



Your Council
Working for Swindon

2021
2022

Introduction

Councillor David Renard
Leader of the Council



Welcome to this year's council tax booklet which gives an overview of where the Council's money comes from and how it is used to serve Swindon and the Borough's 220,000+ residents.

It is with immense pride to see first hand how the Swindon community continues to rally round, nearly a year on since the first national lockdown. The kindness, compassion and resilience shown by residents, volunteers and staff across the public, private and voluntary sectors has been impressive.

Every day, the ongoing vaccine rollout brings us all a step closer to better times. In the meantime, we have worked hard over the past year to be there for our residents and businesses.

More than ever during the pandemic, thousands of

vulnerable children and adults have relied on the Council for their care and safety. I'm grateful and inspired by how our staff have managed to maintain services, adapting to fast-moving events.

Providing care and the best possible quality of life to our vulnerable children and adults is an essential but expensive task. The high level of need means the costs of these services is expected to account for over 80% of the Council's budget this year and is why your council tax bill is going up.

In the following pages you can read how the Council continues to fight Swindon's corner, recently securing £25m and submitting a bid for an extra £25m in government funding.

I'd welcome your feedback on this booklet via this online survey: smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ctaxbooklet

This booklet costs 14p per household to produce. To find out how to switch to a digital bill and access this booklet online, visit swindon.gov.uk/annualreport

If you require this booklet in another format email: customerservices@swindon.gov.uk

Overview of the Council's budget

Our net budget for 2021/22 is £153.3m. This is funded by council taxpayers, a share of the business rates collected locally and government grants.

We use our budget to provide hundreds of services to Swindon's residents. While many of our services are highly visible, like waste collections or road maintenance, many others go unseen, such as providing foster carers for children in crisis, caring for older people and supporting rough sleepers.

Over the past year, more people have relied on these council services than ever before, with many residents facing difficult challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over 80% of this year's budget will be spent on helping the most vulnerable members of our community, and with demand for these services continuing to increase it means a lot less can be spent on other services.

To continue to keep up with this demand, the Government has given councils an additional social care grant for 2021/22 and has allowed councils to raise council tax through the adult social care precept you will see on your bill.

However, to keep our budget balanced, which is required by law, we also need to deliver savings and the budget includes savings of £7.8m.

This year's average council tax bill has increased by 4.99%. This includes a rise of 1.99% for general funds (which can be spent on any services) and 3% which can only be spent on adult social care.

For more detailed information on your bill please visit: swindon.gov.uk/annualreport

The financial impact of COVID-19

What impact has the pandemic had on the income we receive and the money we spend?

The pandemic has affected the Council's ability to generate income in several areas, for example through the reduction or suspension of car parking charges and the closure of museums. We have also increased our spending in some areas, most notably in adult social care, and have taken on additional responsibilities, including sourcing and distributing PPE, supporting those shielding and helping with outbreak control.

What financial support have we received over the past year from the Government?

We have received over £16.7m in COVID-19 emergency funding from the Government, as well as various other financial support programmes, including outbreak management funding (£3.2m), infection control grant (£3.4m) and hardship funding (£1.5m). In addition, the Government has established an income compensation scheme for up to 75% of eligible income losses.

Has my council tax bill gone up in 21/22 because of costs and lost income caused by the pandemic?

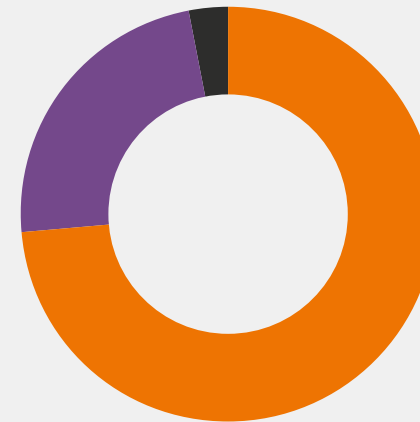
No, the increase in council tax is due to the continued increase in demand for, and the cost of services, particularly in adult social care, as well as the costs of financing the Council's capital investment programme.

How has the Government planned to support the Council with the costs of the pandemic over the forthcoming year?

Over the next year, further support from the Government will be provided in the form of a general grant of £5.7m to meet COVID-19 funding pressures and an extension to the income compensation scheme to 30 June 2021. This support will help us manage COVID-related budget risks in the forthcoming year.

