

APPENDIX L - Hastings Borough Council draft Budget Savings Proposals 2024/25 onwards

The council sets its budget for the following year each February. In previous years savings proposals have been published for consultation in mid-January and are agreed by the Budget Council in mid-February, approximately 6 weeks before the start of the new financial year.

This year, because of the seriousness of the budget position, the following proposals have been subject to consultation and comments were invited from residents, partners, staff and stakeholders. The consultation feedback was reported to the Cabinet on 4th December, and the amended proposals are now to be considered by Budget Full Council on 21 February.

Equality impact assessment

An assessment has been undertaken for each of the budget planning proposals, informed by feedback from the consultation process.

The section following each proposal sets out the council's assessment of the likelihood of negative impact on any of the protected characteristic groups as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The assessment states whether the impact is thought to be Low – Medium – High and the mitigations that will be taken to reduce any negative impact.

Savings proposals	Further details	Savings			Equality Impact Assessment
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
1. On-going programme to review and reduce service costs and staffing expenditure	<p>The council is continuing the programme of service reviews that were commenced last year.</p> <p>The savings proposed for 2024/25 include deletion of the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts following either a service review, restructure or by reviewing posts that have become vacant:</p> <p>a) Net savings from phase 2 of restructure Completed a review of management and staff structures following deletion of Marketing and Major Projects Manager post.</p>	£160,000	£160,000	£160,000	<p>Equality Impact - Low Whilst no disproportionate service impact has been identified on any of the protected characteristics groups as identified by the Equality Act 2010 there is a reduction in staff capacity and projects that are valued by the community.</p>

	<p>A leaner service and management structure is in place that focuses on provision of essential services covering coastal, tourism, civic, event support, cultural, economic development and leisure services. There is now a reduction in capacity currently around non statutory, non-grant funded and non-income generating activity. This area however retains the ability to grow dependent on income generation and external grant funding levels.</p> <p>b) Vacant posts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Services Officer (CCC) 1 FTE • Vacant business support officer post 1 FTE • Vacant planning administration officer post 1 FTE • Vacant Warden post 1 FTE • Delay recruitment to vacant Planning Policy technical officer for 1year 0.6 FTE 	£167,000	£167,000	£167,000	<p>The remaining resource levels are considered appropriate to meet our statutory duties and we will continue to seek external or alternative means of funding these activities with partners</p> <p>RE: Customer Services officer post - We continue to promote channel shift to My Hastings and self-service for those residents who can use these channels, the remaining staff resources are prioritised to support the most vulnerable and/or digitally excluded residents.</p>
2. Service Delivery Model Transformation Programme	<p>The council implemented a digital transformation programme in 2015/16. This further transformation programme will build on that work and will explore opportunities to transform how we work to further reduce costs and to create more capacity and resilience by sharing resources, systems and skills with others.</p> <p>a) Back office operating model re-design</p>	£55,000	£55,000	£55,000	<p>Equality Impact - None</p> <p>No disproportionate impact has been identified on any of the protected characteristics groups as identified by the Equality Act 2010.</p>

