

## Kent County Council report 13 December 2022

There was considerable coverage of the joint letter sent by KCC and Hampshire County Council to the Government about our financial situation. Both councils said they could not have a balanced budget in future years with present levels of finance. Since the letter was sent the Government's budget has raised the limit that councils with responsibility for Social Services are allowed to raise council tax by 5% (around half the level of inflation we have had in the last year). Our financial situation remains grave but, together with a whole series of savings in our discretionary services, we should now be able to set a balanced budget for 2023/24. The demand for social care (and the increasing complexity of cases) is always an issue but it has been inflation that is causing the most pressure.

Despite our own financial challenges KCC still has a number of initiatives funded via Government grant to help individuals and families with the Cost of Living including access to cheaper broadband and computers to help in the school holidays for those entitled to Free School Meals. Search for 'Kent Together' online or ring 03000 41 92 92 for those who need help.

Kent Highways will also be delivering the usual winter services such as emergency response when trees block a road and of course gritting to help prevent the formation of ice. The gritting trucks have all be given names suggested by schoolchildren including #TruGrit, #IceIceBaby, #Margrit and #SaltyMcGritFace. The names mean that people notice the vehicles and comment on social media which helps demonstrate that the vehicles have indeed been out (as they are mostly out at night this service is not always noticed). There are 65 vehicles gritting 58 primary routes (a total of up to 1,300 miles of road) once the road surface temperature is predicted to go below 0°C.

Please keep reporting problems on the roads to Kent Highways. The best way to do this is on the interactive map which you'll find on the Kent Highways section of the website [www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk) under Report a Problem. You can also ring 03000 41 81 81 in normal office hours or, in an emergency outside normal office hours, 03000 41 91 91. You should be given a reference number and it's useful to keep a note of this in case a problem needs follow up.

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Kent County Council