



EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Council Tax and Budget Information 2023-2024



East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service is not alone in facing pressure on its budget during the current cost of living crisis primarily from inflation, higher than expected increases in pay and future funding uncertainties.

By law East Sussex Fire Authority must produce a balanced budget and cannot spend more than it receives.

The Fire Authority has agreed an increase in Council Tax of £5 (at Band D), the maximum allowed without a referendum, in order to help navigate these pressures.

Fire Authority Chairman Roy Galley said:

“No-one on the Fire Authority takes the decision to raise Council Tax lightly.

The fact remains we have limited options to balance our budget in the face of inflation and other increasing costs, and Council Tax is our primary source of funding. We are also aware that support will continue to be available through local Council Tax Support Schemes.”

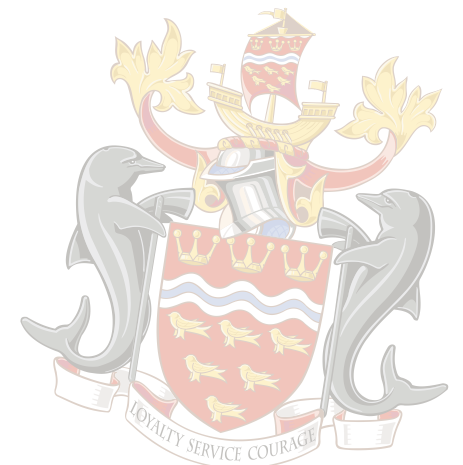
What you pay for fire and rescue - council tax bands

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
Annual Cost	£69.58	£81.18	£92.77	£104.37	£127.56	£150.76	£173.95	£208.74
Weekly Cost	£1.34	£1.56	£1.78	£2.01	£2.45	£2.90	£3.35	£4.01

Sound Financial Management

In its latest report, His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services stated: “The service delivers sound financial management. There are regular reviews to consider all the Service’s

expenditure, including its non-pay costs. This scrutiny makes sure the Service gets value for money.” The Service was rated good for both efficiency and effectiveness.





Budget gap

A budget gap remains despite the increase in Council Tax and as of 9 February 2023:

- the budget gap for 2023/24 was £0.636m, and the Fire Authority agreed that this is funded by the use of reserves.

- the amount required to balance the budget for 2024/25 based on current modelling is £0.721m.

The Fire Authority does not have to take final decisions on its budget for 2024/25 until February 2024 but has agreed a number of proposals for additional savings.

You can find the latest information on our website www.esfrs.org

These measures mean East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service is in the best position it can be to continue its work to provide emergency response, fire safety regulation and community safety programmes.

What we spend:	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	% of budget	How we are funded:	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	Proportion %
Employees	31.2	33.7	75%	Government Grants	3.9	4.1	9%
Running Expenses	11.7	12.2	27%	Business rates	8.6	9.7	22%
Capital Financing	0.9	0.9	2%	Council tax	29.3	31.3	69%
Gross Service Expenditure	43.8	46.8	104%	Total Funding	41.8	45.1	100%
Income & Specific Grants	(2.6)	(2.6)	(6%)				
Contribution to Reserves*	0.6	0.9	2%				
Net Budget Requirement	41.8	45.1	100%				

*The contribution to reserves is the net figure of all reserve transfers and includes the £0.4m drawdown from reserves to balance the budget.

Our plans for the future (our revenue budget)

The additional income from Council Tax along with the better than expected Local Government Finance Settlement, savings of £1.3m and reserve contributions of £0.6m will help us balance the Authority's budget in 2023/24.

Our revenue budget (for day-to-day spending) will increase by £3.3m, mainly due to inflationary pressures. Pay agreements exceed previously agreed budget provisions and there is pressure on running costs, including utilities and fuel.

Investing for the future (our capital budget)

As well as our day to day spending, in 2023/24 we will be investing £8.4m in our assets, including: £3.7m in new fire appliances and other vehicles and £4.7m in improving our buildings. The investment in our estate includes mitigating the risk of contaminants, improvements to reduce energy consumption and the provision of welfare facilities. We expect this investment and other measures will reduce the day to day running costs of our Estate.

Income from the sales of our old HQ and other buildings, the community infrastructure levy fund (CIL) along with other money we have and are planning to put aside are funding some of the Capital Asset Strategy, nevertheless the Authority is expected to require new borrowing from 2023/24, the first since January 2008.