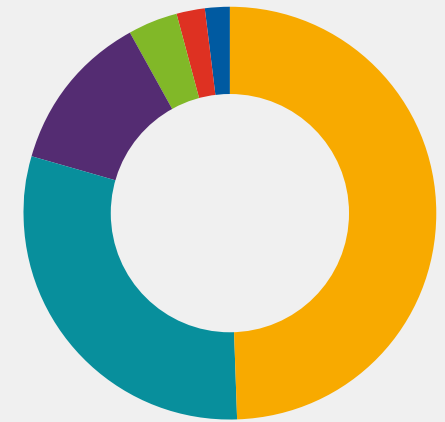
Where the budget comes from and how it is spent

Where the budget comes from



Council Tax	£113.0m (74%)
Business Rates	£35.9m (23%)
Government Revenue Support Grant	£4.4m (3%)
Total	£153.3m (100%)

Where the budget is spent



Vulnerable adults	£76.1m (49.6%)
Children, families and community health services	£46.1m (30.1%)
Waste collections, country parks and tree maintenance	£18.9m (12.3%)
Economy, development, skills and libraries	£6.2m (4.1%)
Keeping people safe (incl. community safety, emergency planning and trading standards)	£3.3m (2.1%)
Highways and buildings	£2.7m (1.8%)
Total	£153.3m (100%)

How you help change the lives of those most in need

When you pay your council tax, over 80% of what you pay helps fund services which support vulnerable people across the Borough including the elderly, people with disabilities and children who cannot live with their families.

While only a relatively small proportion of people need these services, they are incredibly important to those who depend on them, especially during the ongoing pandemic when many of those vulnerable people remain most at risk.

Last year, your council tax directly helped to support some of the Borough's most vulnerable including:

13,012

Children given support from our Early Help services, which include health visiting, youth engagement, family support and mental health support

120

Children who couldn't be cared for by their parents either placed with extended family members or with a foster family living in or near Swindon



803

Residential or nursing care placements provided for adults who are too vulnerable to live by themselves



278

Adults helped to live independently in supported living accommodation

1,727

People supported to return home from hospital

1,085

Adults given daily help to live independently at home

Helping our town bounce back

The coronavirus pandemic has had a major impact on businesses and economies across the world but we're doing all we can, along with our partners and Swindon's innovative business sector, to encourage economic recovery and growth in our town.

Here are some of the ways we are supporting businesses through the pandemic:

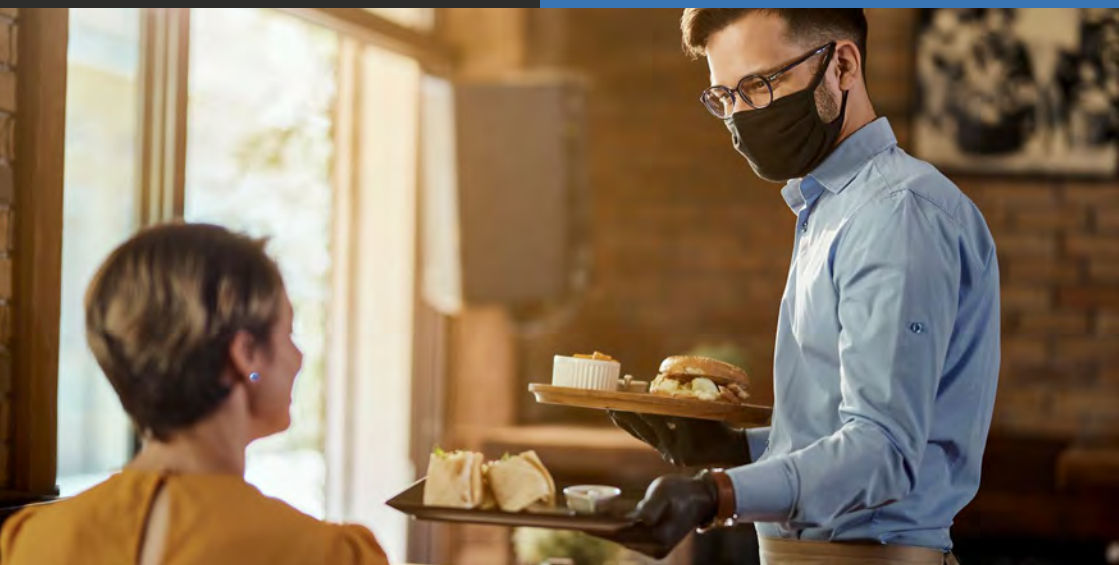
- More than £38m of lifeline grant funding has been distributed to local firms to help them get back on their feet.
- A fast-track system for pavement licences was introduced to help hospitality businesses serve their customers outdoors, supporting with social distancing to keep their staff and customers safe.
- For those who need it, we continue to signpost to vital financial and well-being support organisations.
- Help continues to be provided to businesses, including retailers and pubs, to reopen safely when guidance permits them to do so.
- We continue to work with the local business community to create new uses for the changing town centre.

