

Report to Governance, Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Board

Conservative Budget Amendment Proposals 2024/25

Portfolio Holder: Councillor M. Woodvine

Officer: Chris Kelsall, Assistant Director of Finance

05 February 2024

Reason for Decision

This Report presents to Governance, Strategy & Resources Board the Conservative Group proposals for amendments to the Administration's Budget for 2024/25.

Executive Summary

This Report presents to the Board a series of amendments in addition to those proposals already presented by the Administration in the 2024/25 Budget. This report proposes, for the second consecutive year, a freeze in Council Tax for General Purposes.

We would like to thank the Assistant Director of Finance and the Conservative group researcher for their efforts in helping pull much of the information that is provided in this report. Also taken into consideration during the production of the proposed amendments in this report are the parameters in which Oldham Council must work within. That is, direction set by His Majesty's Government, in policy areas such as Education, and the strategic oversight of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority across the Metropolitan County.

It must be pointed out that we faced difficulties in obtaining information across all departments. We feel that the Council's finances should be much more open and transparent to elected members and to the public, so they can access and engage with them properly and help contribute in a more meaningful way with the financial wellbeing of the Metropolitan Borough. It is something the executive and senior officers should re-evaluate going forward.

Nevertheless, the proposed amendments to the Administration's Budget are focused on the **people's priorities, by reducing waste, investing in our highways, environment, neighbourhoods, and more importantly FREEZING the Council Tax for general purposes.**

Details of the proposals can be found in Section 3 and in summary at Appendix One. Business Cases for the individual budget reductions can be found at Appendix Two.

At the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 7 February 2023, the Conservative Budget Amendment proposals were presented for discussion and recommendation as an Alternative Budget. The Scrutiny Committee did not accept the Conservative Party budget reduction proposals and did not commend them to Cabinet.

Recommendations

The Board recommends:

1. The proposal to implement no increase in Council Tax for General Purposes.
2. Significant capital investment in Highways, Environment and Neighbourhoods.
3. A redistribution of funds back to local wards and districts for events.

Conservative Budget Amendment Proposals 2024/25

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council is required by legislation to produce a balanced budget each financial year. Aside from the legal requirements, financial plans are important because they set out the financial management of the Council's policies and guide Officers on the areas where they should prioritise resources.

2. 2024/25 Revenue Budget Proposals

- 2.1 With several Councils having issued Section 114 notices banning all non-essential spending, the safe stewardship of the Council's resources and supporting deliverable priorities has become ever more important. These amendments ensure a balanced budget.
- 2.2 As highlighted in at least one national newspaper which said, "There are a whole bunch who think they are in serious risk of issuing a 114 but they haven't made it public." This same article listed Oldham as one of these authorities. It is incumbent on the Labour administration to be more transparent about what is going on at Oldham Council and to set the record straight, rather than reading such information in a national newspaper. It is of considerable concern to all of us that the financial wellbeing of the authority is in good order. It is why we have followed very strict fiscal rules and not engaged in any additional borrowing.
- 2.3 Given the concerns highlighted in the press we believe that it is time for the politicians in the Council chamber who have for over a decade made difficult financial decisions to now make themselves subject to those same decisions. It is why we have suggested some of the most far-reaching savings be made by elected members. Simply put we believe that it is time to take money from politicians' pockets and put it back into the people of Oldham's pockets. We believe that it should be a Civic honour and duty to serve the people of the Oldham Metropolitan Borough.
- 2.4 We are also reducing wastage costs by implementing savings to photocopying and postage charges with a 20% to 15% saving being made respectively.
- 2.5 Given the reluctance of the administration to take up Article 4 directions to better regulate HMO's we are looking at increasing the costs associated with this to limit the expansion of such institutions in our Borough.
- 2.6 We will abolish the Working for your Newspaper. Propaganda on the rates by the administration and of the cult of personality with such publications around the Council Leader is akin to that of Russia, not a Council in the North West of England.
- 2.7 We have also frozen senior executive pay for two years (those on over £100k), rationalised senior executive posts, reduced the use of agency staff, reduced management entitlements, and reduced duplication. We are clear that we need to put the people of the Oldham Metropolitan Borough first. These are difficult decisions,

which we are having to take to help reduce the burden on taxpayers who have faced years of Council tax rises by the current Labour administration.

- 2.8 Looking to other local authorities, businesses and online we can look to raise new income without reducing levels of service. The Council can earn increasing amounts of income from advertising and maximising its fleet to that effect. We do not live in Socialist state where all advertising must be government propaganda. We believe that there are more innovative and effective ways of increasing income for the Council. With a public/private partnership the Council can adapt to this opportunity to help local public services.
- 2.9 The priority of the Conservative Group is to keep taxation at the lowest possible level. While making Budget reductions, we do not directly impact any of the Council's statutory services and residents should not feel any direct result of them – that has been the priority of the Conservative Group. The Conservatives in Opposition are retaining resource in statutory services, which residents expect to be delivered well, but asking this Council to feel the pinch for itself whilst giving residents much-needed relief in freezing Council Tax in these inflationary times.
- 2.10 We have factored in reducing the number of Councillors by 1/3 to future budget proposals. This will over the term of a Councillor reduce expenditure by £814,120.

Budget Reduction Proposals

- 3.6 The Conservatives in Opposition are proposing a range of budget reduction proposals which will reduce spend on non-essential services in order to prioritise helping people deal with cost-of-living pressures. An explanation of these savings proposals is summarised at Table 1 below and outlined in detail at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.7 Proformas are attached at **Appendix 2** as follows:

Proposal	Full Year Impact £000
OPP-BR1-301 – District Partnerships	788
OPP-BR1-302 – Communications & Research	559
OPP-BR1-303 – Vacancy Factor	400
OPP-BR1-304 – Senior Management	314

- 3.8 Other proposals relate to general efficiencies that can be delivered within the organisation.

