



Public Document Pack


Southend-on-Sea City Council

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19 February 2025

THE COUNCIL - THURSDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY, 2025 SUPPLEMENTARY PACK – BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Please find enclosed, for consideration at the next meeting of the Council taking place on Thursday, 20th February, 2025, the supplementary pack containing the budget amendments that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda Item No

6 **Budget Proposals - 2025/26 to 2029/30** (Pages 3 - 16)

Budget Amendments pack

Rob Harris
Principal Democratic Services Officer

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Council – 20th February 2025

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Agenda Item 6: Council Budget – 2025/26

Amendments:

Amendment 1: Councillor Courtenay and Councillor Salter.

Amendment 2: Councillor Cox and Councillor D Jones.

Amendment 3: Councillor Cox and Councillor D Jones.

Amendment 4: Councillor Cox and Councillor D Jones.

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Council Budget – 2025/26 to 2029/30

Budget amendment to the proposed 2025/26 General Fund Revenue Budget

Proposed by Councillor James Courtenay and Seconded by Councillor Lesley Salter

Revenue and Capital Budget Amendment

	£s
Increased funding for the Community Safety Team	320,000

1. Expand the Community Safety Team by 5 permanent FTE
200,000

To hire five new permanent Community Safety Officers within the Community Safety Team to tackle antisocial behaviour throughout the City and improve enforcement of our five Public Space Protection Orders. This will enable the Community Safety Team to expand their presence from Leigh-on-Sea to Shoeburyness all year around.

2. Increase the budget for (flexible) Community Safety resource 120,000

To create an additional permanent budget to enable the flexible deployment of Community Safety Officers during times of heightened need. This is the equivalent of three full time members of staff, or approximately 15 Community Safety Officers for a total of 10 weeks per year (e.g. six-week summer holiday, Easter holidays and during events that attract a higher footfall to the City).

Funding for Pensioner Support	100,000
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1. Fund a Pensioner Group Co-ordinator 50,000

To fund the resources for a full time Pensioner Group Co-ordinator role, to support the formation and continuation of pensioner groups, clubs, societies and outreach. The intention is for these groups to offer a wide range of activities, depending on local demand/need.

2. Create a fund to kick-start and support these pensioner groups 50,000

Create a budget for the Pensioner Group Co-ordinator to help the above groups form and provide ongoing support to them. Ideally these groups will be self-funding, but it

BUDGET AMENDMENT 1

is recognised that funds are required to get them off the ground, provide ongoing support and to try new things.

Significantly increase the number of trees planted across the City 110,000

Quadruple the “Net tree gain” target (as measured by Corporate Performance Indicator 02.07), reflecting the urgent need to increase the tree canopy cover across the City.

The capital cost of the purchase of the different species of trees and the planting of them with a watering bag, stakes, ties and woodchip is circa £175,000. This would mean creating a new capital budget for £175,000. The capital investment would need to be funded by borrowing and the relevant financing costs are £12,000 pa. In addition, the watering and staked tree maintenance for the first few years to get the trees established would cost around £98,000 pa.

Total of revenue and capital budget amendment 530,000

Funding Proposal

The above amendment to the General Revenue and Capital budget creates a £530,000 revenue budget funding requirement. It is proposed that this is funded by:

£s

Make the Southend Pass fairer for all (225,000)

Introduce a limit of two vehicles per Southend Pass. At present each Pass can have an unlimited number of vehicles registered to it.

This change enables the target parking income to be raised, as a result of a net increase in additional Passes (new registrations less cancellations) and increased ‘Pay & Display’ income.

N.B. nothing prevents a household from having more than one Southend Pass.

Vacancy Factor (305,000)

(Investment – 03-COP)

The current budget proposes an investment of £815,000 for a reduction in the corporate wide vacancy factor.

This proposal is to ‘right size’ the vacancy factor in line with the latest budget monitoring position to broadly cover the latest estimated overspend and thus the investment is proposed to be reduced to £510,000.

Total of funding proposal (530,000)

Net overall impact on the Council's Revenue Budget (0)

Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) statement pursuant to the Council Procedure Rule at paragraph 3.21 of Part 2 Section 3 of the Constitution

I can confirm that as the Council's S151 Officer, I am able to state that the overall budget package including this proposed budget amendment remains sufficiently robust and whilst challenging can be considered for approval by the Council. I have reviewed and confirm my S25 statement to the Council still remains robust and appropriate in the light of these proposed amendments.

For the proposed change to the criteria for the Southend Pass, it is difficult to assess the full scale of actual take up and potential changes in parking behaviours that may occur. An assessment has been undertaken by professional officers in the Parking team based on a set of assumptions and overall, given all relevant information available, including demand analysis, price change modelling and historical performance of various parking initiatives then these changes do not appear to pose significant additional financial risks to the overall Council budget for 2025/26. The estimated level of income to be generated from these proposed changes in the context of the overall parking income budget seems reasonable.

