

Council Budget – 2024/25 to 2028/29

Budget amendment to the proposed 2024/25 General Fund Revenue and Capital Budget

Proposed by Councillor Cowan and Seconded by Councillors Collins, Terry, and Woodley

Revenue Budget Amendment

	£s
Dementia Community Support Team	100,000
<p>Fund another £100,000 in addition to 04-AHCA for the Dementia Community Support Team. This funding envelope is to retain 4x FTE Dementia Navigators and 1x PT Community Builder from TPP-03, to continue to provide this vital service for the benefit of local families coping with dementia. This investment will reduce the reliance on statutory services and provide value for money for the council in prevention and adult social care overspend reductions during 2024/25 whilst the service is reviewed as part of the ongoing modernisation of Adult Social Care services.</p>	
Car Parking (Parking Fees and Charges – Appendix 1 (ii))	185,000
<p>To reduce parking charges in all Zones except Zone 1a by an average of 11.14% per hour across the various charging tariffs. This will make parking cheaper for local residents and encourage footfall to and through our shopping areas. To additionally amend a range of parking fees for permits and season tickets as set out in Appendix 1(ii). Reduction in income based on average income and transactions in Zone 1b, Zone 2, and Zone 3 from 2021-2024 adjusted for new proposed tariffs. Full details of the figures are set out in the proposed fees and charges schedule - Appendix 1(ii).</p>	
Expand the Community Support Team	100,000
<p>To create three new roles within the Community Support Team to tackle antisocial behaviour in our city centre wards and expand our presence across East/West localities. These Community Support Officers are expected to be in place by Q2 2024/25.</p>	
Hire more Civil Enforcement Officers	100,000
<p>To hire three new Civil Enforcement Officers, increasing to five depending on demand, to increase patrols around schools, resident parking zones, and council parking areas, including additional hours of operation. These Civil Enforcement Officers are expected to be in place by Q2 2024/25 ready for the return to school in September.</p>	
Financing of Carriageways and Footways Capital	175,000
<p>Fund corporate borrowing costs of £2.5m for the additional capital investment in carriageways and footways. £1.5m extra for carriageways and £1m extra for footways.</p>	

Southend Pass (Parking Fees and Charges – Appendix 1 (ii)) **10,000**

To reduce the proposed annual charge of £150 to £125 to provide a discount to pass holders who choose to pay for their Southend Pass annually. This sum is estimated based on the current level of pass holders who pay annually.

Southend Pass 6-9pm (Parking Fees and Charges – Appendix 1 (ii)) **0**

To introduce an exemption from 6-9pm parking charges for Southend Pass holders. This will be in addition to their existing 3 hours parking per zone per day and will require use of the app. This will ensure residents can park as cheaply as possible and we increase parking revenue income from visitors to make sure those who do not pay council tax in Southend are contributing to the cost of sanitation and maintenance of our seafront and city. The cost of this has been factored in to the overall income figure for 6-9pm parking charges. The Southend Pass will continue to be able to be used by up to two vehicles per pass for the maximum period allowed per day as per the current policy.

Investment in Events and Tourism **100,000**

Increase the budget for the Events and Tourism team to ensure that Southend remains a competitive place to host events and that Southend's rich culture and heritage is well-managed and celebrated with regular events.

This investment is made to increase tourism and events revenue by hosting at least 20 weeks of cumulative events on Southend Pier and at least six outdoor events per year such as the Halloween Parade, Christmas markets, beach festivals, classic car shows, and art tours etc. This target is expected to be achieved and part of the council's events calendar by 2026.

Cremation Charges (IGC-07) **40,000**

Reduce the planned increase of 15% down to 10% in line with other fees and charges, reflecting the inflationary high of 10.7% since the government's 'mini budget'. This reflects the current average levels of demand for this service but also demand increasing as a result of the reopening of the crematorium to full operations after completion of the significant refurbishment.

Burial Charges (IGC-11) **20,000**

Reduce the planned increase of 20% down to 10% in line with other fees and charges, reflecting the inflationary high of 10.7% since the government's 'mini budget'. This reflects the current average levels of demand for this service.

Tree Nursery Management Plan and service changes **100,000**

Invest to save. To make best use of the council's land at the nursery site using unheated greenhouses to grow trees and plants for Southend-on-Sea City Council to plant in public spaces to improve biodiversity and resilience to drought/climate conditions.

This investment will reduce the council's reliance on external purchasing and will enable the council to explore future revenue streams by selling surplus or purpose grown stock to other local authorities.

To introduce a 'cut and collect' policy to keep gullies clear and encourage biodiversity.

This is a best value for money service that takes learning from other authorities that have successfully implemented this strategy with less land availability than Southend-on-Sea City Council.

Pause Graduate Programme (ORE-04) 200,000

Delete this line to ensure that Southend-on-Sea City Council continues to develop talent and attract newly graduated professionals alongside a programme of apprenticeships.

Cyber Security, Data, and SARs 100,000

Invest to save by improving cyber security awareness, assurance, data management, and responses to Subject Access Requests within the organisation. This investment will enable the council to achieve Cyber Essentials certification from NCSC, improve responsiveness to Subject Access Requests, enhance digital maturity, and implement a cyber assurance framework. This links to our second rated risk on the Corporate Risk Register and enables us to meet our key controls, limit causes, and ameliorate consequences.