	<p>The first workstream of this programme will begin in January 2024 and will aim to share resources, streamline functions and maximise capacity and transferable skills to meet demand peaks across all service areas, at a lower cost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A savings target for this project has been set to achieve a reduction of at least 2 full time equivalent posts, ideally through a process of voluntary severance from 1st April 2024. • In scoping the review, the functions of all administration posts across services, grades 10 – 6 will be considered. • By taking this project review approach individuals and teams will be at the heart of the re-design work and will be able to contribute to and consider proposals before final decisions are made. <p>b) Sharing services The second workstream which has already started is the work to capitalise on new opportunities to improve or sustain service delivery by working with others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A service delivery model transformation team will be established who will work with HBC and our partners throughout this process. • This team will be funded by ‘invest to save’ resources identified to support the project and achieve the targeted savings. 	<p>£193,000</p>	<p>£362,000</p>	<p>£482,500</p>	<p>However, this will continue to be assessed through the process of developing shared service proposals and will be a key consideration in service re-design.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External funding will also be sought to facilitate this work – this is being made available by various organisations because it is an approach many councils are taking to address their deficits. • The project will commence in early 2024. <p>This five year programme will focus on opportunities for sharing back-office and essential services where others have the same statutory duty and/or savings can be made from management, administration, sharing and rationalising systems etc. or by providing the service for others.</p> <p>A key part of this work will be business process mapping. This will identify savings that can be achieved by implementing new ways of working even if services are not able to be shared at this time.</p> <p>Priorities for transformation and sharing depend on the opportunities available with other potential partner councils and public organisations, but over the lifetime of the project will include all services.</p> <p>Year 1 priorities for exploring potential for sharing are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive's division (SLT) • Accountancy and Exchequer services • Audit • Communications and graphic design 				
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Health and Licensing • Estates and Building surveyors • Housing Management and administration • Human Resources • Information technology • Legal Services • Planning enforcement • Planning services (development management and planning policy) • Programmes and compliance • Revenues and Benefits <p>The potential savings from this programme have been identified as follows:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Total staff cost of the areas listed above: £5.7m</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Total Full Time Equivalent staff is: 139.9FTE</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A range of savings targets have been considered: 10%, 15% and 20%.</p> <p>The target proposed: is to reduce the costs of these services by 15% i.e. 21 FTE posts, saving £865k, plus £100k of associated supplies and services costs = £965k</p> <p>The profile of the savings is based on recognition that these savings will take time to identify and implement and we need to work to the timescales of partner councils. For financial and strategic planning purposes we have assumed that we will achieve:</p>				
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	40% in 2024/25 adjusted for 50% reduction 75% in 2025/26 adjusted for 50% reduction 100% in 2026/27 adjusted for 50% reduction				
3. White Rock Theatre	The council has been successful in identifying a charitable organisation to lease and run the theatre over the medium term.	£25,000	£75,000	£75,000	Equality Impact - None
4. Community safety	Rather than reducing this priority activity, the work funded by the council's revenue grant to address community safety issues across the town will be funded from the community safety reserve for 3yrs.	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	Equality Impact - None
5. Events	Reduce the events budget by £15k Seek an update by February 2024 from event organisers regarding their progress in becoming self-sufficient (as discussed during 2023/24)	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	Equality Impact - Low
6. Regeneration activity budget	Major regeneration funding now is accompanied by capacity funding and therefore the levels of support needed from core budgets to develop schemes is reduced. These cost centres supported capacity for developing bids and supporting one of regeneration initiatives such as the Seafront Wi-Fi. 3 Year seafront Wi-Fi contract ceases in March 2024 – proposal to cease due to technology now making this obsolete.	£64,000	£64,000	£64,000	Equality Impact – Low
7. Anti-social behaviour pilot	Seek alternative external funding opportunities and therefore delay introduction of pilot to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour in urban and countryside parks (this was a growth item in the budget	£10,500	£21,750	£21,750	Equality Impact – Low*

	agreed in February 2023 to be in place from mid-way through 2024/25 part-year).				*This will be kept under review if the council is unable to secure alternative funding
8. Youth council	Cease budget from 24/25 and find more effective means of engaging with youth representatives at key strategic and operational decision-making meetings. E.g. invite youth members onto the Local Strategic Partnership and associated bodies, seek input from those engaged with youth projects and via learning through the Connected Futures research work, into how youth voice can be better heard by town leaders and decision-making bodies.	£12,000	£12,000	£12,000	Equality Impact – Medium Whilst this proposal directly impacts on a protected characteristic the council is seeking alternative ways of ensuring that young people's views are heard at a strategic and decision-maker level.
9. Cashless operations	Introduce cashless services to save costs on cash collection contract.	£0	£25,000	£25,000	Equality Impact – High The council will aim to make alternative arrangements for essential items for those who are unable to pay for council services with a phone or bank card.
10. Food safety inspections	Bring food safety inspections work in-house and avoid costs of contractor – work will transfer to substantive EH team. Changed during December Cabinet Meeting.	£0	£0	£0	Equality Impact - None
11. CCTV	Cost savings from new contract for transmission and maintenance costs following an upgrade to technology. No change to service delivery.	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	Equality Impact - None

