



East Sussex Fire Authority

Council Tax and Budget Information 2025/26

East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service is facing increases in costs, reductions in funding, and further uncertainty as the Government plans changes to funding for 2026/27.

By law East Sussex Fire Authority must produce a balanced budget.

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 and maintain our essential services to the community. That is an increase of just 10 pence per week.

Fire Authority Chair Amanda Evans 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 and protect local services in the face of increasing costs and reductions in our grants from government, and Council Tax is our primary source of funding. Despite these challenges the Fire Authority remains totally committed to keeping our communities safe.”

Support will continue to be available through local Council Tax Support Schemes for those residents who are eligible.

What you pay for fire and rescue - Council Tax bands

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Annual cost	£74.99	£87.49	£99.99	£112.49	£137.49	£162.49	£187.48	£224.98
Weekly cost	£1.44	£1.68	£1.92	£2.16	£2.64	£3.12	£3.61	£4.33

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

Our Commitments

Delivering high performing services

We will use our resources to achieve the best level of safety for people and businesses, by:

- Responding quickly to emergencies.
- Ensuring plans and resources are in place to provide a flexible, efficient and resilient response to emergency incidents.
- Using intelligence and data to match resources to risk and demand.

Have a safe and valued workforce

We will ensure our people are safe and are provided with the right equipment, training and skills:

- Our workforce will be competent and able to deliver our purpose and commitments.
- Our culture embraces change, reflects our values, promotes leadership and is inclusive.

Engage with our communities

We will use our trusted reputation to deliver educational initiatives and campaigns, ensuring:

- We collaborate with partners to promote home and fire safety, business safety, road safety, water safety, and health and wellbeing initiatives linked to core functions.
- More people and businesses will be better prepared in an emergency situation.

Making effective use of our resources

We will become a more efficient service by:

- Ensuring all our resources are managed effectively and focused on delivering our purpose and commitments
- Improving our productivity
- Seeking new sources of income and funding.



Budget Gap

The 2025/26 budget will be balanced by new savings of £0.6m, other one-off savings and flexibilities of £1.9m and by drawing £0.5m from our reserves.

Based on current modelling the amount required to balance the 2026/27 budget is £2.6m but this may increase, for example if the Government does not fully fund the increase in National Insurance costs or if the pay award for staff is more than 2%.

The Fire Authority does not have to take final decisions on its budget for 2026/27 until February 2026 but has asked officers to identify options for achieving permanent savings to balance the budget at the earliest opportunity.

As part of our Future Foundations programme we are reviewing our support services, including training and are also working on a new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and expect to consult the public on its proposals in spring / summer 2026.

What we spend	2024/25	2025/26	Proportion
	£m	£m	
Employees	36.4	38.6	76%
Running Expenses	15.9	14.0	27%
Capital Financing	1.0	1.2	2%
Gross Service Expenditure	53.3	53.7	106%
Income & Specific Grants	-2.5	-2.9	-6%
Contribution to/(from) Reserves*	-0.8	0.0	0%
Net Budget Requirement	50.0	50.9	100%
How we are funded			
Government Grants	6.9	5.7	11%
Business rates	10.6	10.5	21%
Council tax	32.5	34.6	68%
Total Funding	50.0	50.9	100%

*The contribution to reserves is the net figure of all reserve transfers and in 2025/26 includes £0.5m drawdown from reserves to balance the budget.

Our plans for the future (our revenue budget)

Our revenue budget (for day-to-day spending) will increase overall by £0.9m, mainly due to inflationary pressures on pay (£1.2m) and prices (£1.1m) which have been offset by savings (£0.6m) and other flexibilities (£1.9m).

Investing for the future (our capital budget)

As well as our day to day spending, in 2025/26 we will be investing £9.6m in our assets, including: £2.2m on new fire appliances, other vehicles and equipment and £3.7m 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.

Major projects include refurbishments of Eastbourne, Roedean, Seaford and Barcombe Fire Stations the creation of an Engineering Workshop in Newhaven and improvements to our training facilities. We expect this investment, and other measures will reduce the day to day running costs of our Estate.

Government grants and income from 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, but we expect to have to also take out new borrowing of £7.1m.

We hold some reserves to fund planned investments and also in case of unexpected costs. These will reduce from £6.6m to £3.0m during the coming year, meaning we will have less financial flexibility.

Sound Financial Management

In its most recent 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. Another inspection is currently underway, and a new report will be released later this year.