Revenue changes proposals

- 3.9 We will redistribute the sum of £21k from town centre events into local districts giving them £4.2k per district and split that amongst local ward members to use it as they see fit for local events such as Christmas, Whit Friday etc. District events due to previous budgetary changes by the administration are now facing higher costs for Christmas lights and Whit Friday.

3.10 We will also redistribute a further £20k from events to districts to help societies, clubs and pubs organise many well attended public events that can have an impact on public safety and or the highway. Due to large attendances, many of these events may need support with proper licences and safety. Using a targeted approach we can verify and accredit venues. This funding can then help support local events whether it be bonfire night or other events such as Whit Friday, St Georges Day, Armed Forces Day or even Christmas. It will be for local districts and elected ward members to determine how they spend this money as we trust local members to support local community events in their districts.

Summary of Conservative's Revenue proposals

Table 1 - Conservatives Revenue summary 2024/25 to 2025/26

Ref	Proposal	24/25 £000	25/26 £000
Reduction In Council Tax Levied		(3,300)	(3,300)
Proposed Savings			
1	District Partnerships	500	788
2	Communications Savings	350	559
3	Additional Vacancy Factor	400	400
4	Executive Management	200	319
5	Admin Efficiencies	309	374
6	Members Allowances	200	486
7	Officers Car Allowances	75	105
8	Increased Income	50	81
9	Events / Improvements	178	38
Total Proposed Savings		2,262	3,149
Additional Expenditure		(41)	(41)
Additional contribution from Reserves		1,079	192
Net Impact		-	-

4 Capital proposals

4.6 We are investing in neighbourhoods with devolved targeted funding in Austerlands, Derker, Moorside, Heyside, High Crompton, Lees, Thornham, Royley, Wrigley Head, Westwood and Whitegate to name a few. We believe that it is down to local elected members to deliver projects to these areas and not centrally drive them. We want proper business cases to be made and for long lasting improvements to be made to neighbourhoods.

4.7 We are also making key investments into neglected town centres in Royton and Shaw with a £1.3 million investment to reverse the decline in our high streets. As well as a making a key investment with a new health centre for Saddleworth. It is also worth

pointing out that Chadderton thanks to HM Government is receiving £20 million over the next decade, as part of the overlooked towns fund announced by the Prime Minister in October 2023.

4.8 The Borough has seen a dramatic increase in fly tipping. We need to break the business model of fly tippers and stop the Council being merely a ‘click and collect’ service. As part of our commitment to help reduce and tackle the issue we believe we need to tackle the problem with more preventative measures, enforcement, and the use of technology. We will work with a cross departmental taskforce to target these resources effectively and efficiently to help deliver the best results with data and patterns where hotspots are prevalent. As well as co-ordinating more rapid legal action. This funding is there to make that happen.

4.9 We are also investing in our highways so we can turn the tide on the declining state of our roads. We want to invest in them to help reduce potholes, improve safety and help make sure that our roads are fit for the future.

Table 2 - Conservatives Alternative Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27

	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	Total £000
Funding				
Fund for Emerging Priorities (Cap prog)	2,043	6,793	410	9,246
Proposals				
1. Environmental Measures	235	468	410	1,113
2. District Town Centres	300	1,000		1,300
3. Highways	1,308	1,000		2,308
4. Neighbourhoods	200	1,100		1,100
5. Saddleworth Health Centre		3,225		3,225
Total Proposed Capital Expenditure	2,043	6,793	410	9,246
Balance of Fund for Emerging Priorities	-	-	-	-

4.10 Further detail can be provided at **Appendix 3**.

5 Director of Finance Comments

5.1 I confirm in my role as Responsible Officer under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 that the proposed have been financially reviewed and evaluated by officers.

5.2 As it is an alternative set of budget options the opportunity for testing the risks associated with the proposals is always limited, even more so this year due to the financial challenges in setting a balanced budget this year and the reduced time available. It is therefore necessary to afford a level of caution in presenting these alternatives as to the implications of the proposed budget reductions and the ability to generate increased income.

5.3 The proposal not to increase the level of Council Tax for general purposes would significantly increase the budget challenge for 2025/26 and later years and as such must be considered a high risk proposal given the financial pressures the Council will continue to face and the continued uncertainty over future funding from central government.

(Sarah Johnston – Director of Finance)

6 Options/Alternatives

6.1 With regard to the proposals set out in this report, the options available to the Governance, Strategy & Resources Board are to:

- Accept and recommend to Cabinet all of the recommendations of the report.
- Accept and recommend to Cabinet some of the recommendations of the report and reject others.
- Reject all of the recommendations of the report.

7 Preferred Option

7.1 The preferred option is that the Governance, Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Board accepts and recommends to Cabinet all of the recommendations.

8 Consultation

8.1 Heads of Service have been consulted in compiling the proposals set out in this report and the proposals have been agreed within the content of the business cases attached in Appendix B. The presentation of the Conservative Budget Amendment proposals to the Governance, Strategy & Resources Board on 5 February 2024 will be the first stage of the budget consultation process.

9 Financial Implications

9.1 Full financial implications are included within this Report.

10 Legal Services Comments

10.1 The proposals involve a change to officers' and members' employment terms and conditions, appropriate HR processes will need to be followed in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures.

10.2 Any proposal to reduce the number of Councillors must be approved by the Local Government Boundary Commission.

11 Co-operative Agenda

11.1 The proposals included within this report have been considered in conjunction with the Council's Co-operative Agenda and there are no adverse impacts.

12 Human Resources Comments

12.1 The proposals included within this report are noted.

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- 12.2 Options with workforce implications will be assessed should they be approved and discharged in accordance with the organisation's policies and procedures.

13 Risk Assessments

- 2.1 The risks of deliverability have been considered and, as it is an alternative set of budget proposals, the opportunity for testing the risks associated with the proposals are more limited and as advised above, it is therefore necessary to afford a level of caution in presenting these alternatives.
- 2.2 In addition, whilst the budget is already being balanced by the use of one-off measures, increasing this still further increases the Council's financial challenge.

