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## Report to Council

# Liberal Democrats Budget Amendment Proposals 2024/25

**Portfolio Holder:** Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats and Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance and Low Carbon, Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Sam Al-Hamdani

**Officer Contact:** Andy Cooper, Senior Finance Manager

**28 February 2024**

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## Reason for Decision

The report presents to Council the Liberal Democrats suggested amendments to the Administration's Budget proposals for 2024/25 and offers some forward-looking proposals to achieve savings in future years.

## Executive Summary

The report presents to Council a number of 2024/25 budget amendments in addition to those proposals already presented by the Administration in its Revenue Budget and Capital Programme reports.

At the Governance, Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Board meeting held on 8 February 2024, the Liberal Democrats presented their Budget Amendment proposals for discussion and recommendation as an Alternative Budget. The Board specifically referred three of the Liberal Democrat Budget Amendment proposals to Cabinet for consideration; Opp-BR1-201, 202 and 204 as outlined in sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.5 respectively. At its meeting on 12 February 2024, Cabinet considered the draft minutes of the Board but did not accept the proposals contained in the Liberal Democrat Budget Amendment.

The Liberal Democrats are disappointed that none of the proposals have been recommended believing they are sensible options and therefore propose that Council agrees the recommendations within this report.

This report identifies additional savings totalling £0.311m in 2024/25 and a further £0.139m in 2025/26. There are a range of investments that will be funded from the savings proposals put forward to offset the increased expenditure and suggested amendments to the Capital Programme. Details of the proposals can be found in section 3 and in summary at Appendix A. Business Cases for the individual budget reductions can be found at Appendix B.

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## **Recommendations**

That Council approves:

1. The Investment and Savings proposals for 2024/25 as summarised at Appendix A.
2. The amendments to the Administration's proposed Capital Programme as set out in this report.

**Liberal Democrats 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.
- 1.2 In the current economic environment, it is becoming more difficult to deliver a balanced budget. The Chief Executive described setting the budget for 2023/24 as the most challenging budget round the Council has faced for a significant number of years and it is fair to say the process for 2024/25 has been equally if not more challenging. An increasing number of Local Authorities are in discussion with and/ or have had Inspectors appointed by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities with regard to their long-term financial sustainability. During the 2023/24 financial year Birmingham City Council, Nottingham City Council and Woking District have issued Section 114 notices; this follows Thurrock, Croydon and Slough Borough Council who all issued notices in previous financial years. In addition, an increasing number of authorities are issuing warnings that they are at risk of issuing a Section 114 notice if they do not quickly deliver the required savings and limit expenditure.
- 1.3 The Liberal Democrats produce budget amendments to challenge key decisions set out by the Administration, identify other areas for revenue savings and propose alternative priority areas for the Council to concentrate its resources. There is also a review of the Administration's Capital Programme with the Liberal Democrats proposing alternative schemes to deliver their priorities.
- 1.4 In producing these budget amendments, the Liberal Democrats offer common-sense practical solutions to the borough's problems and challenge the Administration to cut waste, get the basics right for residents and provide the value-for-money local services the public want. Throughout this document there is a focus on targeting resources to make the borough safer, greener and cleaner whilst providing support for the most vulnerable members of our community during this cost of living crisis.
- 1.5 In preparing the Opposition Budget, the Liberal Democrats would like Council, once again, to note the significantly reduced timescales afforded to the Party. With effectively 10 working days being made available, this is in our opinion insufficient time to construct a meaningful and robust proposal with the right amount of due diligence applied.

**2. Current Position**

- 2.1 The context of the whole budget setting process has once again been extremely challenging. The legacy of COVID-19 and the 'cost of living crisis' continue to have a profound and far-reaching impact on the Council in terms of service delivery.
- 2.2 Macro- and micro-economic factors together with global events have also contributed to the challenge of setting a balanced budget, whilst inflation rates have reduced significantly and interest rates have stabilised, the general cost of living continues to have an impact on the Council and the residents of the Borough, other influencing factors include:
  - The impact of Brexit – affecting trade arrangements with countries which remain within the European Union;
  - The war between Russia and Ukraine;
  - Central Government policy changes and an impending General Election.

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- 2.3 Considering these factors and existing budget constraints, the Administration has presented a series of savings proposals as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process. The Liberal Democrats recognise that, especially for the forthcoming budget, difficult choices need to be made to ensure a balanced budget can be presented to Council, and therefore reluctantly accept that the majority of the proposals for 2024/25 cannot be avoided, particularly when considering the current failure to provide a national solution to the funding of social care. In doing so the Liberal Democrats recognise the future savings required to reduce the continued reliance on reserves as set out in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy are a challenge. Each year the Council continues to use reserves to balance the budget – which is currently the only approach recommended by the Department of Levelling-up, Housing and Communities – has a compounded negative effect in future years. However, we are assured at this stage that the Council is implementing plans intended to improve its long-term financial resilience and reduce its reliance on one-off resources.
- 2.4 The proposal by the Administration to increase Oldham Council’s element of Council Tax for general purposes by 2.99% for 2024/25 as well as a 2% increase for the Adult Social Care Precept; 4.99% in total, the maximum permissible increase without requiring a Council Tax referendum is reluctantly accepted by the Liberal Democrats. Without doubt, a 4.99% Council Tax increase will be challenging for the residents of the Borough, particularly those already suffering hardship. The Liberal Democrats do however recognise that the spending power of the Council in terms of Central Government support for Local Authorities is predicated on Councils levying the maximum permissible increase, in this way, an increase that is anything lower than the currently proposed 4.99% will seriously restrict the Council in its ability to support and provide the necessary services to the Residents of the Borough, in particular the provision of non-statutory services that provide direct support to the most vulnerable citizens; potentially including but not limited to; cost of living initiatives, the provision of welfare rights, support and inclusion services as well as community and outreach services.
- 2.5 Despite the position we find ourselves in we must continue to strive for improvements in the borough. More than ever the decisions we make now will have a direct impact on future generations; therefore, collectively, we want to ensure that the correct priorities are at the forefront of decision-making processes.
- 2.6 The Liberal Democrats recognise that these priorities will not be achieved in the short term, therefore there is a real focus on including both revenue and capital investment proposals that tackle the issues within these budget amendment proposals. The proposals we have identified are also set against a background of ensuring the best interests of the Borough are supported through every day decision making at the Council, for example the Liberal Democrats believe that the Council should use its spending power to support the local economy by, where possible, spending locally.

