope local people will tell us where they think the savings we need should be made, because our aim continues to be to make their lives better."

The feedback from the consultation will be considered in January. The Cabinet will meet again in February to recommend a budget and Council Tax to the full Council in early March.

There is a high level of uncertainty and risk around all councils' finances, which could potentially have a significant impact on next year's budgets, including volatile

economic conditions. The other challenges facing Bexley include -

- Demographic growth leading to increased demand for children's and adults social care
- Increasing number of children with higher educational needs
- Increasing number of homeless households, including those families who have no access to the wider benefit system
- Increasing numbers of children and vulnerable adults needing support to transport them to school and their day opportunities.

Bexley is working to find opportunities for redesigning and reshaping services to reduce cost and increase income by -

- Maximising the potential for generating income and taking a clearly commercial approach where this is appropriate
- Seeking to work differently through partnership and with local communities
- Continuing to search for efficiencies and practicing robust 'housekeeping'
- Looking for opportunities to support residents to do more for themselves
- Re-procuring and re-negotiating contracts
- Exploiting the opportunities that digital transformation can provide
- Making the best use of the Council assets
- Considering what action it can take to influence and reduce demand.

The Council's financial strategy assumes a Council Tax increase of 1.99% next year, but there is the option to increase it by a further 1% without a local referendum.

Next week's Cabinet meeting takes place at the Civic Offices Bexleyheath and is open to the public. You can watch the meeting live online or afterwards at <https://bexley.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>. The papers considered at the meeting are available online at <http://democracy.bexley.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=149&MId=28699&Ver=4>

**'ENDS'**

The papers for the meeting will be published this afternoon (5 November).

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Attachments

- Cabinet plans Budget for local priorities [Cabinet plans Budget for local priorities](#)