

News and updates:

£2 million savings delivered by Worcester City Council.

More than £2 million of savings have been found by Worcester City Council over the last ten months, after it previously identified a funding gap of £2.25 million for the 2024-25 financial year.

The figures from earlier this year also pointed to that gap widening to £2.76 million by 2025-26, due to rising costs that include a 94% jump in gas and electricity bills and a 20% increase in fuel costs for bin lorries and other vehicles.

Thanks to a major savings plan, the City Council is now in a position to set a balanced budget for 2024-25, ensuring that essential services like bin collections, street cleaning, planning and housing can continue to be delivered for Worcester residents.

Joint Council Leader Cllr Marjory Bisset said: "It has been a mammoth effort to get to this point. Council officers and members have been working hard against a background of other authorities declaring bankruptcy, and we remain committed to pulling out all the stops to maintain services for Worcester.

"I would like to thank all the City Council staff and my fellow councillors for getting us to a place where we are able to set a balanced budget for the year ahead."

A report to be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 19 December sets out the Council's current financial position, laying the ground for it to agree a proposed net budget of £12.6 million when the full Council meets in February.

Before then, the Council's individual committees will scrutinise the proposals in the budget report.

The savings plan, which has included a major programme of voluntary redundancies among Council staff, will deliver an annual saving of £2.3 million by 2026-27.

For 2024-25 the Council will potentially dig into its reserves for £378,000 to keep the books balanced. It is awaiting of the Government's grant settlement, expected later this month, and a final assessment of the remaining budget gap will be presented to a meeting of the full Council in February.

The Council will continue to look for further savings in the coming months and years, as its long-term forecasts continue to show a potential deficit of £2.4 million by 2028.

<https://www.worcester.gov.uk/news/2-million-savings-delivered-by-worcester-city-council>

Tudor House Museum lease extended by 999 years.

A move that will secure the future of one of the city's popular museums will see Worcester City Council take the unusual step of extending a lease – for 999 years.

A report to members of the Council's Policy and Resources Committee explains that the decision to extend the lease on the Tudor House Museum has been made by officers under delegated powers, in consultation with the Joint Leaders of the Council.

Back in 2008, the Council approved a 125-year lease of the Grade II listed property to Worcester Municipal Charities CIO to enable Worcester Heritage and Amenity Trust to operate the property as a museum and heritage centre, to ensure it was retained as a facility for public use.

The report to the Policy and Resources Committee, to be considered on 19 December, says that since the initial lease was agreed, the Trust has invested £93,500 in the property and the property has been kept in good repair. The Friar Street museum, a beautiful 16th Century building, is now well-established as a tourist destination.

An extension of the existing lease to a period of 999 years has been proposed to fulfil both the Trust's desire to secure the long-term future of the museum and the Council's aims of retaining it as an asset for the local communities in Worcester and for visitors to enjoy.

Councillors Lynn Denham and Marjory Bisset, Joint Leaders of Worcester City Council, said: "We are delighted to be taking the unusual step of extending the lease on the Tudor House Museum for 999 years as a demonstration of our long-term commitment to the museum – it is a well-run and popular venue and this arrangement will mean it can be enjoyed by generations to come."

Paul Griffith MBE, Chairman of Worcester Municipal Charities, which will hold the new lease, said: "I would like to express absolute delight on our behalf and also on behalf of the Worcester Heritage and Amenity Trust who run the museum with two part-time staff and an amazing army of volunteers.

"The generosity of the City Council in granting a new lease lasting 999 years will give both charities the confidence to go on investing time and money in the museum and improving the facilities there for visitors and the host of schoolchildren who want to learn about Tudor Worcester. We already have plans to build a new visitors and education centre behind the museum and need to start raising the funds to pay for it."

See <https://www.tudorhouse.org.uk/> for more information about Tudor House museum

<https://www.worcester.gov.uk/news/999-year-lease-will-secure-future-of-popular-museum>

Charity shop gift card scheme for Worcester.

Worcester residents in need are to be given gift cards for local charity shops to enable them to buy clothes and other essentials.

Worcester City Council is working with the national [Charity Shop Gift Card](#) scheme to deliver the 'essential items' part of its [Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme \(DWAS\)](#), which supports people with immediate financial hardship needs.

The gift card scheme, which has recently arrived in several Worcester charity shops, will enable people supported by DWAS to get hold of essentials like clothing at value costs.