### **3. 2024/25 Proposals**

- 3.1 The Liberal Democrats propose a range of specific budget amendments to be considered this year. These are split into:
- an amendment to the Capital Programme for 2024/25 and 2025/26;
  - investment proposals which would achieve significant benefits within the borough;
  - budget reduction proposals where it is considered individual service areas can make new or additional savings in order to fund the investment proposals put forward in this report.
- 3.2 If the savings proposals are acceptable to the Administration, then, if taken in isolation, they have the option to reduce the level of reserves required to support the budget, thereby improving the financial resilience of the Council.
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## **Liberal Democrat Alternative Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27**

- 3.3 The Liberal Democrats are proposing an adjustment to the Council's Capital Programme by directing capital resources to be allocated, prioritised and used at a local/ward level in order to help drive the wider regeneration agenda. Vibrant districts are vital to the overall prosperity of the Borough, COVID confirmed how important our Districts are and targeted funding is needed now to redress a historic lack of local investment and to restore district facilities to the heart of communities. Member Led Investment in our Districts' therefore proposes expenditure of £2.000m; £1.000m in each of 2024/25 and 2025/26 and will be targeted at a number of initiatives which will contribute to the regeneration of the Borough and allow us to build back better in a post COVID-19 environment. Priorities will include, but will not necessarily be limited to:

### Crime prevention

- 3.4 To fund specific local measures targeted at reducing crime and anti-social behaviour within neighbourhoods.

### Roads and Road Safety

- 3.5 Investment in the road network including improvements to the general condition and also targeted investment to make travelling throughout Oldham safer for all road users and pedestrians.

### District Centres

- 3.6 Targeted neighbourhood initiatives to directly respond to the needs and wishes of residents

### Environmental Initiatives

- 3.7 Furthering the green agenda at a local level including making sure that the green and recreational spaces that have become popular since the pandemic are suitably maintained and remain available to the residents of the Borough.

## **Summary of Capital Investment Proposals**

- 3.8 The £2.000m additional capital investment required to deliver 'Investment in Our Districts' will be financed by redeploying part of the Fund for Emerging Priorities included in the report 'Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2028/29'. The table below summarises the Liberal Democrats Alternative Capital Programme and the call on the Fund for Emerging Priorities. The proposed expenditure leaves a total of £7.426m remaining within the Fund and does not require any Prudential Borrowing and therefore neither adds expenditure to the Capital Programme nor incur any additional revenue expenditure in the form of capital financing costs.

**Table 1 - Liberal Democrats Alternative Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28**

Capital Proposals	2024/25 £k	2025/26 £k	2026/27 £k	2027/28 £k	Total £k
<b>Funding</b>					
Fund for Emerging Priorities	(1,043)	(3,318)	(2,885)	(2,000)	(9,246)
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>(1,043)</b>	<b>(3,318)</b>	<b>(2,885)</b>	<b>(2,000)</b>	<b>(9,246)</b>
<b>Proposals</b>					
Investment in Our Districts	1,000	1,000			2,000
<b>Total Proposed Capital Expenditure</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,000</b>
<b>Balance of Fund for Emerging Priorities</b>	<b>(43)</b>	<b>(2,318)</b>	<b>(2,885)</b>	<b>(2,000)</b>	<b>(7,246)</b>

**The Liberal Democrat Alternative Revenue Budget 2024/25 to 2025/26****Investment Proposals**

- 3.9 The Liberal Democrats are proposing a range of additional budget reduction proposals for 2024/25 which will make £0.311m available for investment with a further £0.139m in 2025/26 as detailed in Section 4. The resource will be used to invest in a range of proposals aimed at improving the lives of residents within the borough. Details of the individual investment proposals are provided below.

**Highways and Pavement Repairs (£0.100m)**

- 3.10 A revenue fund of £0.100m to support the transport infrastructure of the Borough.

**Recreational and Green Spaces (£0.100m)**

- 3.11 A sum of £0.100m to support and promote recreation and enhance green spaces in 2024/25.

**Youth Services (£0.050m)**

- 3.12 Investment in youth services is a Liberal Democrat priority. The proposal is to increase the revenue budget for the Youth Service by £0.050m. This will be used for enhanced delivery of the District and Detached Youth work offer including venue costs, activity costs and resources to support the increased youth work provision in each district of the borough and provide a quality youth work offer to young people that supports and promotes positive emotional health and wellbeing.

**Investment in Crime and Safety (£0.050m)**

- 3.13 An investment of £0.050m is proposed to support measures aimed at reducing crime and improving safety for the residents of the Borough.

**Whit Friday Band Contest (£0.011m)**

- 3.14 A sum of £0.011m to support and facilitate the running of the annual Whit Friday band contest, one of the higher profile events within the Borough, attracting visitors and providing a major boost for local businesses.

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#### 4. Liberal Democrat Alternative Budget Reduction Proposals

- 4.1 The Liberal Democrats are proposing a range of challenging budget reduction proposals, totalling £0.450m across 2024/25 and 2025/26, which will reduce spend on non-essential or non-statutory services in order to reprioritise the funds into proposals which will improve the lives of people in the borough. Brief summaries of the savings proposals are provided below with full pro-formas provided at Appendix B.

##### **OPP-BR1-201 – Reconsideration of Council priorities with regards to the Communications and Research Service (£0.365m)**

- 4.2 As in the previous two years, and with limited action from the Administration, the Liberal Democrats still feel that there is further scope in this area to reduce spend on what is a non-statutory service and to re-prioritise this to other areas. As such, the Liberal Democrats propose to redesign the Communications and Research team generating a total budget reduction of £0.365m. This will enable the reprioritisation of funding towards front line services. This reduction would be generated by halting production of the publication Oldham Council: Working for You and by disestablishing 6.3 posts which may include redundancies, however, due to staff consultation timelines only a part year effect would be achieved in 2024/25. This would generate a saving of £0.360m. It is also proposed to generate revenue of circa £0.005m by optimising income generation opportunities across the Council's media channels. The Communications and Research Service has put forward a budget reduction of £0.075m for 2024/25 (with a further £0.025m in 2025/26), achieved by a review of the Research and Engagement function. For this reason, the proposed reduction of £0.365m is reduced accordingly to £0.265m of which £0.198m will be achieved in 2024/25 with an additional £0.067m in 2025/26.

