

Financial Strategy








INTRODUCTION

In the years preceding this Strategy Sevenoaks District Council has proven itself to be highly successful in some of the most austere and challenging times faced by local government. This was only possible because of our award winning financial strategy and the achievement of a self-sufficient balanced budget within our unique 10-year budget framework.

The absolute need and desire to support our local businesses and people in our communities during the Covid-19 pandemic placed an unforeseen and difficult challenge on the Council and its finances. Using our previous experience and following our principles, we acted early, bringing forward our budget setting, making incredibly difficult but necessary savings to maximise the opportunity for a much stronger financial position in the medium to long-term.

Our Financial Strategy enables the Council to deliver its services effectively, in accordance with the priorities set out in the Corporate Strategy. At the same time, it ensures that our spending is prioritised to deliver the promises our Members set out in the **Council Plan themes**:

-  Environment
-  Economy
-  Housing
-  Community Safety
-  Health

OUR FINANCES

Our Vision Long-term financial health to deliver exceptional services and achieve the promises set out in the Council Plan.

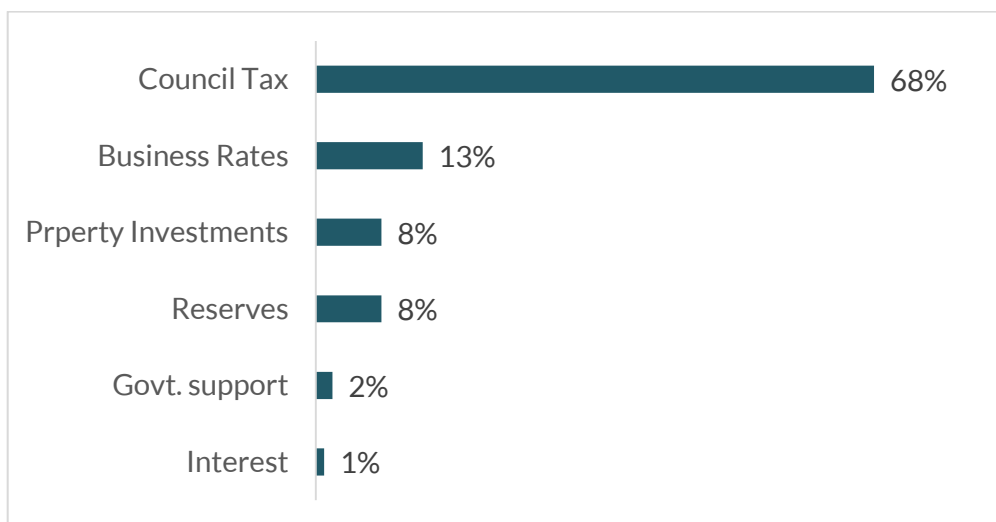
What's important to us:

- Our budget supports the Council's vision and priorities
- Taxpayers and customers receive quality services and value for money
- Innovation, efficiency and cost-effectiveness
- Maximising income from grants and other funding opportunities
- Taking a commercial approach where it will benefit our budgets and our residents and local businesses
- Good quality, risk managed investments to generate more income for local priorities

To be successful, we must:

- Remain financially self-sufficient
- Be clear about the Council's future financial prospects, with a ten-year budget as an integral part
- Ensure a strategic approach is taken to the management of the Council's finances, Council Tax, and budget setting
- Make effective use of reserves and capital receipts
- Manage our money carefully, monitor monthly and constantly strive for better value from our spending

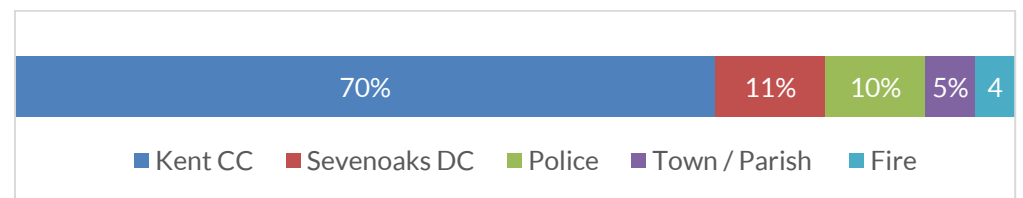
WHERE OUR MONEY COMES FROM



COUNCIL TAX

Sevenoaks District Council collects the Council Tax charge for itself but also for Kent County Council, Kent Fire & Rescue Service, Kent Police & Crime Commissioner and all the local town and parish councils. Each authority sets its own charge that contributes to the total.




Sevenoaks District Council's part of the charge at Band D is £224.91, 11% of the total. Council Tax contributes about £11.4million to District Council services.



WHERE OUR MONEY IS SPENT

In 2021/22 the Council will spend about £16.8million on services for local people

	Cleaner & Greener £5.7m
	Development & Conservation £0.9m
	Housing & Health £1.0m
	People & Places £0.6m

	Finance & Investments £3.1m
	Improvement & Innovation £5.7m
	Other -£0.2m

OUR PRIORITIES | By keeping a focus on our priorities we will deliver our vision

Financial self-sufficiency



No longer relying on direct government funding gives greater certainty to our financial planning. It allows for long-term plans to be developed over our 10-year budget period.

- We will produce high quality financial reports and monitor our budgets every month
- We will address growth items and service pressures annually through the budget planning process
- We will manage inflationary pressures and prudent assumptions about future pressures and keep them under regular review

Savings & reserves



Creating a culture where there is a continuous drive for better value in our spend helps to create savings to balance our budgets. Alongside flexible and effective use of reserves, it allows for sustainable solutions to financial pressures

- We will seek to deliver a minimum of £100,000 in savings annually
- We will regularly review the use of reserves and maintain a minimum balance of 10% of the Net Service Expenditure budget.
- We will make flexible use of the Budget Stabilisation Reserve to increase resilience in the budget setting process

Income & investments



Making best use of the Council's reserves and carefully managed borrowing generates 10% of the Council's annual budget. Seeking new opportunities for funding from grants and investments is increasingly essential to the Council's financial sustainability.

- We will bid for external funding
- We will adopt a commercial approach where it will be of benefit to our budgets and support the delivery of Council priorities
- We will make investments in property and banks and institutions to bring in income to support the delivery of Council services

Delivering our Financial Strategy

Our Financial Strategy is supported by a number of related strategies and an action plan to help us achieve our vision and to deliver the ambitions set out by Members in the Council Plan.

How we work as a team of officers is critical to the success of the organisation and to help us achieve our aims, the Financial Strategy seeks to unite us all behind the same priorities and approach.

The outcomes we hope to achieve and the measures that will help us to determine whether we have been successful are set out below.



Outcomes and success measures

Financial self-sufficiency					
	Financial plans ensure there are no unplanned reductions to Council services		Overall proportion of Council budgets funded by income from council tax does not increase		A balanced 10-year budget is delivered annually

Savings & Reserves					
	Annual savings exceed the £100,000 target whilst continuing to protect services		The General Fund reserves retains at least 10% of the Net Service Expenditure budget		Specific savings agreed as part of the annual budget process are achieved as planned.

Income & Investments					
	Successful bids for external funding generate new income and opportunities for the Council		Income from paid for services is in accordance with budget costs, is comparable to neighbouring authorities and is considered to provide value for money		Treasury Management, Property and commercial investments exceed expected yield