

County Council 15 December 2023

Item 10(a) – Notice of Motion amendment from Cllr Wall

For 2024/25 and beyond, councils are experiencing budget pressures greater than those experienced at any time before. The Local Government Association (LGA) reports that councils have experienced a 27% real terms cut in core funding **from** central government since 2010. Meanwhile, cost and demand pressures will have added 29% to the cost of delivering council services between 2021/22 and 2024/25.

Cost pressures are particularly acute in adult and children's services for all councils including West Sussex County Council. These include but are not limited to the cost of increasingly complex care alongside the increasing difficulty of finding appropriate provision within the care market, more requests for Special Educational Needs (SEND) support than can be processed each month, and continually rising costs in home to school transport. **It is currently projected that** Children's services **will** accounts for £22.8m of WSCC's predicted £26.5m overspend **on portfolio budgets** this year.

This Council has consistently lobbied the Government for increased funding for all of the services referenced above, especially recognising the need for a considerable increase in the funds needed to provide appropriate levels of services for vulnerable people, alongside adequate funding for those services used by all residents, such as Highways and Library services.

Despite ***In view of the challenges being faced and the continued*** lobbying of government by the County Councils Network and the LGA and of our MPs by this Council, ***the Council is disappointed that*** the Government provided ***little or*** no protection for ***council services*** councils from real-terms cuts in the Autumn Statement and there was no increased funding in children's and adults' services.

Alongside other county councils, West Sussex County Council ***remains*** is in the ***likely*** invidious position of having to ***propose an*** increase ***in*** council tax by the maximum available during a ***difficult financial time for our residents*** cost-of-living-crisis whilst also having to find savings ***through efficiencies*** from the services it offers to residents. Even with this there is currently a predicted shortfall of £4.4 m in the council's budget for 2024/25 with a cumulative budget gap out to 2026/27 of £51.1m and of £91.8m out to 2028/29.

Therefore, this Council ***strongly supports*** calls-on the ***efforts of the*** Leader ***and Cabinet*** to:

- (1) ***Continue to support*** Call-upon our MPs to make the cause of adequate funding for West Sussex County Council their top priority in the final year of this ***Parliament*** government;
- (2) ***Continue to call*** upon the Government to urgently address the acute financial challenges affecting councils in order to protect the local services our communities rely on;

- (3) **Continue to back** the County Councils Network calls for emergency funding for children's services this year and next;
- (4) **Continue to back** the LGA's calls for a long term plan for adequate council funding from government; and
- (5) Write **once again** to the Secretary of State and our MPs to lobby for an urgent injection of funding before our budget needs to be set in February 2024 and for the local government financial settlement to **set out** ~~guarantee~~ adequately increased funding ~~out~~ to at least 2026/27 to allow for certainty in planning.