##### **OPP-BR1-202 – Reduction in mileage budgets to reflect change in work practices (£0.055m)**

- 4.3 The Liberal Democrats propose to reduce mileage budgets by £0.055m on a pro rata basis across the Council, excluding Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care cost centres. The Liberal Democrats propose that due to the increase in Council employees working from home and the increase of Teams based meetings, the requirement to travel using a personal vehicle has reduced, which in turn should result in a saving for the Council.

##### **OPP-BR1-203 – Reduction in Trade Union Facilities Time (£0.070m)**

- 4.4 The Liberal Democrats are proposing to reduce the Trades Union subsidy provided by the Council following a consistent reduction in Trades Union membership as evidenced by decreasing numbers of staff opting to pay membership through payroll. This would result in a reduction of approximately 50% to the base budget resulting in a total saving £0.070m which, due to the consultation required, would be achieved over 2 financial years resulting in a £0.035m saving in 2024/25 and a further £0.035m in 2025/26

##### **OPP-BR1-204 – Review of car allowances, as previously promised, to reduce the amount paid as a lump sum to staff doing zero or minimal mileage (£0.050m)**

- 4.5 A lump sum car allowance of £500 is paid annually to essential car users. The Council is currently paying car allowances to 532 staff members of staff (£0.236m) compared to 641 members of staff at the same point in time twelve months ago (£0.316m).
- 4.6 Analysis of the data shows that in the period April 2023 to December 2023, 244 (46%) of those individuals in roles with the Essential Car Allowance have recorded/ claimed zero miles (302= 47% to December 2022). For the same period 52 (10%) recorded/claimed for 1 to 100 miles (38= 6% to December 2022) and 236 (44%) recorded/claimed for 101 and above miles

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(301= 47% to December 2022). It should be noted that anecdotal evidence suggests that officers do not always claim mileage travelled, particularly where the value is low.

- 4.7 The Liberal Democrats believe, and the analysis above supports the view that a review of the posts which attract essential car user status should be undertaken with the intention of removing the lump sum payment from posts where users routinely record zero, or very few miles. Removal of the allowance from 100 employees would result in a £0.050m saving. Due to the consultation requirements only a part year saving of £0.013m would be generated in 2024/25 with full year effect being applied in 2025/26.

#### **OPP-BR1-205 – Reduction in the Stationary Budget (£0.010m)**

- 4.8 It is proposed that a budget reduction of £0.010m is implemented in 2024/25 in relation to the Stationary Budget in the belief that there is scope for a modest reduction in this area. Facilitated by the increase in home working there is a reduced reliance on physical stationary and an increasingly 'paper-less' working environment which will be consolidated as staff move to the Spindles centre. The purchase of remaining requirement for stationary is completed by individual teams across the organisation on an ad hoc basis which does not always ensure best value for money through economies of scale. It is therefore suggested that the purchase of stationery could be centralised ensuring that better value for money was being achieved through increased understanding of which items are required, volumes etc.

#### **Summary**

- 4.9 After considering all investment and savings proposals there is a balanced position as can be seen in Appendix A.

### **5. Items for Future Consideration**

#### **1) Hire out office space externally**

A survey by Deloitte found the majority of CEO's (97%) are planning to make the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic permanent, including increased working from home. Although a combination of office and homeworking will be needed it is reasonable to assume there will be increased demand for occasional office space and meeting rooms where external organisations require space for one off larger meetings or team away days. Conversely, if the Council also takes advantage of the increased capability for flexible working, such as working from home and virtual meetings, there will also be a decrease in demand internally for meeting rooms. Whilst acknowledging that the estate is being rationalised, the Council should look into the potential of hiring its meeting room space, including the modern facilities in the newly established Spindles, longer term proposals for Henshaw House and to maximise opportunities at satellite buildings and Town Halls.

#### **2) Local Spending**

The Liberal Democrats support a steady increase in the percentage of Council expenditure made with businesses based in our Borough and also an increased percentage of Council job vacancies made available to local residents. These aspirations also embrace spending and hiring by MioCare CIC and Oldham Community Leisure, and other partners, such as our two local colleges, the Oldham Integrated Care Board, the NHS Acute and Primary Care Trusts and social landlords.

We have called for an increase in Council local spending from the initial 52% reported in the 2019/20 financial year to at least 60% and for efforts to be made to encourage local residents to apply for Council jobs especially those at entry level. It is disappointing to note that the average for Local Spend was 46.4% in 2022/23 compared to 55% in 2021/22. The position



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does however appear to be improving with 53.2% being reported at quarter 2 in the current financial year (against a target of 55%.) In addition, we note that the Council is looking to increase this figure with the implementation of the Social Value Portal for contracts above £0.100m and a programme of engagement events with local suppliers within cohorts of spend, supporting them on how to submit tenders and giving them visibility of the future pipelines of tenders coming up within their specific industry. Clearly work needs to continue to meet the stated criteria. This combined approach should yield an increase in local spend to circa 60%.

By retaining Council Tax and other revenue within the Borough, through awarding contracts where-ever possible to local businesses and by employing local people, the Liberal Democrats believe the Council and its partners can establish a virtuous circle 'making every Oldham pound go further' as this money will in turn be spent in local shops and hospitality businesses. This helps create a local economy that will recover more quickly after the COVID-19 pandemic and is also more environmentally sustainable, as it reduces commuting and the transport miles associated with the supply of goods and provision of services by contractors outside of the borough.

In addition, to support local spending, the Liberal Democrats would welcome consideration of a "local impact" measure when considering budget cuts, this would assess whether a savings option would disproportionately impact Oldham suppliers or the local economy.

### **3) The Remediation of Brownfield Land**

The Liberal Democrats believe that the Administration should be prepared to repurpose a further significant sum from the capital programme to pay for the remediation of brownfield land sites for housing development, if either no money, or an insufficient sum, is made available to the authority from the Greater Manchester Brownfield Fund. The Flexible Housing Fund does have an allocation over the life of the current Capital Programme, however, notwithstanding the current commitments identified at this present time, it is felt that more can be done.