The Southend Pass change is expected to increase the overall level of parking income generated in 2025/26, which can legitimately be assigned against some of the new proposals above in accordance with the reporting and eligibility requirements of the memorandum parking income account.

Any income generation changes will be subject to the usual volatility of demand and resident/visitor behaviours but based on the robust assessment and modelling undertaken by the Parking team, I have determined that these do not appear to expose the Council to a significant increase in the level of financial risk, relating to the overall Council Budget that is under consideration.

The investment reduction in the vacancy factor will mean the Corporate Leadership Team will need to work with the reduced investment across the 2025/26 circa £90m employee budget for the Council.

All Local Authority budgets contain a range of assumptions, estimates, exposure to volatility, demand, economic factors but overall the potential range of risk has not significantly increased with these proposed budget amendments and in my opinion at this time would not produce an **unbalanced** or **unsound** budget.

Joe Chesterton

Executive Director - Finance & Resources (S151 Officer)

BUDGET AMENDMENT 1

18th February 2025

Council Budget – 2025/26 to 2029/30

Budget amendment to the proposed 2025/26 General Fund Revenue Budget

Proposed by Councillor Tony Cox and Seconded by Councillor Darryl Jones

Revenue Budget Amendment

	£s
Anti-Social Behaviour Initiative	20,000

An annual budget to provide community groups access to small grants where an event or initiative can demonstrate it will lead to reduced anti-social behaviour.

Ask Angela Scheme	0
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To include the nationally recognised 'Ask Angela' scheme as part of the Council's licensing conditions.

Total of revenue budget amendment	20,000
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Funding Proposal

The above amendment to the General Revenue budget creates a £20,000 revenue budget funding requirement. It is proposed that this is funded by:

	£s
Vacancy Factor	(20,000)

(Investment – 03-COP)

The current budget proposes an investment of £815,000 for a reduction in the corporate wide vacancy factor.

This proposal is to slightly reduce that investment and the investment is now proposed to be reduced to £795,000.

Total of funding proposal	(20,000)
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Net overall impact on the Council's Revenue Budget	(0)
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Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) statement pursuant to the Council Procedure Rule at paragraph 3.21 of Part 2 Section 3 of the Constitution

I can confirm that as the Council's S151 Officer, I am able to state that the overall budget package including this proposed budget amendment remains sufficiently robust and whilst challenging can be considered for approval by the Council. I have reviewed and confirm my S25 statement to the Council still remains robust and appropriate in the light of these proposed amendments.

The minor investment reduction in the vacancy factor will mean the Corporate Leadership Team will need to work with the reduced investment across the 2025/26 circa £90m employee budget for the Council.

All Local Authority budgets contain a range of assumptions, estimates, exposure to volatility, demand, economic factors but overall the potential range of risk has not significantly increased with these proposed budget amendments and in my opinion at this time would not produce an **unbalanced** or **unsound** budget.

Joe Chesterton

Executive Director - Finance & Resources (S151 Officer)

18th February 2025

Council Budget – 2025/26 to 2029/30

Budget amendment to the proposed 2025/26 General Fund Revenue Budget

Proposed by Councillor Tony Cox and Seconded by Councillor Darryl Jones

Revenue Budget Amendment

	£s
Connected Southend Transformation: Focussed Care Package Review (Savings – SOC-02)	350,000
To delete the proposed saving for the focussed care package review.	
Community Sector Discretionary Grants (Savings TPP-01)	100,000
To delete the proposed saving for the community sectors discretionary grants.	
Parking Charges – Zone 4 (Appendix 15)	20,000
To delete the additional income budget and the proposed changes for the old Zone 3 to Zone 4.	
New Parking Permit	5,000
To introduce a new 2 hour parking permit at a cost of £10 to be used across the car parks with lower occupancy levels of Short Street, Ceylon Road and Ilfracombe car parks.	
Street Furniture and signs	130,000
To provide an annual budget for the cleansing of street furniture and signs to enhance the Civic Pride of our City.	

BUDGET AMENDMENT 3

Pensioner Support **60,000**

With the withdrawal of the Governments winter fuel allowance for pensioners, to provide a budget to support pensioners most in need, as a result of this reduced Government funding.

Total of revenue budget amendment **665,000**

Funding Proposal

The above amendment to the General Revenue budget creates a £665,000 revenue budget funding requirement. It is proposed that this is funded by:

£s

Better Queensway – Highways **(379,000)**

To withdraw the proposed Council borrowing of £5.380m to part fund this scheme thereby saving the resultant capital financing costs for the revenue budget.

Trade Union **(55,000)**

To withdraw the financial support provided by the Council for the Trade Unions.

Interpretation and Translation (Investment – O2-COSAFE) **(35,000)**

To delete the proposed investment for interpretation and translation.