Currently the gift cards can be bought and used in St Richard's Hospice, Acorns, Sense and Salvation Army shops in Worcester. Other charity shops are expected to join the scheme in the near future.

City Council Joint Leader Cllr Lynn Denham popped into the St Richard's Hospice to find out about the gift cards.

She said: "I am grateful to City Council officers who have negotiated this deal. The Charity Shop Gift Card is a great way for the Council to help more people in need to get some of the essentials that they require. It is a win-win all round, enabling our limited funds to go further.

"These new gift cards would also make brilliant Christmas presents. They are a fantastic way for people to support some of the hard-working charities that contribute so much to our city, including local causes like St Richard's and Acorns, and spread some festive cheer."

Dan Corns, Commercial Director for St Richard's Hospice, added: "We are delighted to be part of this excellent scheme, which not only supports charity fundraising but promotes the many benefits of shopping second-hand. Charity shopping and pre-loved items are more popular than ever and we can't wait to see the scheme flourish in the city."

The Council's DWAS scheme supports people who are facing financial hardship and who urgently require support with the cost of food, energy or physical items from a fridge to clothes, cutlery and plates. People in need have to be referred to the service by a support worker or professional agency.

The Council has partnered with The Charity Shop Gift Cards scheme, which is a social enterprise, to provide smaller essential items such as clothing.

Sarah Cox, co-founder and Head of Support Sector Partnerships at The Charity Shop Gift Card CIC, said: "Worcester City Council's initiative to use the gift card as a sustainable way to disburse funds to people in need of essentials highlights their commitment to supporting the circular community and we couldn't be more happy for their support."

<https://www.worcester.gov.uk/news/worcester-joins-charity-shop-gift-card-scheme>

Active Consultations:

Taxi and Private Hire Policy - Vehicle Write-Off Policy Amendments

Worcester City Council is conducting a short and targeted consultation on proposals to make a minor amendment to the wording contained in part of its Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy. This small change is being proposed to rectify an unintended consequence that arose from the current wording in this part of the Policy.

This consultation will remain open for responses until Tuesday 9 January 2024.

Draft Revised Statement of Licensing Policy (2024-2029)

The Licensing Act 2003 requires each licensing authority to prepare and publish a Statement of Licensing Policy, which it must review at least every five years.

Worcester City Council, in line with the above legal requirement, has now reviewed and updated its current Statement of Licensing Policy for the purpose of consultation.

The Council welcomes comments on the draft revised Statement of Licensing Policy

Gillam Street / Green Lane open space

Local residents are being asked for their views on proposed improvements to a green space and multi-use games area (MUGA) in Worcester.

The City Council has drawn up plans for a revamp of the community space on the corner of Gillam Street and Green Lane, including relining the ball court, new bike stands and improvements to hedges and the natural habitat.

Residents in the area are being invited to give their views on the proposals, before plans are finalised and the work gets underway.

The deadline for responses is **Wednesday 31 January 2024**.

Draft Sex Establishment Licensing Policy

Worcester City Council is reviewing its current policy on the licensing of sex establishments. Whilst only very minor changes have been made to the policy, the Council would like to offer the opportunity to everyone to provide comments and feedback on the content of the entire draft policy document.

This consultation will be open for responses until **12 February 2024** and all responses received will be given consideration by the Council before a revised policy is approved and implemented.

Please see <https://www.worcester.gov.uk/council/consultations> for links to these surveys

Cranham Drive / Chedworth Drive Play Area: consultation ended 17/12/2023

The 4 week consultation has ended regarding city council plans for a range of improvements to the 4.2-acre area of public open space that runs alongside Cotswold Way, between Cranham Drive and Chedworth Close.

Proposals include new play areas, a new 11-space illuminated car park and work to enhance the existing woodland and to plant wildflowers, in order to improve the biodiversity in the area.

<https://www.worcester.gov.uk/news/worcester-residents-asked-for-views-on-plans-to-improve-public-space-in-warndon>

This concludes the city councillors' report for the Warndon Parish council meeting on Monday 8th January 2024.

Katie Collier

4th January 2024

Rota for preparation of future city councillor reports:

Date of meeting	Preparation Deadline	Responsible
5 th February 2024	1 st February 2024	Cllr Stephen Hodgson
4 th March 2024	29 th February 2024	Cllr Andrew Cross
1 st April 2024	28 th March 2024	Cllr Sarah Murray