12. Public Convenience Cleaning	Cleaning contract – actual cost of the new service is less than was budgeted.	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	Equality Impact - None
13. Stray dogs contract	Savings from re-tendered contract without impacting on service.	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000	Equality Impact - None
14. Savings from Capital Programme Adjustments	Individual business cases will be bought forward for the assets identified for disposal. Estimated savings will be achieved from reduced interest payments & MRP provisions if HBC used capital receipts instead of borrowing to fund the capital programme. This follows decisions made around Capital Programme including the sale of the Cornwallis site and other asset sales.	£1,436,000	£3,617,000	£3,620,000	Equality Impact - None
15. Contingency	Instead of retaining budgets for 'just in case' contingency use, centralise budgets and determine strategic priorities.	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	Equality Impact - None
16. Renewals and Reserves changes	Change the way we fund repairs and renewals reserve. This will enable better oversight of whole costs of assets and planning for future maintenance programmes. All asset maintenance plans are being reviewed and spend will be limited to health and safety priorities or to preserve existing/generate new income.	£200,000	£200,000	£200,000	Equality Impact - None
17. Affordable Housing Supply	Supply of newly developed affordable rented homes which will become available to people to move into and out of temporary accommodation.	£217,085	£1,739,440	£797,419	Equality Impact: positive impact for the most vulnerable people in the town.
18. Housing Acquisitions	This programme involves the council acquiring up to 50 homes over a two-year period for use as TA. The programme will use an end-to-end property service to increase the council's capacity	£189,458	£310,542	£0	Equality Impact: positive impact for the most vulnerable people in the town.

	to source, negotiate, acquire and refurbish properties. Additional £310,542 added at Cabinet 12/02/2024.				
19. IT reserve	Changing how spend is managed - an annual revenue budget to be agreed to cover known costs, then all additional spend will require a business case to be agreed. This also ensures that appropriate costs are reflected in the capital programme budget.	£124,000	£124,000	£124,000	Equality Impact - None

New Income proposals		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
20. Fees and charges	<p>Following a review of fees and charges the council has reflected the increased costs of delivery in the fees for services (these are to be agreed at Cabinet on 4th December)</p> <p>Equality Impact: The fees and charges have been structured to protect the residents with the least ability to pay.</p>	+344,280	+ 289,096	+£208,149
21. Treasury investment	Aim to maximise investment returns and improve performance on the money the council has invested.	+ £400,000	+£400,000	+£400,000
22. New Homes Bonus	102 New Homes identified as part of external review and additional NHB grant expected as a result of the work.	+ £88,534	+£88,534	+£88,534

Total Savings	£3,878,857	£7,903,362	£6,693,352
NB If only 80% of savings are achieved then additional savings required of	£775,771	£1,580,672	£1,338,670

Other reviews underway/ to be completed that will identify cost savings, new income, cost avoidance or new ways of working over next 6-12 months (NB Equality impact assessments will be undertaken as part of the review processes)

23. A single person discount review to be undertaken to identify any potential changes which will bring in additional revenue to fund council services and fraudulent activity is reduced.
24. Undertake a review regarding council tax to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A Single person discount review to be undertaken to identify any potential changes which will bring in additional revenue to fund council services. b. An Empty Homes review is being undertaken to ensure all homes that are eligible for a council tax charge are contributing to the cost of council services and fraudulent activity is reduced. c. Review of council tax reduction policy.
25. A business case is to be developed to introduce a more commercial approach to hiring of council venues and sites as demand for event space is increasing.
26. Commercialisation and new trading opportunities explored following creation of the new Operational Services team – street cleansing, grounds maintenance etc.
27. Undertake a wide-ranging review, to involve residents in 2024/25 of the costs of public conveniences to include options around charging. NB No changes will be made in 2024/2025.
28. Additional proposals to reduce the cost and usage of temporary accommodation costs (over and above what is already planned).
29. Invest to save debt collection business case proposal bought forward.
30. Review and where necessary re-tender contracts held across HBC facilities e.g. security, confidential waste, photocopiers, mobile phones etc.
31. In early 2024/25 implementation of a review of Housing Services – staff structure, use of external funding, options for sharing activities.
32. Review of parks service and staffing structure once new grounds maintenance service has been operational for 6 months.
33. Development of a business case for invest to save resources to explore a cultural trust model for sustainable future for cultural assets.
34. Review out of hours arrangements ensuring council has capacity to respond appropriately in emergencies and out of office hours.
35. Review evidence for further housing licensing scheme and depending on outcome develop a business case that is cost-neutral to HBC.
36. Seek opportunities to expand the successful Active Hastings programme across neighbouring areas and via their role in addressing health inequalities within the levelling up programmes.

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| 37. Develop proposals to use Levelling Up funding to invest in playgrounds and ensure they are not at risk of closure in future due to lack of funding for maintenance etc. |
| 38. Pause applications for Green Flags for the town's Parks whilst we embed our new Grounds Maintenance team and review whether the standards are contrary to our climate emergency/ biodiversity net gain aspirations. |