Outside of our response to the pandemic, our role as a council involves doing what we can to support the success of Swindon's wider economy. We continue to promote the profile of Swindon as a great place to live, work and invest, whether this is through attracting new employers and external investment to the town or supporting the employers currently based here.



Other ways we're supporting the town's economy include:

- **Strengthening the growing tech community:** The TechSwindon campaign showcases Swindon's emerging tech cluster. The role of this group of local companies is to promote Swindon, attract talent, encourage inward investment and create jobs.
- **Supporting businesses through redundancy:** We continue to provide businesses with the support they need, including helping Honda of the UK Manufacturing and its wider supply chain to minimise the impact of its closure and encourage it to consider the best outcomes for the site.
- **Creating new employment site opportunities:** Employment sites have been incorporated as part of the New Eastern Villages housing development. As part of a £400m investment at Symmetry Park (photo above), one of the units is already occupied by Iceland and construction is well underway on a new state-of-the-art building, providing 2,000 new jobs. Work is underway to identify further employment land to support local business growth and attract inward investment.
- **Delivering next-level internet speeds:** We're working with fibre broadband providers to enable the infrastructure to offer residents and businesses next-level internet speeds.



Improving our town centre

Like many other places, Swindon's town centre faces some difficult economic challenges, particularly as consumers continue to favour online shopping. However, our role is to do everything we can to attract investment and work with partners to overcome these challenges.

While there is no simple solution, our actions have secured big investments in new town centre projects from both businesses and government. These are a huge boost for Swindon and the local economy, helping to kick-start the town centre's transformation.

- **We received £25m** of government funding to redevelop Fleming Way, creating a new gateway into the town centre.
- **Work is underway** on Zurich's new state-of-the-art offices which forms part of a council-led regeneration scheme at Kimmerfields (photo below).
- When this booklet went to print, we were expecting a decision on **our bid for £25m** from the Government's Towns Fund to be used towards several regeneration projects to improve the visitor experience in the town centre.
- Last year, proposals were approved to **seek external funding** to create a new Cultural Quarter that includes the development of a new theatre, dance centre and media facility.

Heritage Action Zone

We are working with Historic England on a £1.6m plan to revitalise Swindon's Railway Village. We will enhance paths and public spaces and will raise awareness of the area's history through a programme of cultural events. Key buildings will receive much-needed attention including:

Health Hydro (photo below)

We've allocated £1.5m towards improvements to this iconic building and have submitted a bid for a further £5m from the Government's Towns Fund. This funding will enable a complete refurbishment to ensure the long-term future of the building and to provide a major historic leisure attraction in our town centre.

The Carriage Works

In 2020, we refurbished a third unit of the Carriage Works, in which the Royal Agricultural University has established a Cultural Heritage Institute. Over the next year, a government grant of £4m and a potential additional £5m from the Towns Fund, will fund the delivery of another two units.

Mechanics' Institution

Last year, a hazardous materials survey was completed to enable structural engineers to safely enter the building and assess its current condition. The next steps are to estimate the likely refurbishment costs and create a detailed business plan for the restoration of the non-council owned building.



#HereFor Swindon

Over the past year, we have provided support to more residents than ever, with many people facing challenges they've never had to worry about before.