14 IT Implications

- 14.1 There are no specific IT requirements associated with the proposals that have not already been considered.

15 Property Implications

- 15.1 There are no specific property implications associated with the proposals set out in this report.

16 Procurement Implications

- 16.1 Any proposals that impact on the procurement of goods, services etc. will be undertaken in full liaison with the Procurement Service and in compliance with all necessary Council and statutory requirements.

17 Environmental and Health & Safety Implications

- 17.1 There are no adverse environmental or Health and Safety implications associated with the proposals.

18 Equality, community cohesion and crime implications

- 18.1 There are no adverse equality, community cohesion or crime implications associated with the proposals.

19 Equality Impact Assessment Completed

- 19.1 These are not required at the present time for these proposals.

20 Key Decision

- 20.1 No.

21 **Key Decision Reference**

21.1 Not a Key Decision.

22 **Background Papers**

22.1 The following is a list of background papers on which this report is based in accordance with the requirements of Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972. It does not include documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information as defined by the Act:

File Ref: Background papers are contained in Appendices One and Two
Officer: Chris Kelsall, Assistant Director of Finance

23 **Appendices**

23.1 Appendix One: Table of Amendments to the Administration's Revenue Budget Proposals.

23.2 Appendix 2: Budget reduction proformas.

23.3 Appendix Three: Table of Amendments to the Administration's Revenue Budget Proposals.

APPENDIX 1: Conservatives Savings Proposals

Proposal	Rationale	Annual Financial Implication	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			District Partnerships	Communications	Additional Vacancy Factor	Senior Management	Admin / Efficiencies	Members Allowances	Officers Car Allowances	Increased Income	Events / Improvements
Restructure of the District Teams. (Keeping Caseworkers and Business Support Officers)	The Council is duplicating provision that is provided already elsewhere. This reduction and restructuring will reduce management costs and make the team more efficient and district focused.	£ 787,640	787,640								
To reduce spend on this non-statutory service and proposed a redesign of the communications and research team.	The Council needs to make efficiencies. Core communication of Council services and online digital communications of those services does not need vast amounts of resources.	£ 475,755		475,755							
Reconsideration of Council priorities with regards to the Working for You Newspaper	We will abolish the newspaper as it is a non-essential service which can be better delivered through existing services and delivery.	£ 74,625		74,625							
Marketing and advertising for Town Centre Events	We believe that this is not an efficient use of resources when the Council faces significant financial pressures. The focus must be on core delivery rather than marketing animations for Christmas.	£ 9,043		9,043							
Additional Vacancy Management factor to achieve greater efficiency including limiting the present use of agency staff and consultants.	In previous years the Administration agreed to apply a vacancy factor at a rate of 1.5% to all mainstream employee budgets based on the assumption that some posts would become vacant or would be held vacant during that financial year due to staff turnover. To assist in reducing the number of agency staff and consultants used across the Council further, we propose that a saving of 0.4% on top of the administrations 1%. The Additional Vacancy Management factor of 1.4% to all Council mainstream employee budgets.	£ 399,000			400,000						
Merge Asst Director of HR role with Asst Chief Executives role	We believe that with the changes agreed by full Council in regard to the part time role of the Chief Executive that a rationalisation is needed. The Human Resources Portfolio role should be merged with that of the ACE to improve Council delivery and core messaging to employees, giving the ACE a better insight into the organisation.	£ 115,000				115,000					
Merge Director of Environment with Director of Economy	Merge the two roles together will allow for better strategic use of Council assets and delivery of public services from those Council assets.	£ 133,000				133,000					
Freeze salary increases over £100,000 for 2 years	We believe that as frontline staff face increasing pressures those at the top of the organisation should share the burden and as part of this we propose a salary freeze for two years in order to reflect the more than generous salary paid for by many who may never be able to reach such a wage.	£ 66,000				66,000					
Scrap the car allowance for senior management to zero	To help reduce the impact on Council finances and the Councils commitment to meet its net zero targets we believe that well remunerated officers do not need further remuneration.	£ 5,000				5,000					
Reduction in the General Training Budget	The reduction of in the general training budget is proposed that a budget reduction of £80,000 is implemented in 2024/25 specifically in relation to the General Training Budget in the belief that there is scope for further reductions in this area.	£ 80,000					80,000				
Reduce photocopier charges by 20%	The drive towards paperless workplaces is ongoing as more documents are published online, more flexible working or home working, and office space rationalisation is factored in, then that we need to reduce the amount of paper used and focus on digital delivery. It would also make it easier for auditing purposes and future cost savings.	£ 54,000					54,000				
Reduce postage charges by 15%	The drive towards paperless workplaces is ongoing as more documents are published online, more flexible working or home working, and office space rationalisation is factored in, then that we need to use email where possible and focus on digital delivery. It would also make it easier for auditing purposes and future cost savings.	£ 70,500					70,500				
Reduce staff in the Leaders office by 2 FTE	We believe that as other departments face reductions that the Leader of the Council should also be subject to the same efficiencies. The Council Leader will need to be more focused and more diligent in dealing with work, however we believe a competent individual can manage these changes.	£ 87,000					87,000				
Stationery be centralised in particular locations across the Borough to ensure better VFM through increased understanding of which items are required, volumes etc.	The drive towards paperless workplaces is ongoing as more documents are published online, more flexible working or home working, and office space rationalisation is factored in, then a reduction in stationary would be a sensible saving. It would also make it easier for auditing purposes and future cost savings. Due to the changes of home working, it is a reasonable budget reduction of £0.012m	£ 12,000					12,000				
Trade union facility time	Many organisations facilitate this role outside of work time.	£ 70,000						70,000			