### **4) Comprehensive Analysis of Major Capital Spending Projects**

The Administration has committed to a series of "big ticket" capital spending projects, largely based around Oldham town centre. The Liberal Democrats acknowledge the importance of improving our urban districts, and the need to drive improvements of Oldham town centre and are therefore suggesting there should be a thorough review of the current capital Programme; more in depth than the Annual Review, specifically targeted at schemes which have not yet begun or those where there is scope for a reduced specification.

### **5) Review of Potential for Housing Stock Ownership**

The Administration Budget includes measures to increase the amount of rental stock available to provide accommodation to manage the current levels of homelessness in the Borough. In the medium and long term, however, this should be addressed by capital investment in housing stock, which will better offset the current revenue demands caused by this increased pressure in a demand led-

## **6. Review of Previous Liberal Democrat Budgets**

- 6.1 At its meeting on 7 February 2023 the Performance, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in considering the 2023/24 Liberal Democrat Budget Reduction proposals, referred the Liberal Democrat revenue and capital budget reduction and investment proposals to Cabinet for consideration, the Committee once again shared the concerns in relation to the lack of review of mileage budgets. Without any available funding, Cabinet at its meeting on 13 February 2023 was not in a position to give its support to the Alternative Investment Proposals.

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Subsequently, the Budget Amendment was moved at the Council meeting held on 1 March 2023 but lost after a recorded vote.

- 6.2 It should be noted that items which have previously been rejected or referred for consideration have subsequently been adopted or proposed in full or in part by the Administration, these include:
1. Income targets with regard to Section 38 and Section 278 inspections within the Highways service
  2. Levels of expenditure within General Training budgets
  3. A variable lighting strategy in relation to street lighting
  4. Increasing the Council Tax Premium on Empty properties
- 6.3 A proposed/pending review of reward and recognition packages, to include essential car user allowances has still not been brought forward. Service data still suggests that in this tough financial climate this is an area which need to be considered in order to protect front line services.
- 6.4 Given the continued pressure within Children's Social Care, within which a major factor is the increasing cost and demand for Out of Borough Residential Placements, it is disappointing to note that the proposal to commission a Council run care home within the administrations 2023/24 proposed budget has not been delivered. Mindful of the amended Administration proposal to open three homes in 2024/25 the Liberal Democrats have chosen not replicate the 2023/24 proposal for an additional care home within its 2024/25 alternative budget.
- 6.5 In addition, some of the other previous recommendations have not been actioned. For example the Government provided (initially as part of its response to COVID-19) and continues to provide significant funding through the Holiday Activity and Food Programme in order to provide meals and activities for disadvantaged children during school holidays, therefore it has been unnecessary to identify funding for such activities from existing budgets in 2020/21 through to 2023/24 and again in 2024/25.

## **7. Director of Finance Comments**

- 7.1 I confirm in my role as Responsible Officer under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 that the budget amendments as presented are robust and deliverable as a stand-alone package of measures that provides a mechanism for the reallocation of a limited level of resources within the Council's overall budget.
- 7.2 As it is an alternative set of budget options the opportunity for testing the risks associated with the proposals are more limited and it is therefore necessary to afford a level of caution in presenting these alternatives. In particular, any unintended consequences of these measures on the current administration's budget proposals has not been examined in detail (Sarah Johnston)

## **8. Options/Alternatives**

- 8.1 With regard to the consideration of the Liberal Democrat's alternative Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2028/29, revenue investment proposals and revenue savings proposals for 2024/25 to 2025/26, the options available to Council are to:
- Accept all of the recommendations of the report
  - Accept some of the recommendations of the report and reject others
  - Reject all of the recommendations of the report

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## **9. Preferred Option**

9.1 The preferred option is that Council accepts all of the recommendations.

## **10. Consultation**

10.1 Service Managers have been involved in compiling the proposals and the proposals have been agreed within the content of the business cases attached at Appendix B. The presentation of the Liberal Democrat Budget Amendment proposals to the Governance Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board on 8 February 2024 was the first stage of the budget consultation process. The Scrutiny Committee referred three of the Liberal Democrat Budget Amendment proposals to Cabinet for consideration. At its meeting on 12 February 2024, Cabinet considered the draft minutes of the Board but did not accept the proposals contained in the Liberal Democrat Budget Amendment.

## **11. Financial Implications**

11.1 The financial implications are included within the report.

## **12. Legal Services Comments**

12.1 There are no immediate legal issues arising from the report save that where the proposals involve a change to officer's employment terms and conditions and/ or potential redundancies appropriate HR processes will need to be followed in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures.  
(Alex Bougatef)

## **13. Co-operative Agenda**

13.1 Revenue and Capital Investment and Savings proposals have been considered in conjunction with the Council's Co-operative Agenda and there are no adverse impacts.

## **14. Human Resources Comments**

14.1 The Opposition proposals are noted.

14.2 The removal of car allowance, if treated as a standalone activity, is unlikely to align with work ongoing to determine future ways of working and this should therefore be incorporated into this wider workstream. The options with workforce implications will be assessed should they be approved and discharged in accordance with the organisation's policies and procedures.  
(Vikki Morris)

## **15. Risk Assessments**

15.1 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.

## **16. IT Implications**

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

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## **17. Property Implications**

- 17.1 The Council's approach to its Medium Term Property Strategy will involve the relevant workstreams associated with for example, regeneration, new investments and combating climate change and carbon neutral initiatives.

## **18. Procurement Implications**

- 18.1 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.

## **19. Environmental and Health & Safety Implications**

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

## **20. Community cohesion, including crime and disorder implications in accordance with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

- 20.1 The investment in crime and safety will have a positive impact on crime. There are no adverse equality or community implications associated with the proposals.

## **21. Oldham Equality Impact Assessment, including implications for Children and Young People**

- 21.1 The investment in youth services is one of the key proposals that will have a beneficial impact on children and young people. Equality Impact Assessments are not required at the present time for the proposals.

## **22. Key Decision**

- 22.1 No.

## **23. Key Decision Reference**

- 23.1 Not a Key Decision.