Interpretation and Translation Services **(131,000)**

To delete £131,000 of the current budget of £151,000 for interpretation and translation services. As part of the remaining budget in 2025/26 a one-off purchase of a braille machine to support the visually impaired.

Trade Union Accommodation **(5,000)**

To introduce an annual charge for the office space in the Civic Centre occupied by the Unions.

Corporate Strategy staffing **(60,000)**

To delete one senior policy advisor post in the Corporate Strategy team.

Total of funding proposal **(665,000)**

Net overall impact on the Council's Revenue Budget **(0)**

Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) statement pursuant to the Council Procedure Rule at paragraph 3.21 of Part 2 Section 3 of the Constitution

I can confirm that as the Council's S151 Officer, I am able to state that the overall budget package including this proposed budget amendment remains sufficiently robust and whilst challenging can be considered for approval by the Council. I have reviewed and confirm my S25 statement to the Council still remains robust and appropriate in the light of these proposed amendments.

For the proposed changes to parking charges, it is difficult to assess the full scale of actual take up and potential changes in parking behaviours that may occur. An assessment has been undertaken by professional officers in the Parking team based on a set of assumptions and overall, given all relevant information available, including demand analysis, price change modelling and historical performance of various parking initiatives then these changes do not appear to pose significant additional financial risks to the overall Council budget for 2025/26. The estimated level of income to be reduced as a result of these proposed changes in the context of the overall parking income budget seems reasonable.

Any income generation changes will be subject to the usual volatility of demand and resident/visitor behaviours but based on the robust assessment and modelling undertaken by the Parking team, I have determined that these do not appear to expose the Council to a significant increase in the level of financial risk, relating to the overall Council Budget that is under consideration.

The funding proposals do carry some risk. The Better Queensway scheme will need to be managed within a lower budget sum and there may also be a potential impact on the remaining external funding for the scheme. There are potential redundancy implications for the Trade Union and Corporate Strategy staff proposals but all the normal HR consultation policy and procedures would be expected to be followed.

In respect of Interpretation and Translation Services, although not a statutory requirement, this might expose the Council to legal challenge as circa 97% of the service contract use is for Social Care services. Prioritisation of the Social Care budget will need to be considered if this budget is deleted. The relevant Statutory officers views for Children's and Adults are respectively;

Interpreting and translation services are used when assessing children's needs, child protection investigations and conferences and with legal care proceedings. Failure to ensure parents and carers fully understand the concerns and processes so they can contribute in an informed manner could lead to further harm to the child.

BUDGET AMENDMENT 3

The need for translation and interpretation services is decided upon by professional need and best practice to be able to meaningfully engage with someone to ensure that we meet our statutory duties and the needs of the individual and their carers.

All Local Authority budgets contain a range of assumptions, estimates, exposure to volatility, demand, economic factors but overall the potential range of risk has not significantly increased with these proposed budget amendments and in my opinion at this time would not produce an **unbalanced** or **unsound** budget.

Joe Chesterton

Executive Director - Finance & Resources (S151 Officer)

18th February 2025

Council Budget – 2025/26 to 2029/30

Budget amendment to the proposed General Fund Capital Budget

Proposed by Councillor Tony Cox and seconded by Councillor Darryl Jones

£'s

Capital Investment Programme

Climate Change Provision (1,238,000)

To delete the current allocation in the subject to viable business case section of the Capital Investment Programme for Climate Change provision, which currently has no firmly identified and worked up projects allocated to this provision.

Renewal of Street Furniture in our City 1,138,000

To allocate a provision of £1.138m in the subject to viable business case section of the Capital Investment Programme for the commencement of a programme for the renewal of street furniture across our City.

Kursaal – Feasibility Study 100,000

To allocate the sum of £100k in the subject to viable business case section of the Capital Investment Programme for a feasibility study of the regeneration of the wider Kursaal area also incorporating a future use of the current Kursaal building as part of that wider regeneration.

Total of capital budget amendment 0

Total of funding proposal 0

Not currently required - as the above proposal deletes a project in the subject to viable business case section of the capital investment programme and replaces it with two alternative initiatives for the same sum.

Net Overall Impact 0

Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) statement pursuant to the Council Procedure Rule at paragraph 3.21 of Part 2 Section 3 of the Constitution

I can confirm that as the Council's S151 Officer, that these proposals would not produce an unbalanced or unsound budget and that I am still able to state that the overall budget package proposed is still sufficiently robust but challenging for approval by the Council.

In coming to this conclusion I have had regard to the following;

The proposal to reassign the value of a current project in the subject to a viable business case section of the Capital Investment Programme would mean that no additional financing costs will be incurred at this stage. The proposal is simply replacing one project with two alternative projects for the same total value.

Any scheme which wants to move to the main programme from this section will require a full and thorough viable business case to be validated before it can be moved to the main programme but would also need to be in line with the Council's overall budget situation at that time.

Joe Chesterton

Executive Director - Finance & Resources (S151 Officer)

18th February 2025