APPENDIX 1: Conservatives Savings Proposals

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Proposal	Rationale	Annual Financial Implication	District Partnerships	Communications	Additional Vacancy Factor	Senior Management	Admin / Efficiencies	Members Allowances	Officers Car Allowances	Increased Income	Events / Improvements
Cut the number of Councillors by 20	To help reduce the cost of politics and with the pressures on frontline staffing and taxpayers bills will believe Oldham has far too many politicians than is necessary.							210,280			
Abolish District Leads Allowances	Most committee members attend meetings without drawing on any additional allowance/s. Given the pressures on Council finances we believe that District Leads of committees should consider it a matter of Civic duty rather than for financial gain.	£ 39,630						39,630			
Scrap Deputy Cabinet posts	These posts are unnecessary and were only introduced when Labour took control of the Council post 2011. The relevant Cabinet portfolio holder should be on top of their brief. This is nothing more than political patronage.	£ 39,425						39,425			
Scrap Chairman's allowances	Most committee members attend meetings without drawing on any additional allowance/s. Given the pressures on Council finances we believe that Chairman of committees should consider it a matter of Civic duty rather than for financial gain.	£ 59,831						59,831			
Sell the ABU 1J number plate & Mayral car		£ 10,000						10,000			
Scrap the Deputy Mayoral Allowance	It is a matter of Civic pride that someone is nominated as the Deputy Mayor of the Metropolitan Borough. Many local Mayors and Parish Chairman do not receive an allowance anywhere near as generous and given the role is remunerated through the basic allowance, we believe that given frontline staff face pressures that so should the politicians.	£ 3,129						3,129			
Reduce Mayoral allowance by 50%	It is a matter of Civic pride that someone is nominated as the Mayor of the Metropolitan Borough. Many local Mayors and Parish Chairman do not receive an allowance anywhere near as generous and given the role is remunerated through the basic allowance, we believe that given frontline staff face pressures that so should the politicians. We note that the current Mayor has led by example by giving away his allowance following a honourable Civic tradition of taking no financial benefit.	£ 8,248						8,248			
Leader of the Opposition allowance 70% cut in allowance	It is a matter of Civic pride that someone is the Leader of the Opposition on Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council. Given the role is remunerated through the basic allowance, we believe that given frontline staff face pressures that so to should the politicians.	£ 11,040						11,040			
Deputy Main Opposition Leader abolition of allowance	It is a matter of Civic pride that someone is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition on Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council. Given the role is remunerated through the basic allowance, we believe that given frontline staff face pressures that so to should the politicians.	£ 6,309						6,309			
Minority Opposition Group Leader abolition of allowance	It is a matter of Civic pride that someone is the Minority Leader of the Opposition on Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council. Given the role is remunerated through the basic allowance, we believe that given frontline staff face pressures that so to should the politicians.	£ 4,731						4,731			
Chairman of the Standards Committee (Abolition of allowance)	The majority of committee members attend meetings without drawing on any additional allowance, given the pressures on finances we believe that Chairman should consider it a matter of Civic duty rather than for any financial gain.	£ 734						734			
Reduce Cabinet Members Allowances by £9000	The official opposition receives no financial remuneration and many Cabinet members attend meetings without drawing on any additional allowance, given the pressures on finances we believe that they should lead by example and see it as a matter of Civic duty rather than for any financial gain.	£ 90,000						90,000			
Abolish District Deputy Leads Allowances	Most committee members attend meetings without drawing on any additional allowance/s. Given the pressures on Council finances we believe that Deputy District Leads of committees should consider it a matter of Civic duty rather than for financial gain.	£ 2,604						2,604			

APPENDIX 1: Conservatives Savings Proposals

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Proposal	Rationale	Annual Financial Implication	District Partnerships	Communications	Additional Vacancy Factor	Senior Management	Admin / Efficiencies	Members Allowances	Officers Car Allowances	Increased Income	Events / Improvements
Review of car allowances, as previously promised to reduce the amount paid as a lump sum to staff doing zero or minimal mileage	To help reduce the impact on Council finances and the Councils commitment to meet its net zero targets. Also if it is not being used then there is a clear need to repurpose that allowance.	£ 50,000							50,000		
Reduction in mileage budgets to reflect change in work practices	To help reduce the impact on Council finances and the Councils commitment to meet its net zero targets. Also if it is not being used then there is a clear need to repurpose that allowance.	£ 55,000							55,000		
Advertising on the side of a bin wagon- £1800 per annum per vehicle	This revenue raising option allows the Council to bring in revenue and to do so on vehicles that are seen in around the borough on a regular basis. It is carried out on busses and other modes of public and privately owned vehicles in the UK. Internal Council messaging is wasted when a financial gain can be made by the Council.	£ 32,400								32,400	
Advertising on Council land at £1175 per site per annum x12 sites	Many sites that are near to main gateway access points can help generate revenue as it already the case at two sites. With additional sites this will help bring in new additional income to the Council.	£ 14,100								14,100	
Allowing adverts (with necessary restrictions) to feature on the Council website through the Council Advertising Network.	This revenue raising option allows the Council to bring in revenue and to do so online. It is carried out by numerous organisations in order to generate revenue. It is a simple and easy revenue raising activity which will help bring in well needed additional income.	£ 10,000								10,000	
Advertising on Council owned vehicles - similar to taxis (How many LGV's and Cars are there in the fleet)	Using at least 30 vehicles that are suitable for advertising then and just on an annual period, then a reasonable working assumption of a £250 to £300 markup on a partial/full/wrap advertising which can cost £500 to £1000 for 6 to 8 months is a reasonable return.	£ 9,000								9,000	
Increase in fees for Houses of Multiple Occupation Licence	There is a clear increase across the board of HMO's which are putting increased strain on Council resources and community patience. It is time we saw an increase in charges in order to reflect that.	£ 15,000								15,000	
Big Bang Bonfire (Redistribution to districts to manage £20,000 - £4000 per the 5 districts £1000 per ward)	Societies, Clubs and Pubs organise many well attended bonfire night displays in the Borough. It is a more efficient use of taxpayer's money to remove the event at Oldham Edge and redistribute the funds to districts where the funding can help support local events whether bonfire night or other events in the year. Many events outside of the Council organised event attracted more people.	£ 35,000									35,000
Ollie and Millie Mascots	We believe that this is not an efficient use of resources when the Council faces significant financial pressures. The focus must be on core delivery rather than paying actors to dress as Owls.	£ 3,000									3,000
LIF Surplus 24/25	We are repurposing the LIF underspend in order to help all residents across the Borough with our Council tax freeze.	£ 140,000									140,000
TOTAL		3,077,743	787,640	559,423	400,000	319,000	373,500	485,960	105,000	80,500	178,000

Appendix 2

**Budget
Reduction
Proformas**

**Budget
reductions**

Service Area:	District Partnerships
Budget Reduction Title:	Reduction in the District Partnership Service

Budget Reduction Proposal - Detail and Objectives:

The proposal is that the Council will reduce this service.