## **24. Background Papers**

- 24.1 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 A and B  
Officer Name: Andy Cooper (andy.cooper@oldham.gov.uk)

## **25. Appendices**

- 25.1 Appendix A: Summary of Alternative Budget Proposals.  
Appendix B: Business Cases for Alternative Budget Reduction Proposals.

**Appendix A**

**Summary of Alternative Budget Proposals**

**APPENDIX A**

Proposal Reference	Proposal Name	Responsible Officer	Budget Proposal 2024/25 £000	FTE Impact 2023/24	Budget Proposal 2025/26 £000	FTE Impact 2025/26	Cumulative Budget Impact £000	EIA Required?
<b>Alternative Budget: Capital Investment Proposals</b>								
<b>Investment Proposals</b>								
	Member Led Investment in our Districts (inc crime prevention, roads and road safety, district centres and environmental improvements)		1,000		1,000		2,000	No
<b>Total Cost of Alternative Capital Programme</b>			<b>1,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,000</b>	
<b>Funded by:</b>								
	Fund for Emerging Priorities		(1,043)		(3,318)		(4,361)	
<b>Total Funding Available</b>			<b>(1,043)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(3,318)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(4,361)</b>	
<b>Balance Remaining (Fund for Emerging Priorities)</b>			<b>(43)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(2,318)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(2,361)</b>	
<b>Alternative Budget: Revenue Budget Proposals</b>								
<b>Revenue Investment Proposals</b>								
	Highways and Pavement Repairs		100		70		170	No
	Green Spaces		100		69		169	No
	Youth Services		50				50	No
	Investment in Crime and Safety		50				50	No
	Whit Friday- band contest		11				11	No
<b>Total Revenue Budget Investment Proposals</b>			<b>311</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>450</b>	
<b>Alternative Budget Reduction Proposals</b>								
OPP-BR1-201	Reconsideration of Council priorities with regards to the Communications and Research Service	Jeni Harvey	(198)	(5.3)	(67)	0	(265)	No
OPP-BR1-202	Reduction in mileage budgets to reflect change in work practices	Vikki Morris	(55)		0	0	(55)	No
OPP-BR1-203	Reduction in the subsidisation of Trades Union facilities time	Vikki Morris	(35)	(1.65)	(35)		(70)	No
OPP-BR1-204	Review of car allowances to reduce the amount paid as a lump sum to staff doing zero or minimal mileage	Vikki Morris	(13)		(37)	0	(50)	No
OPP-BR1-205	Reduction in stationery purchased	Corporate	(10)				(10)	No
<b>Total Budget Reduction Suggestions</b>			<b>(311)</b>	<b>(7.0)</b>	<b>(139)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>(450)</b>	
<b>Surplus Budget/Total FTE Impact</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>(7.0)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	

# **Appendix B**

**Business cases  
for alternative  
budget reduction  
proposals**

**Budget  
reductions**

## 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.

As more information moves online and residents become increasingly technologically advanced the need to produce hard copy publications reduces. As such the Liberal Democrats propose to reduce the service budget for the Communications and Research team by £0.265m over a two year period.

This reduction would be met by generating £0.260m through ceasing the publication of '@Oldham Council, Working for You' and deleting/ disestablishing 5.3 FTE posts.

Alongside the above reductions, it is proposed to generate revenue of circa £0.005m through income generation activities across the full range of Council media channels

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

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)	(198)	(67)	
Proposed Staffing Reductions (FTE)	5.3	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?

<b>Property</b>
No impact
<b>Service Delivery</b>
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.
<b>Future expected outcomes</b>
<p>Reducing the number of staff by 5.3 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 carer 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>
<b>Organisation</b>
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.
<b>Workforce</b>
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.
<b>Communities and Service Users</b>
<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> <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.</p>
<b>Children and Young People</b>
No specific impact



<b>Oldham Cares</b>
Reduced partner communications would leave partners unclear of the role of the Council on key partnership projects, and less able to collaborate effectively.
<b>Other Partner Organisations</b>
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?**

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

<b>Benefits to the organisation/staff/customers including performance improvements</b>
A budget reduction of £0.265m across 2024/25 and 2025/26

**Section C**

**Key Risks and Mitigations – include any interdependencies**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
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

### Equality Impact Screening

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

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

<b>EIA required? (choose YES if any of the above impacts are YES)</b>	<b>NO</b>
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## Section E

<b>Finance comments</b>
<p>This option would result in a reduction of 5.3 posts within the Communications and Research service and the cessation of the Oldham Council Working For You publication, which would generate a saving of £0.260m in a full financial year. There is also an additional proposal to generate additional income estimated at £0.005m per annum and therefore the total budget reduction would be £0.265m over a two year period. The proposal may incur redundancy costs which would be funded centrally.</p> <p>The Communications and Research Service has put forward a budget reduction of £0.075m for 2024/25 (with a further £0.025m in 2025/26), achieved by a full service review, for this reason the initially proposed reduction of £0.365m in a full year is reduced accordingly to £0.265m across the two years.</p> <p>Due to the requirement for consultation with Trades Unions and staff, the whole of the reduction cannot be achieved in the first year. The profiling to incorporate this process is therefore the realisation of £0.198m in 2024/25 and £0.067m in 2025/26.</p>

<b>Signed RO</b>	5 February 2024
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<b>Signed Finance</b>	5 February 2024
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## BR1 - Section A

Portfolio:	Corporate Services
Service Area:	Human Resources and Organisational Development
Budget Reduction Title:	Reduction in mileage budgets to reflect changes in work practices

### Budget Reduction Proposal - Detail and Objectives:

The Liberal Democrats propose to reduce mileage budgets by £0.055m on a pro rata basis across the Council, excluding Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care cost centres.

Mileage can currently be claimed for work related travel except for travel from Oldham town centre to the following destinations (unless there are mitigating circumstances):

- Manchester City Centre
- Failsworth District Centre
- Royton District Centre
- Rochdale Town Centre
- Ashton Town Centre

Line managers must agree beforehand that using a personal vehicle is the most appropriate way to travel to a destination.

The Liberal Democrats propose that due to the increase in Council employees working from home and the increase of Teams based meetings, the requirement to travel on Council business using a personal vehicle has reduced.