Tradesperson Permit (Parking Fees and Charges – Appendix 1 (ii)) 0

To delete the existing Tradesperson Permits for £363 and £1210, and to replace it with a new Tradesperson permit as detailed in the funding proposal 'New Tradesperson Permit'.

Single Yellow Line Permit (Parking Fees and Charges – Appendix 1 (ii)) 0

Introduce a single yellow line permit or equivalent at £50 per annum for residents in areas with single yellow line restrictions where appropriate. This will enable residents to park throughout the restriction periods whilst retaining the benefit of the restrictions in discouraging parking pressures. This could have an income potential of around £50,000 but has a nil value for 2024/25 for trial purposes. Operational considerations are to be reviewed before any scheme is implemented to ensure that this scheme can be delivered robustly.

Total of revenue budget amendment 1,230,000

Capital Budget Amendment

	£s
CIL Main Fund Allocation – Enhancing Cycle Infrastructure	0
Bring £850,000 into the 2024/25 main capital investment programme from the 2024/25 subject to viable business case section to prioritise the improvements of East-West and North-South cycle networks.	
Carriageways and footways	2,500,000
Bring £2.5m of investment for carriageways and footways into the main capital investment programme for 2024/25 from the subject to viable business case section of the capital investment programme 2024/25. £1.5m extra for carriageways and £1m extra for footways. Funded by corporate borrowing.	
Climate Change Provision	0
Vire £150,000 from Climate Change Provision of £1,500,000 to a provision for Southend Highway Trees subject to a viable business case.	
Net Overall Impact for funding	2,500,000

Funding Proposal

That potential net decrease/increase in income and increased costs arising from the above net proposals of £1,230,000 be offset as follows.

Improve implementation of grassland management strategy (25,000)

Invest to save. Implement a 'cut and collect' strategy to discourage species dominance of barley grass and replace use of barley grass seed in grassland management areas along dual carriageway verges and central reservations, not residential side streets, such as A127, Eastern Avenue, Royal Artillery Way, Prittlewell Chase, Blenheim Chase, St Laurence Way, and Southchurch Boulevard etc with a low-maintenance, dog-friendly, restricted growth seed mix.

This will encourage pollinators and reduce the need for maintenance and plant hire to a grass cutting season of April to October delivering a minimum of a £50,000 saving over a two year period.

Increased income from events (165,000)

Invest to save. To host more events on the pier such as El Galleon, City Jam, and the Waverley steamer. In 2023/24 this increased pier revenue by £220,000. With an increase in pier fees a similar return would generate £300,000 in additional revenue. This requires management to deliver this additional income so is linked to the proposed additional £100,000 investment in the events and tourism team plus the one-off £75,000 investment as part of the published final budget.

Southend Pass (Parking Fees and Charges – Appendix 1 (ii)) (175,000)

To increase take up of Southend Pass to at least 15,000 users by the end of 2024/25. Each increase of 1000 annual users has an equivalent value of £125,000. Current average user numbers are 7758 and the additional income predicted is based on 9000 users, an increase of 16%, lower than the 25.86% increase in 2023/24 from 2022/23. The added value of nullifying 6-9pm parking charges for Southend Pass holders will naturally increase usage beyond the existing selling points of 12 hours free parking. This target will be supported by a clear PR campaign to encourage take up and educate residents on the savings available.

This income will support revenue spend and activities in-line with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Car Parking Charges (Parking Fees and Charges – Appendix 1 (ii)) (285,000)

To increase parking charges in Zone 1a to £3 per hour, further detailed in Appendix 1(ii) to weight parking revenue towards visitors and enable us to reduce parking charges in all other zones for local residents. Southend Pass holders will continue to benefit from 3 hours parking in Zone 1a between 8am and 6pm at no additional charge and will also be exempt from parking charges after 6pm.

This income will support revenue spend and activities in-line with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Car Parking Zone 1a 6-9pm (Parking Fees and Charges – Appendix 1 (ii))

(520,000)

To extend charging times in Zone 1a to 9pm. This could generate £750,000 though £520,000 is accounted as it is estimated there will be an increase in the use of the Southend Pass which will exempt pass holders from paying any charges after 6pm. In addition, to ensure that residents living above and behind the Zone1a charging area are protected from increased parking stress especially at night with anti-social noise and disruption when people go back to their vehicles.

This income will support revenue spend and activities in-line with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

New Tradesperson Permit (Parking Fees and Charges – Appendix 1 (ii)) (60,000)

To introduce a Tradesperson permit that covers all parking and charging zones, including residential permit zones between the hours of 8am and 6pm Monday to Saturday for the monthly price of £60 or £600 per annum. This is based upon a take up of at least 100 permit holders in the first year.

This income will support revenue spend and activities in-line with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Total of funding proposal

(1,230,000)

Net Overall Impact on the Council's Revenue Budget (0)

Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) statement pursuant to Standing Order 10.1(e)

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 full range of parking charge amendments proposed, 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 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 2024/25. The estimated level of income to be generated from these proposed changes in the context of the overall parking income budget seems reasonable.

The range of proposed parking tariff changes is expected to increase the overall level of parking income generated in 2024/25 which can legitimately be assigned in accordance with the reporting and eligibility requirements of the memorandum parking income account. The full range of current and proposed parking income can be legitimately assigned against some of the new proposals above and other respective existing revenue and capital budget areas.

Other income generation changes will be subject to the usual volatility of demand and resident/visitor behaviours but based on a robust assessment 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.

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)

21st February 2024