Restructure of the District Teams (Keeping Caseworkers and Business Support Officers). This will mean reducing the team by 14 posts of which three are currently vacant.

The Council is duplicating provision that is provided already elsewhere. This reduction and restructuring will reduce management costs and make the team more efficient and district focused.

2022/23 Service Budget and Establishment	£000
Employees	1,321
Other Operational Expenses	429
Income	(146)
Total	1,604

Current Forecast (under) / overspend	-
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Number of posts (Full time equivalent)	-
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	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Proposed Budget Reduction (£000)	(500)	(288)	0
Proposed Staffing Reductions (FTE)	10	0	0

Is your proposal a 'one-off' in 2024/25 or is it ongoing?	On-going
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Section B

What impact does the proposal have on the following?

Property	
None	
Service Delivery	
Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced support to Elected Members in each District including the support on bids to LIF, case work, advice and guidance as examples • The teams facilitate partnership working at a place-level including supporting Placed Based Integration which supports demand reduction and for example supports the new adult operating model • Reduction in the support to wider humanitarian programmes including the cost of living and wider health related work • Reduction in support to programmes and development of such things as the Clean Streets programme along with other campaigns • Remove support to key events including – Bonfire night, local community events etc • Reduction in support to Residents First approach to engagement and the support to wider residents engagement • Reduction in supporting the coordination of local partnership meetings and problem solving meetings • Reduction in support to the voluntary sector on community activity, resource support, advice and guidance, and partnerships developing community co-production 	
Future expected outcomes	
Reduced service provision as per the above	
Organisation	
Yes – unable to support key events and link to community	
Workforce	
Yes – a reduction in workforce would be a consequence of the approval of this proposal	
Communities and Service Users	
Yes – see above. Services to communities would be reduced.	
Oldham Cares	
None	
Other Partner Organisations	
No work to build capacity of communities and community organisations	

Who are the key stakeholders?

Staff	Yes
Elected Members	Yes
Residents	Yes
Local business community	No

Schools	No
Trade Unions	Yes
External partners (if yes please specify below)	Yes
Wide range of external partners including the voluntary sector	
Other Council departments (if yes please specify below)	No
N/a	
Other (if yes please specify below)	No
N/a	

Benefits to the organisation/staff/customers including performance improvements
Over two financial years, a cumulative £0.788m reduction in costs to the Council.

Section C

Key Risks and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Adverse impact of communities due to the reduction of the services identified above	Emphasis to be placed on increased use of the voluntary sector to deliver such programmes albeit this would also see a reduction in voluntary sector support.
Lack of support for Elected Members	Members to engage directly with service managers and officers.
Loss of placed based coordination and delivery	Cease placed based working

Key Development and Delivery Milestones

Milestone	Timeline
Staff and Trades Unions consultation completed	May 2024
Proposals implemented	July 2024

Section D

Consultation required?	Yes Timeline to be determined
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	Start	Conclusion
Staff	TBC	TBC
Trade Union	TBC	TBC
Public	TBC	TBC
Service Users	TBC	TBC
Other	TBC	TBC

Equality Impact Screening

Is there potential for the proposed budget reduction to have a disproportionate adverse impact on any of the following?

Disabled people	Yes
Particular Ethnic Groups	No
Men or Women (including impacts due to pregnancy / maternity)	No
People who are married or in a civil partnership	No
People of particular sexual orientation	No
People who are proposing to undergo, undergoing or have undergone a process or part of a process of gender reassignment	No
People on low incomes	Yes
People in particular age groups	Yes
Groups with particular faiths and beliefs	No

EIA required? (choose YES if any of the above impacts are YES)	Not at this point
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Section E

Finance comments
The budget reduction proposal will generate an additional saving of £0.788m from 2025/26 onwards. Due to the requirement to undertake staff consultation, there would be a reduced impact in 2024/25.

Signed RO	05/02/2024
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Signed Finance	05/02/2024
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BR1 - Section A

Portfolio:	Reform and Regeneration
Service Area:	Communications and Research
Budget Reduction Title:	Communications and Research Service Redesign

Budget Reduction Proposal - detail and objectives:

The role of the Communications and Research service is to communicate and engage with a wide range of audiences both within Oldham and beyond; in order to ensure residents are aware of Council news and services; to attract visitors and investors; and to enable our residents and stakeholders to participate in decision-making.

The Communications and Research service currently has 18 permanent FTE staff working across disciplines including digital and web, design, social media, video creation, media relations, internal communications, media relations, marketing, engagement and consultation. One of these posts is currently vacant.

Our proposal is to reduce spend on this non-statutory service and proposed a redesign of the communications and research team. The Council needs to make efficiencies and the core communication of Council services and online digital communications of those services does not need vast amounts of resources. We would reduce staffing resources to save £0.475m per annum. This is in addition to the £75k proposed by the current administration.

We believe any impact on essential areas can be mitigated by prioritising resources appropriately and have not been presented with any evidence to the contrary.

This reduction would be supplemented by a further saving of £0.075m through ceasing the publication of the three issues of Oldham Council, Working for You'

In addition, it is proposed to save £9k through ceasing marketing and advertising for town centre events.