2023/24 Service Budget and Establishment	£000
Employees	N/A
Other Operational Expenses	158
Income	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>

Current Forecast (under) / overspend	(98)
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Number of posts (Full time equivalent)	N/A
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	2024/25	2025/26	2027/28
Proposed Budget Reduction (£000)	(55)	0	0
Proposed Staffing Reductions (FTE)	0	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?

<b>Property</b>
None.
<b>Service Delivery</b>
Council staff may have to consider alternate forms of transport if required to travel for work requirements.
<b>Future expected outcomes</b>
Budgets would be amended to reflect the decreasing demand for mileage claims.
<b>Organisation</b>
None.
<b>Workforce</b>
There is the potential that the workforce would evaluate whether travel is necessary or whether meetings could take place via Microsoft Teams.
<b>Communities / Service Users</b>
None.
<b>Oldham Cares</b>
None.
<b>Partner Organisations</b>
None.

Who are the key stakeholders?

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

<b>Benefits to the organisation/staff/customers including performance improvements</b>	
Budgets would be reduced to reflect the decrease in mileage claims.	

## Section C

### Key Risks and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Staff continue to claim mileage for non-essential travel.	Adequate communication to all staff detailing the new policy along with regular budget monitoring to ensure any potential areas of overspend can be identified early and raised with budget holders.
Essential travel is restricted due to lack of travel budgets.	Budgets where essential travel is assumed to be a regular requirement are excluded from the budget reductions, for example Adults and Children's Social Care.
N/A	N/A

### Key Development and Delivery Milestones

Milestone	Timeline
Proposal presented to the Policy Overview Scrutiny Committee.	8 February 2024
Review of Cost Centres which could be excluded from the budget reduction proposal.	February – March 2024
The budget reduction is implemented.	April 2024

## Section D

<b>Consultation required?</b>	<b>No</b>
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	<b>Start</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>Staff</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Trade Union</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Public</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Service Users</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Other</b>	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?

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

<b>EIA required? (choose YES if any of the above impacts are YES)</b>	<b>No</b>
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## Section E

<b>Finance comments</b>
This proposal would result in a budget reduction of £0.055m across mileage budgets. Budget monitoring during 2024/25 will highlight if there are any challenges to the delivery of the proposal.

<b>Signed RO</b>	5/2/2024
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<b>Signed Finance</b>	5/2/2024
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**Additional information (if required)**

There are many groups of roles across Council services that require travel as part of their day to day job description requirements, such as town planners, environmental health staff etc. and not just Social Workers. If staff were asked to use public transport as an alternative, this may drive up costs.



## BR1 - Section A

Portfolio:	Corporate Services
Service Area:	Human Resources and Organisational Development
Budget Reduction Title:	Reduce the subsidisation of Trades Union Facility Time

### Budget Reduction Proposal - Detail and Objectives:

The Council, in accordance with the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service, recognises 3 unions for Local Government Services employees as follow:

- Unison 2.89 FTE
- GMB 0.8 FTE
- Unite 0.4 FTE

Oldham Council supports the system of collective bargaining and the principle of solving employee relations problems by discussion and agreement before they escalate and to facilitate the conduct of joint business.

The role of the unions is therefore to work with the employer to represent and protect the interests of their members by:

- Negotiating agreements with the Council on changes to conditions of service or other contractual provisions;
- Representing the workforce in consultation on changes which impact on their members or that represent major changes to the workplace such as large-scale restructure or working practices;
- Supporting members to discuss their concerns with the Council;
- Accompanying their members in disciplinary and grievance meetings; and
- Providing access to legal and financial advice and other support functions.

The Council seeks to provide for time off and facilities within the statutory framework provided by of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, and the ACAS Code of Practice 'Time off for Trade Union Duties and Activities'. The Liberal Democrats are proposing the Council reduces it subsidisation of trade union support following a reduction in membership. This would result in a reduction of approximately 50% of the base budget resulting in a total saving £0.070m which, due to the consultation required, would be achieved over 2 financial years.

In addition, the Liberal Democrats propose a review is undertaken to ensure the Council subsidy of Trades Union time and facilities is in line with that of neighbouring boroughs.

2023/24 Service Budget and Establishment	£000
Employees	116
Other Operational Expenses	55
Income	(12)
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Current Forecast (under) / overspend</b>	<b>31</b>

<b>Number of posts (Full time equivalent)</b>	3.30
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	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
<b>Proposed Budget Reduction (£000)</b>	(35)	(35)	-
<b>Proposed Staffing Reductions (FTE)</b>	(1.65)	-	-

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

### What impact does the proposal have on the following?

<b>Property</b>	Potential impact on provision of office facilities within Manchester Chambers for UNISON and rent collection for this property.
<b>Service Delivery</b>	Potentially less effective use of management time and ability to conduct meetings and hearings due to non-availability of union representation.
<b>Future expected outcomes</b>	Loss of goodwill and excellent industrial relations history. Movement of trade union activity from local to regional level. Loss of trust and confidence among the workforce where unions are not fully involved.
<b>Organisation</b>	Delays in work and projects requiring (or where best practice dictates) working with, consulting or negotiating with the trade unions.
<b>Workforce</b>	Potential reduction in employee capacity arising from the requirement to engage the workforce directly in matters normally subject to trades union engagement. Frustration from employees unable to access statutory right to representation and delays to dealing with any matters.
<b>Communities</b>	Delay in the delivery of change or other cost saving activities
<b>Service Users</b>	Delay in the delivery of change or other cost saving activities
<b>Partner Organisations</b>	Where unions represent employees working within or in partnership with our partners – similar implications to those identified for Oldham Council. Oldham Council employees are not fully or properly represented in change that affects them and which is instigated within partner organisations.

### Who are the key stakeholders?

<b>Staff</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Elected Members</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Residents</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Local business community</b>	<b>No</b>

<b>Schools</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Trade Unions</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>External partners (if yes please specify below)</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Other Council departments (if yes please specify below)</b>	<b>Yes</b>
All	
<b>Other (if yes please specify below)</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Oldham Cares, Mio Care Group, Unity, Oldham Schools, Academies (who buy back)	

<b>Benefits to the organisation/staff/customers including performance improvements</b>
Reduction in cost.