Here are some of the ways we have been here for Swindon during the pandemic:

Recruited
396
new
volunteers
to support
vulnerable
residents



1,213,796
pieces of PPE
distributed



Found
accommodation
for over
40
rough
sleepers



1,471
food boxes
delivered



3,364
prescriptions
delivered



Over
£38m
processed
in business
grants



909 children
of critical workers
or vulnerable
families
given
free
childcare



Helped distribute
£241,000
in self-isolation
support
payments



28,668
letters sent to
shielding
residents



Helped re-schedule
483
weddings



6,413
emergency
response visits
from our
Homeline
team



30,448
library book
reservations and
orders through
Click,
Call &
Collect



609
free parking
permits
for NHS
staff, key
workers and
charities



8,180
welfare
calls
made



252
colleagues
redeployed
to support
vital
services



Supporting residents through the pandemic

Over the past year, residents in Swindon have volunteered their services like never before, to support one another and show their community spirit, despite the challenges many of us have faced.

We've worked closely with local partners, our voluntary sector and Swindon's residents to provide as much support to those who need it as possible, particularly to those who are most vulnerable.

Facilitating COVID-19 testing in Swindon

We played a key role in establishing the COVID-19 testing sites available in Swindon, to make sure all residents who have symptoms can easily and promptly access testing. This year we also set up new community sites to support symptom-free testing of those unable to work from home.



Recruiting local volunteers

Last year we worked with our partners in the voluntary and community sector to launch Compassionate Swindon, a new initiative aimed at helping our town's most vulnerable residents who were required to shield. We recruited over 200 volunteers to provide practical support to those who were shielding or who were isolated during the first and second lockdown. Our volunteers continue to work alongside us, offering befriending support and assisting people in practical ways to regain their independence either at home or when leaving hospital.

Delivering locally enhanced Test and Trace

Our public health local contact tracing team continue to enhance the national NHS Test and Trace system at a local level by contacting positive COVID-19 cases the national programme have not been able to reach. The team have so far successfully contacted over 700 local people, helping to reduce the spread of the virus in our local community.

Helping to vaccinate Swindon

Since December, the STEAM Museum has acted as a vaccination site for residents in Swindon and we have recruited a number of local volunteers to support us as car park marshals and patient co-ordinators.



Keeping Swindon moving

As Swindon continues to grow, several projects are underway to improve our road network, along with providing routes for sustainable transport. This includes investing over £100m in major schemes to reduce congestion and improve your journey times.

This considerable investment has been made possible thanks to the Council obtaining significant funding from Central Government. This money needs to be spent by a certain time, which is why many of the schemes are currently running in parallel. We have carefully planned and co-ordinated each project in order to minimise disruption to drivers and residents.

For the latest news relating to the Borough's roads, including the major schemes underway, subscribe to the Council's Highways News e-newsletter: swindon.gov.uk/highwaysnews



Improving the road network at the New Eastern Villages (NEV)

Work to upgrade White Hart junction has made good progress, with improvements at Gablecross junction, Piccadilly roundabout and Nythe Road also underway. Once complete, the capacity at these junctions will be increased to support the NEV housing development.

Last year, £19m of Housing Infrastructure funding was approved so that the Council could build the Southern Connector Road, a key link road joining up the NEV development with the Commonhead roundabout.

Repairing our roads

In 2020, we filled over 5,382 potholes and carried out major road resurfacing across areas in North Swindon (photo above).



Funding improvements to Junction 15

We have teamed up with Highways England and Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver £17.5m of improvements to Junction 15 of the M4, including the addition of a new lane on the A419 for London-bound traffic.

The scheme is well underway and, once complete, will improve journey times and reliability for motorists by tackling congestion at both the busy M4 junction and on the A419, particularly at peak times.

Creating the Wichelstowe Southern Access

Significant progress has been made on this new road into Wichelstowe beneath the M4, which will provide easy access to the new housing development and help reduce congestion in other areas of the town.

Taking action on climate change

Climate change is the biggest environmental threat the world currently faces and we are committed to playing our part to tackle this challenge. Our Carbon Reduction Strategy sets out our plan to reduce the Council's carbon emissions to net zero by 2030, while also encouraging residents and businesses to reduce their emissions. As part of that we will look to:

- Reduce the emissions from our vehicles
- Reduce energy emissions from our own buildings
- Use education to promote low carbon activity across the Borough

On top of that, we have made great strides in recent years to help our local environment, investing over £15m in low-carbon initiatives. Progress so far includes:

Changing how new homes are built

We have changed our planning requirements so that all new homes are more environmentally-friendly. This includes a requirement for developers to install electric vehicle charging points in new residential and commercial developments.