2023/24 Service Budget and Establishment	£000
Employees	927
Other Operational Expenses	75
Income	(5)
Total	997

Current Forecast (under) / overspend	-
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Number of posts (Full time equivalent)	18
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	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Proposed Budget Reduction (£000)	(350)	(209)	

Proposed Staffing Reductions (FTE)	9	0	0
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Is your proposal a 'one-off' in 2024/25 or is it ongoing?	Ongoing
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Section B

What impact does the proposal have on the following?

Property
No impact
Service Delivery
Such significant savings to the Communications would destabilise the service's ability to deliver effective communications to the people of Oldham, and mean some core communications activity could not be delivered.
Future expected outcomes
<p>Reducing the number of staff would mean that the Communications service would have to focus only on some essential elements of the service, which are chiefly reactive communications such as responding to media enquiries.</p> <p>This would mean the team would be unable to proactively engage with residents and communities via social and digital media; produce videos, undertake as much research and public engagement, or put out press releases with positive news stories about the council's work. This could then lead to a knock-on reputational risk due to a reduction in positive, proactive, communications teamed with far less direct engagement with residents and communities.</p> <p>The team would also be unable to carry out campaigns work for essential areas such as adoption, foster care recruitment, social work recruitment and more, which could severely impact on our ability as a Council to deliver critical services such as caring for vulnerable young people.</p> <p>The aim of launching the Oldham Council: Working for You council newspaper was primarily to provide essential information, such as contact numbers and guidance on help and support available to households, to those without access to the Internet.</p> <p>Ceasing the publication of Oldham Council: Working for You could therefore lead to people who do not have access to our website or social media channels being unable to access the information they need, and struggling to get in touch with Council departments.</p>
Organisation
Such a significant reduction in the Communications budget would mean non-essential communications internally would have to be ceased. This would lead to the organisation as a whole being less informed and less able to be effective ambassadors who understand our values and behaviours, or our aims and objectives for the borough – hampering colleagues' ability to serve local leaders and put residents first.
Workforce
Removing almost a third of the staffing in the service would create increased pressure on staff that remain, as well as removing technical specialisms such as design, video production and web expertise.
Communities and Service Users
<p>Reduced communications activity – including social media – would leave residents less well informed about what the Council provides, including critical information such as making safeguarding referrals, getting help with housing, or accessing the range of support available through the Cost of Living crisis.</p> <p>Adding advertising to the website would also have a detrimental effect on the customer experience. At present, the Communications team focuses on trying to simplify web content and create interfaces that are designed to assist the resident in their tasks.</p>

Selling advertising space would undermine that effort, decrease usability and make it more difficult for service users – particularly our most vulnerable residents – to complete tasks online.
Children and Young People
No specific impact
Oldham Cares
Reduced partner communications would leave partners unclear of the role of the Council on key partnership projects, and less able to collaborate effectively.
Other Partner Organisations
Reduced partner communications would leave partners unclear of the role of the Council on key partnership projects, and less able to collaborate effectively.

Who are the key stakeholders?

Staff	Yes
Elected Members	Yes
Residents	Yes
Local business community	Yes
Schools	N/A
Trade Unions	N/A
External partners (if yes please specify below)	N/A
Other Council departments (if yes please specify below)	
Other (if yes please specify below)	

Benefits to the organisation/staff/customers including performance improvements
A budget reduction of £0.559m across 2024/25 and 2025/26

Section C

Key Risks and Mitigations – include any interdependencies

Risk	Mitigation
The Communications and Research team will be unable to meet demand.	Services will be fully engaged in the redesign process, ensuring the service continues to meet business needs and focus on key priorities during this time of change.

Proactive communications would be vastly reduced.	A tightly defined and agreed set of core priorities would have to be agreed across the organisation with an acceptance that many existing communications activities would cease.
A reduction in communication opportunities could lead to some areas delivering their own messaging.	Utilise other avenues for communication within the organisation or partners.
Inappropriate advertisements appearing on the Council website through automatic advertising placement.	Increased officer time would need to be spent managing this aspect of the website, to ensure no adverts appear on the site that are controversial or inappropriate. The cost of this may outweigh revenue brought in by the advertising.

Key Development and Delivery Milestones

Milestone	Timeline
Undertake a formal review and consultation with impacted services and staff.	Q1 2024/2025
Implement a restructure of the Communications and Research service	Q2 2024/2025

Section D

Consultation required?	TBC
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	Start	Conclusion
Staff	TBC	TBC
Trade Union	TBC	TBC
Public	N/A	N/A
Service Users	N/A	N/A

Other	N/A	N/A
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Equality Impact Screening

Is there potential for the proposed budget reduction to have a disproportionate adverse impact on any of the following?

Disabled people	N/A
Particular Ethnic Groups	N/A
Men or Women (including impacts due to pregnancy / maternity)	N/A
People who are married or in a civil partnership	N/A
People of particular sexual orientation	N/A
People who are proposing to undergo, undergoing or have undergone a process or part of a process of gender reassignment	N/A
People on low incomes	N/A
People in particular age groups	N/A
Groups with particular faiths and beliefs	N/A

EIA required? (choose YES if any of the above impacts are YES)	NO
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Section E

Finance comments
The combined proposal would generate savings of £0.559m per annum from 2025/26. Due to the requirement to undertake staff consultation, there would be a reduced impact in 2024/25.

Signed RO	
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Signed Finance	5 February 2024
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BR1 - Section A

Portfolio:	Finance & Corporate Resources
Service Area:	Finance
Budget Reduction Title:	Introduction of a Vacancy Factor

Budget Reduction Proposal - Detail and Objectives:

The Council currently prepares its budget estimates on the approved FTE establishment of each service and cost centre. The proposal is to apply a vacancy factor at a rate of 1% to mainstream employee budgets. Some posts will become vacant during 2024/25 due to staff turnover and it is a legitimate and reasonable action to create a budget reduction proposal to take advantage of this movement in staffing and the consequent impact of the recruitment process. The Council has a detailed recruitment review process. This should ensure the timing of the recruitment to posts is managed appropriately.