## Section C

### Key Risks and Mitigations

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Delay in the ability of management to arrange and undertake meetings requiring statutory or policy trade union presence in a timely manner or having no continuity of attendees.	Trade Unions to seek greater involvement from Regional / National Officers.  Trade Unions to increase recruitment of directorate stewards to undertake role within working time, although previous attempts yielded little success.  Lengthen consultation periods / development of new initiatives deadlines to allow for limited availability of local representatives.
TU lack of capacity to be able to support and properly represent their members especially given the Transformation Programme within the Council, Greater Manchester devolution, Health Integration Programme, change within Children's services and the significant levels of change anticipated within Oldham over the next 12 - 24 months.	Trade Unions to seek greater involvement from Regional / National Officers.  Trade Unions to increase recruitment of directorate stewards to undertake role within working time, although previous attempts yielded little success.
Inability of the organisation to comply with statutory, national or local policy requirements regarding negotiation, consultation and representation which will increase the risk of successful challenge, litigation and significant cost.	Trade Unions to seek greater involvement from Regional / National Officers.  Trade Unions to increase recruitment of directorate stewards to undertake role within working time, although previous attempts yielded little success.  Increase in employee direct engagement.
Confusion with the Council's own Fair Employment Charter which honours the right of every employee to be an active member of a recognised trade union without fear of discrimination or reprisal.	Be clear with employees where they are able to access alternative representation outside of the Council.

Movement away from local representation and engagement, with Unions relying more on their own professional Regional Officers. Significant time delays due to lack of availability together with loss of knowledgeable local representation who understand the context, history and operational positions within Oldham.	Retain the recognition agreement and sufficient reasonable and benchmarked facility time.
Reduction in capacity efficiencies gained from collective bargaining. Decline in current constructive industrial relations working partnership and increase in disputes and escalation of industrial action	Retain the recognition agreement and sufficient and benchmarked facility time.

### Key Development and Delivery Milestones

Milestone	Timeline
Complete review of Employment decision making mechanisms in conjunction with Constitutional Services	February 2024
Consult trades union on proposals	February 2024
Review Membership amongst current workforce and update TU figures	April 2024
Benchmark facility time against results from 2022/2023 statutory return	April 2024
(Submission of statutory trade union statistics return to government site under the Trade Union Facility Time Publication Requirements Regs 2017)	(By 31 July 2024)
Open consultation with the trades unions on any change proposals resulting from change to mechanisms and the normal bi - annual review.	April 2024
Internal sign off process.	June 2024
Submission to relevant committee for sign off.	July 2024

### Section D

Consultation required?	Yes
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	Start	Conclusion
Staff	N/A	N/A
Trade Union	Feb 2024	June 2024
Public	N/A	N/A
Service Users	N/A	N/A
Other – schools /partners	April 2024	June 2024

### 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

<b>Finance comments</b>
The successful delivery of this budget reduction proposal will require successful negotiation with Trades Union representatives. There will be the requirement for careful management of consequences such as staff / managers spending time on staffing matters that Trades Union representatives would otherwise have undertaken, leading to increased costs. This will therefore require close financial monitoring.

<b>Signed RO</b>	5/02/2024
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<b>Signed Finance</b>	5/02/2024
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## BR1 - Section A

<b>Portfolio:</b>	<b>Corporate Services</b>
<b>Service Area:</b>	<b>Human Resources and Organisational Development</b>
<b>Budget Reduction Title:</b>	<b>Review of car allowances as previously promised to reduce the amount paid as a lump sum to staff doing zero or minimal mileage</b>

### **Budget Reduction Proposal - Detail and Objectives:**

An Essential Car Allowance of £500 is paid to staff members who are employed in positions which are designated as requiring a car as essential to completing the duties of the post. The money is paid over 12 months at £41.66 a month.

As at January 2024 the Council had 532 staff members employed in roles that paid the Essential Car Allowance, compared to 641 twelve months prior.

Analysis of the data shows that in the period April 2023 to December 2024, 244 (46%) of those individuals in roles with the Essential Car Allowance have recorded/claimed zero miles. For the same period 52 (10%) recorded/claimed for 1 to 100 miles and 236 (44%) recorded/claimed for 101 and above miles.

It should be noted that anecdotal evidence suggests that officers do not always claim mileage travelled, particularly where the value is low.

The Liberal Democrats propose generating a £0.050m saving by reducing the number of posts that attract an essential car user payment. A saving of £0.050m would equate to removal of allowance from 100 employees. Due to consultation requirements, only a part year reduction of £0.013m would be generated in 2024/25 with an additional saving of £0.037m in 2024/25.

There is a local agreement with Trades Unions regarding the assessment of entitlement and application of the Car Allowance Scheme. The scheme comprises a series of factors, including mileage, and allocates points per factor. Consultation with Trades Unions and individuals would need to take place before staff terms and conditions could be amended.

<b>2023/24 Service Budget and Establishment</b>	<b>£000</b>
Employees	0
Other Operational Expenses	419
Income	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>419</b>

<b>Current Forecast (under) / overspend</b>	<b>50</b>
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<b>Number of posts (Full time equivalent)</b>	<b>0</b>
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	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
<b>Proposed Budget Reduction (£000)</b>	(13)	(37)	-
<b>Proposed Staffing Reductions (FTE)</b>	-	-	-

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

**What impact does the proposal have on the following?**

<b>Property</b>
As Essential user status bestows free parking on Council property, budget is provided to the Property Team. Removal of Essential user status would lead to a reduction in the Property Team budget.
<b>Service Delivery</b>
Employees may refuse to use their own vehicles to complete their duties which may result in service delay, especially in the areas of social care. The removal of allowances in certain areas could have a detrimental impact on recruitment and retention, for example Social Workers where recruitment is already difficult.
<b>Future expected outcomes</b>
Potential to increase travel costs associated with other methods e.g. taxi, public transport.
<b>Organisation</b>
None.
<b>Workforce</b>
Certain individuals will have Car Allowance removed. Car parking costs would also increase for those individuals who are reclassified from Essential Users. The contractual change may not be accepted by the individual resulting in their dismissal and re-engagement.
<b>Communities / Service Users</b>
Potential for delays in receiving support in certain areas, e.g. social care.
<b>Oldham Cares</b>
None.
<b>Partner Organisations</b>
The alignment of practice within Team Oldham organisation should be considered as part of the exercise.