Installing electric vehicle charging points

We are helping residents and visitors looking to make the switch to electric cars by providing easy access to charging points in key areas across the town.



Swapping to low energy LEDs

We are more than a quarter of the way through converting 28,000 streetlights to LEDs, which will save 65% of the energy previously used as well as £800,000 a year in energy bills. In addition, all our multi-storey car parks are now lit with LED bulbs.





Using technology to improve services for you

We are at the forefront of using award-winning technology to make it easier and more convenient for residents to access our services.

Simplifying free school meals applications

Last year, despite an increase in applications for free school meals in Swindon, new technology at the Council led to a 98% increase in efficiency in the speed of processing these

applications. It also helped reduce the application turnaround time for applicants by 66%.

Responding to fly-tipping more efficiently

In 2020, we introduced innovative technology to make our response to reports of fly-tipping as efficient as possible. This means we are able to respond to fly-tipping faster and it is easier for residents to report and track fly-tipping cases.

Improving your experience of the HWRC

The new online booking system for the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) introduced last year during the pandemic has not only supported public safety, but made it a more convenient and efficient user experience.

Waste & Recycling



With many people spending more time at home, there has never been a better opportunity to recycle more and waste less. There are lots of items that can be recycled in your kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. If you're ever unsure of where to dispose of an item you can use our handy A-Z guide: swindon.gov.uk/recycling

1,037 tonnes of food waste recycled



The food waste trial, which was tested by 11,000 households across the Borough, was a fantastic success and received overwhelmingly positive feedback. With the help of residents, we successfully recycled 1,037 tonnes of food waste during the trial, which was turned into renewable energy and bio-fertiliser.

In line with our commitment to a more sustainable Swindon, plans are currently being worked through to extend the food waste collection service to all households in the Borough.

Sign up to our garden waste collection service

We offer easy, contactless garden waste collections. Subscribe to our fortnightly service and your garden waste will be collected, composted and recycled into environmentally-friendly soil improver for an annual fee. Sign up today: swindon.gov.uk/gardenwaste



Progress against our priorities

Despite the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, over the past year we have made significant progress towards realising our vision and priorities for Swindon.

Much of this progress is outlined throughout this booklet, but here are some of the other ways we are working to make progress against our priorities:

Our priorities

Priority one

Improve infrastructure and housing to support a growing, low-carbon economy.

Priority two

Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places.

Priority three

Ensure clean and safe streets and improve our public spaces and local culture.

Priority four

Help people to help themselves while always protecting our most vulnerable children and adults.

Supporting children in our care

Over the past year, we have recruited 11 new local foster carers, increasing the number of foster care placements available for children in Swindon so they remain closer to their friends, family and school.

Providing shelter to rough sleepers

Last year, we worked with local partners to support rough sleepers in Swindon by providing food and accommodation, and by drawing over £1m in government funding to increase our Housing First provision and support services.



Queens Drive

Good progress has been made on the £34m regeneration of Queens Drive, one of our major house-building projects. A combined total of 47 flats and houses will be completed by November 2021 ready for occupation. In total, the project will deliver 149 affordable homes by November 2023.

Providing first choice school placements

Last year, of the 5,478 applications received on time, 95% of pupils received their first choice primary and secondary school on National Offer Day, an increase on the previous year. Additionally, 99% of pupils were offered one of their top three preferences.

A new community in Wichelstowe

We're continuing to play a key role in the 4,000 new homes being built at Wichelstowe. In the past year, the first residents have moved into their Canalside homes, an electric vehicle charging network has been installed and construction of the Kingfisher primary school has been completed.



Where your money goes

Your council tax bill 2021/22

Where every £1,000 of your council tax goes

Vulnerable adults **£496**

Children, families and
community health services **£301**

Waste collections, country parks
and tree maintenance **£123**

Economy, development, skills and libraries **£41**

Keeping people safe (including
community safety, emergency
planning and trading standards) **£21**

Highways and buildings **£18**

TOTAL **£1,000**

The figures are provided for illustrative purposes. They do not include services provided through Housing Revenue Account, Dedicated Schools Grant or Public Health Grant as funding for these is separate to the general fund services.

For further information, please search 'open data and transparency' on the Council's website.