The staff budget is forecast to increase to c. £140m by 2024/25. Based on the estimated staffing budget requirements for 2024/25 this will generate a saving of approximately £1.4m.

This proposal differs from the Administration's proposal of £1.0m because it removes the contingency, which we believe is unnecessary. The saving can be delivered through more effective vacancy management.

The additional saving will therefore be £0.4m.

Directorates will be expected to manage any recruitment to permanent or temporary posts whilst remaining aware of their vacancy management targets.

2023/24 Service Budget and Establishment

	£000
Employees	124,000
Other Operational Expenses	0
Income	0
Total	124,000

Current Forecast (under) / overspend	0
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Number of posts (Full time equivalent)	
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	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Proposed Budget Reduction (£000)	(400)	0	0
Proposed Staffing Reductions (FTE)	0	0	0

Is your proposal a 'one-off' in 2024/25 or is it ongoing?	Ongoing
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Section B

What impact does the proposal have on the following?

Property
There is no anticipated impact on property.
Service Delivery
There is no anticipated impact on service delivery, service staffing budgets will be managed within available resources.
Future expected outcomes
There is no anticipated impact on future expected outcomes.
Organisation
There is no anticipated impact on the organisation, service staffing budgets will be managed within available resources.
Workforce
There is no anticipated impact on the workforce.
Communities and Service Users
There is no anticipated impact on communities and service users.
Children and Young People
There is no anticipated impact on children and young people.
Oldham Cares
There is no anticipated impact on Oldham Cares apart from Council staffing budgets within Adult Social Care carrying and managing the vacancy factor.
Other Partner Organisations
There is no anticipated impact on partner organisations.

Who are the key stakeholders?

Staff	Yes
Elected Members	No
Residents	No
Local business community	No
Schools	No
Trade Unions	No
External partners (if yes please specify below)	No
N/a	
Other Council departments (if yes please specify below)	No
N/a	
Other (if yes please specify below)	No

N/a	
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Benefits to the organisation/staff/customers including performance improvements
A £1.4m contribution to the achievement of the 2024/25 budget reduction target.

Section C

Key Risks and Mitigations – include any interdependencies

Risk	Mitigation
Service budgets will overspend in 2024/25 due to non-achievement of the vacancy management target.	There is an expectation that a percentage of posts will be vacant in year through natural turnover of staff, and services through to directorates will manage recruitment and cover arrangements accordingly.
Individual budget areas with low staff turnover will fail to meet the vacancy target.	Information on the achievement of vacancy management targets will be made available at service and directorate level to allow a wider analysis of progress against targets and allow offsets between over and under achieving service / directorate areas.

Key Development and Delivery Milestones

Milestone	Timeline
Vacancy management targets are calculated and allocations communicated to service and budget	March 2024
Vacancy management targets are reviewed in line with any organisational change prior to the commencement of the 2024/25 financial year	March 2024 – April 2025
Vacancy management targets are applied to individual budgets prior to the commencement of the 2024/25 financial year.	April 2025

Production of vacancy management information is built into financial monitoring procedures.	May 2025
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Section D

Consultation required?	No
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	Start	Conclusion
Staff	N/a	N/a
Trade Union	N/a	N/a
Public	N/a	N/a
Service Users	N/a	N/a
Other	N/a	N/a

Equality Impact Screening

Is there potential for the proposed budget reduction to have a disproportionate adverse impact on any of the following?

Disabled people	No
Particular Ethnic Groups	No
Men or Women (including impacts due to pregnancy / maternity)	No
People who are married or in a civil partnership	No
People of particular sexual orientation	No
People who are proposing to undergo, undergoing or have undergone a process or part of a process of gender reassignment	No
People on low incomes	No
People in particular age groups	No
Groups with particular faiths and beliefs	No

EIA required? (choose YES if any of the above impacts are YES)	No
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Section E

Finance comments
This change in the costing methodology for staffing budgets will generate an additional saving of £0.4m. However, any flexibility in fast tracking urgent appointments will be removed as a result of this proposal. Vacancy management targets and their achievement will be closely monitored as part of the budget monitoring process.

Signed RO	05 February 2024
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Signed Finance	05 February 2024
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Service Area:	Chief Executives/ Place & Economic Growth
Budget Reduction Title:	Reduction in the Senior Management Team

Budget Reduction Proposal - Detail and Objectives:

The proposal will merge the following roles, delivering a saving of £248,000.

- Assistant Director of HR with assistant Chief executive
- Director of Economy with Director of Environment

This will remove a high-cost layer of senior management without adversely impacting upon service delivery.

We believe that with the changes agreed by full Council in regard to the part time role of the Chief Executive that a rationalisation is needed. The Human Resources Portfolio role should be merged with that of the ACE to improve Council delivery and core messaging to employees, giving the ACE a better insight into the organisation.

Merge the two roles together will allow for better strategic use of Council assets and delivery of public services from those Council assets.

The salaries of all staff earning in excess of £100,000 will pay will be frozen for 2 years, delivering a saving of £66,000. We believe that as frontline staff face increasing pressures those at the top of the organisation should share the burden and as part of this we propose a salary freeze for two years in order to reflect the more than generous salary paid for by many who may never be able to reach such a wage.

Finally, we will scrap the car allowance for senior management, delivering a saving of £5,000. This will help reduce the impact on Council finances and the Councils commitment to meet its net zero targets we believe that well remunerated officers do not need further remuneration.

2022/23 Service Budget and Establishment

	£000
Employees	248
Other Operational Expenses	
Income	
Total	248

Current Forecast (under) / overspend

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Number of posts (Full time equivalent)

	-
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	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Proposed Budget Reduction (£000)	(200)	(119)	0
Proposed Staffing Reductions (FTE)	2	0	0

Is your proposal a 'one-off' in 2024/25 or is it ongoing?

	On-going
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Section B

What impact does the proposal have on the following?