**Who are the key stakeholders?**

<b>Staff</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Elected Members</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Residents</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Local business community</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Schools</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Trade Unions</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>External partners (if yes please specify below)</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>N/A</b>	

<b>Other Council departments (if yes please specify below)</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>People and Place - Property</b>	
<b>Other (if yes please specify below)</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>N/A</b>	

<b>Benefits to the organisation/staff/customers including performance improvements</b>
Achievement of a budget reduction.

## Section C

### Key Risks and Mitigations

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
The allowance may be taken from users who travel a significant number of miles but have not claimed recompense in the past.	Communicate to claimants the requirement to claim mileage on a regular basis. This would develop an accurate baseline on which to conduct the exercise. The claiming of mileage previously unclaimed will come at an initial cost.
Where allowance is removed there may be an increase in costs associated with other modes of transport, e.g. taxis, public transport.	None.
There is a requirement to undertake appropriate consultation and seek agreement from Trades Unions.	Excellent working relationships with Trades Unions should facilitate and appropriate agreement. In the event agreement is not possible, individual consultation will be required and dismissal and re-engagement processes invoked at last resort.
Services areas where the allowance is paid may be experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties as a result of the proposal. Areas such as Children's Social Work already experience significant difficulties in recruiting and this may exacerbate the issue.	The revised scheme must account for critical areas.
The savings are indicative at this point and have not been modelled on the final scheme (as this is presently not finalised). The full savings may therefore not be realised.	The revised scheme / removal of the allowance will account for the required savings and seek to deliver.
The organisation and services have not yet developed the post-Covid operating model which may further increase remote working and reliance on car travel to visit service users.	Proposals should be developed in synergy with targeted working styles.



## Key Development and Delivery Milestones

Milestone	Timeline
Proposal presented to the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	8 February 2024
Communicate to all staff the requirement to claim mileage in a timely manner.	April – May 2024
Finalise new scheme / allowances (or removal of)	June – September 2024
Consult with affected employees and Trade Unions	October – December 2024
Implement new scheme	January 2025

## Section D

Consultation required?	Yes
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	Start	Conclusion
Staff	October 2024	December 2024
Trade Union	October 2024	December 2025
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	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

<b>People who are proposing to undergo, undergoing or have undergone a process or part of a process of gender reassignment</b>	N/A
<b>People on low incomes</b>	N/A
<b>People in particular age groups</b>	N/A
<b>Groups with particular faiths and beliefs</b>	N/A
<b>EIA required? (choose YES if any of the above impacts are YES)</b>	N/A

## Section E

<b>Finance comments</b>
The reduction in the number of essential users for car allowances by 100 employees would generate a saving of £0.050m. Due to the need to consult this would be phased over 2024/25 (£0.13m) and 2025/26 (£0.037m). The achievement of this budget reduction will be reliant on successful negotiation with Trades Unions and the management of any consequences such as additional alternative travel arrangements.

<b>Signed RO</b>	5/2/2024
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<b>Signed Finance</b>	5/2/2024
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## BR1 - Section A

Portfolio:	Corporate Services
Service:	Cross Cutting
Budget Reduction Title:	Reduction in the amount of stationery purchased across the authority

### Budget Reduction Proposal - Detail and Objectives:

The purchase of stationery pre the pandemic was completed using the A1 financial system. This ensures that suppliers used are those where contracts have been agreed by the strategic sourcing team. However, rather than stationery being ordered centrally, it was on occasion ordered by individual teams on an ad hoc basis which did not always ensure best value for money through economies of scale.

Previous proposals for savings around centralising the system have been superseded by the pandemic. This has resulted in substantial home working reducing the requirement for stationery purchased across the authority. The Liberal Democrats therefore propose that for 2024/25, each mainstream stationery budget is reduced by 15% to reflect the reduced demand for stationary and the move to a paper-less working environment.

2023/24 Service Budget and Establishment	£000
Employees	N/A
Other Operational Expenses	70
Income	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>

Current Forecast (under) / overspend	(4)
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Number of posts (Full time equivalent)	N/A
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	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Proposed Budget Reduction (£000)	(10)	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?

<b>Property</b>
None.
<b>Service Delivery</b>
None.
<b>Future expected outcomes</b>
Staff work using the ICT provided reducing the requirement for future Stationery.
<b>Organisation</b>
Staff continue to work at home.
<b>Workforce</b>
There is the potential that the workforce would evaluate whether items were needed if they were required to arrange a pick-up at the office.
<b>Communities / Service Users</b>
None.
<b>Oldham Cares</b>
None.
<b>Partner Organisations</b>
None.

Who are the key stakeholders?

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

<b>Current suppliers of stationery items</b>	
<b>Benefits to the organisation/staff/customers including performance improvements</b>	
Financial savings would be achieved by less stationery required due to increased online working.	

## Section C

### Key Risks and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Services continue to purchase stationery at the same level as before home working.	Staff continue to minimise work in the office therefore reducing Stationery ordered.
Certain processes continue to require stationery to support them.	The new way of working would be discussed throughout 2024/25 to ensure that stationery ordered does not increase burden on any one service.
N/A	N/A

### Key Development and Delivery Milestones

Milestone	Timeline
Proposal presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Value for Money Select Committee.	8 February 2024
Implementation of 15% reduction of 2024/25 mainstream stationery budgets.	1 April 2024
Monitoring of expenditure against reduced budgets and early identification of pressures	Q1 and Q2 2024/25

## Section D

<b>Consultation required?</b>	<b>No</b>
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	<b>Start</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>Staff</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Trade Union</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Public</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Service Users</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Other</b>	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?

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

<b>EIA required? (choose YES if any of the above impacts are YES)</b>	<b>No</b>
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## Section E

<b>Finance comments</b>
The approval of this budget reduction proposal would reduce mainstream stationery budgets by £0.010m in 2024/25, budgets for stationery are held across the Council and therefore this would be a cross cutting saving.

<b>Signed RO</b>	5/02/2024
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<b>Signed Finance</b>	5/02/2024
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