Property
None
Service Delivery
None
Future expected outcomes
None
Organisation
A change to the way executive decisions are taken
Workforce
A requirement for a new senior management team comprising the Chief Executive and directors
Communities and Service Users
None
Oldham Cares
None
Other Partner Organisations
None

Who are the key stakeholders?

Staff	Yes
Elected Members	No
Residents	No
Local business community	No
Schools	No
Trade Unions	Yes
External partners (if yes please specify below)	No
Other Council departments (if yes please specify below)	No
N/a	
Other (if yes please specify below)	No
N/a	

Benefits to the organisation/staff/customers including performance improvements

Over two financial years, a £0.480m reduction in the costs of the Council.

Section C

Key Risks and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
A decline in the effectiveness of the setting the Council's strategy and key decision making.	Directors to take on the roles previously undertaken by the posts removed.
A reduction in senior management capacity in the Council.	Directors and other senior staff can take on the roles previously undertaken by the posts removed.
N/a	N/a

Key Development and Delivery Milestones

Milestone	Timeline
Staff and Trades Unions consultation completed	May 2024
Proposals implemented	July 2024
N/a	N/a

Section D

Consultation required?	Yes Timeline to be determined
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	Start	Conclusion
Staff	TBC	TBC
Trade Union	TBC	TBC
Public	TBC	TBC
Service Users	TBC	TBC
Other	TBC	TBC

Equality Impact Screening

Is there potential for the proposed budget reduction to have a disproportionate adverse impact on any of the following?

Disabled people	No
Particular Ethnic Groups	No
Men or Women (including impacts due to pregnancy / maternity)	No
People who are married or in a civil partnership	No
People of particular sexual orientation	No
People who are proposing to undergo, undergoing or have undergone a process or part of a process of gender reassignment	No
People on low incomes	No
People in particular age groups	No
Groups with particular faiths and beliefs	No

EIA required? (choose YES if any of the above impacts are YES)	No
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Section E

Finance comments
The budget reduction proposal will generate a total saving of £0.314m from 2025/26 onwards. Due to the requirement to undertake staff consultation, there would be a reduced impact in 2024/25.

Signed RO	05/02/2024
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Signed Finance	05/02/2024
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APPENDIX 3: CONSERVATIVE CAPITAL PROPOSALS

Proposal	Rationale	Annual Financial Implication
Emerging priorities 2024/25 Repurpose from emerging priorities		
Capital investment in Environmental measures	The Borough has seen an increase in fly tipping. As part of our commitment to help reduce and tackle the issue we believe we need to tackle the problem with more preventative measures, enforcement and the use of technology. We will work with department heads to target these resources effectively and efficiently to help deliver the best results with data and patterns where hotspots are prevalent.	£ 235,000
Capital investment in District Town Centres	Royton and Shaw have been long neglected by the Council, in the Precinct in Royton and the High Street in Shaw. We believe that working with the ward Councillors, businesses, the public and Parish Council that a business case can be presented which helps with public realm improvements, security and public access. Businesses are investing in these areas despite of the Council, so it is only fair that we back that investment up with the capital needed to help secure the long term use of our Highstreets.	£ 300,000
Capital investment in Neighbourhoods	We believe that our neighbourhoods are key to the overall health of our towns. As such we would focus on using this funding to help alleviate problems on our roads, parks or footpaths in particular around Thornham and High Crompton, with each allocated an equal share of the total. Working with ward members, residents, officers and stakeholders it will be used to help improve these areas with properly targeted schemes. This will be for local wards and or districts to decide. Devolving power to neighbourhoods.	£ 200,000
Highways	Many of the Borough's roads are not in a fit and proper state due to years of neglect. We want to invest in them in order to help reduce potholes, improve safety and help make sure that our roads are fit for the future.	£ 1,308,000
Emerging priorities 2025/26 Repurpose from emerging priorities		
Capital investment in District Town Centres	Royton and Shaw have been long neglected by the Council, in the Precinct in Royton and the High Street in Shaw. We believe that working with the ward Councillors, businesses, the public and Parish Council that a business case can be presented which helps with public realm improvements, security and public access. Businesses are investing in these areas despite of the Council, so it is only fair that we back that investment up with the capital needed to help secure the long term use of our Highstreets for another year in order to maximise the impact of the funding.	£ 1,000,000
Capital investment in Neighbourhoods	We believe that our neighbourhoods are key to the overall health of our towns. As such we would focus on using this funding to help alleviate problems on our roads, parks or footpaths around Derker/Greenacres/Westwood/Whitegate/Moorside/Heyside/Wrigleyhead/Firwood Park/Lees/Austerlands/Royley, with each allocated an equal share of the total. Working with ward members, residents, officers and stakeholders it will be used to help improve these areas with properly targeted schemes. This will be for local wards and or districts to decide. Devolving power to neighbourhoods.	£ 1,100,000
Highways	Many of the Boroughs roads are not in a fit and proper state due to years of neglect. We want to invest in them in order to help reduce potholes, improve safety and help make sure that our roads are fit for the future.	£ 1,000,000
Capital investment in Environmental measures	The Borough has seen an increase in fly tipping. As part of our commitment to help reduce and tackle the issue we believe we need to tackle the problem with more preventative measures, enforcement and the use of technology. We will work with department heads to target these resources effectively and efficiently to help deliver the best results with data and patterns where hotspots are prevalent.	£ 468,000
New Health Centre for Saddleworth	Saddleworth with a growing population is in desperate need of a new health centre. With the backing of ward members, the Council, Parish Council, NHS and other stakeholders we will look to make that a reality. By investing in a new health centre that can stand the test of time.	£ 3,225,000
Emerging priorities 2026/27 Repurpose from emerging priorities		
Capital investment in Environmental measures	The Borough has seen an increase in fly tipping. As part of our commitment to help reduce and tackle the issue we believe we need to tackle the problem with more preventative measures, enforcement and the use of technology. We will work with department heads to target these resources effectively and efficiently to help deliver the best results with data and patterns where hotspots are prevalent.	£ 410,000