

REVENUE BUDGET SAVINGS AND INVESTMENTS

New Revenue Efficiency Proposals and Savings Identified

Ref No	Service Directorate	Description of Proposal	Budget Impact	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
				£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
E1	Enterprise	Howard Park kiosk income following refurbishment (see linked capital proposal). Additional income from bringing the kiosk in-house. Proposal remains subject to business case. Estimated value based on activity in previous years when operated by the leisure contractor.	Additional Income	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)
E2	Place	Website development costs. The planned replacement of the Council's externally hosted intranet and Insight staff magazine pages with SharePoint will mean that the current web hosting and support services are no longer required.	Expenditure Reduction	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)
E3	Regulatory	Additional income from the increase to statutory planning fees from 1st April 2024. Fee increases were announced by government in response to a DLUHC consultation earlier in the year and the draft legislation is expected to pass into law this autumn. Fees for major applications received will rise by 35% and all other planning applications by 25%. Estimate is based on planning activity in 2022/23.	Additional Income	(175)	(175)	(175)	(175)	(175)
E4	Regulatory	Town Wide Reviews. Use of balance held in earmarked reserve to finance costs of town wide reviews over the next five years.	Expenditure Reduction	(15)	(15)	(15)	(15)	(15)
E5	Resources	Removal of the approved investment budget (PI13 below) for the repair of the surface drain at District Council Offices (DCO) following further inspection. The need for the repair was originally identified in a survey by external contractors undertaking the refurbishment of DCO, but subsequently there have been no significant issues from, nor noticeable deterioration in, the condition of the drain.	Expenditure Reduction	(15)	-	-	-	-
E6	Place	Leisure Centre management fee income. Revision to management fee income budget based on the tender prices submitted by the preferred bidder. Efficiency values include estimated annual inflation of management fee.	Additional Income	164	150	(514)	(542)	(1,039)
E7	Managing Director	Revenue saving from proposed provision of a learner swimming pool at Royston leisure centre. Delivery of this project is expected to result in an increase in the management fee income due to the Council, of an amount at least equivalent to the associated capital financing cost.	Expenditure Reduction	-	(125)	(125)	(125)	(125)
E8	Managing Director	Revenue saving from financing improvement projects at our Leisure Centres. Delivery of these projects would be expected to result in an increase in the management fee income due to the Council, of an amount at least equivalent to the associated capital financing cost.	Expenditure Reduction	-	(262)	(542)	(542)	(542)
E9	Managing Director	Revenue savings from decarbonisation projects. It is anticipated that the delivery of those projects eligible for match funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund will enable the Council to achieve ongoing revenue savings at least equivalent to the associated capital financing cost of the relevant projects.	Expenditure Reduction	-	(230)	(230)	(230)	(230)
E10	Place	Additional Leisure Centre management fee income from lower Leisure Centre energy costs. The new leisure contract was let on an open-book basis in relation to energy costs. As part of the tender process, bidders were given rates to assume for electricity and gas. The new provider has started the process to procure energy for next year. Due to general market movements, the rates are forecast to be a lot lower than what were included in the tender process. This saving is only assumed for 2024/25 as energy costs can be volatile, and (if the grant is successful) the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme works will also affect energy usage and costs.	Additional Income	(430)	-	-	-	-
Total Net Budget Reduction from new efficiency proposals			Total Expenditure Reduction	(35)	(637)	(917)	(917)	(917)
			Total Additional Income	(446)	(30)	(694)	(722)	(1,219)
			Total Efficiencies	(481)	(667)	(1,611)	(1,639)	(2,136)

New Revenue Pressures and Investment Proposals

Ref No	Service Directorate	Description of Proposal	Budget Impact	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
				£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
R1	Customers	Procurement of Careline call handling and service desk system solution(s). The current calls handling platform has been used for over 10 years and a new tender exercise is required in accordance with procurement rules. While the Careline Service Desk System is part of the existing Careline call handling system, most call handling platforms do not include this as part of the call handling software so the likelihood is that two pieces of software will need to be procured. The IT Strategy requires consideration of more cloud based solutions, while at present we have a cheaper on-site solution. Software suppliers may not offer an on-site solution and initial advice received is that the cost is likely to rise.	Additional Expenditure	59	59	59	59	59
R2	Enterprise	Removal of the anticipated revenue income return from the proposed capital investment to build a commercial storage facility alongside a new museum storage facility at Bury Mead Road, Hitchin (PE5 below). Further investigation and evaluation of the options for a commercial storage facility on the site did not identify a viable scheme for delivery.	Income Reduction	25	50	50	50	50
R3	Enterprise	Full time Project Officer/ Project Curator for Burymead Project: This role would be a 2 year fixed term contract. This will be required as a temporary increase to the curatorial teams staffing capacity so that they may undertake the work of managing the transition of the collection during the rebuilding works. While the post would be subject to job evaluation, the investment value represents the maximum in terms of the expected cost for this post.	Additional Expenditure	50	50	-	-	-
R4	Enterprise	Redecoration of the Lucas Room, hallway and Mountford Hall at Hitchin Town Hall. Previous painting has involved painting over the existing coat, so the paint is peeling away in certain areas and does not have much longevity. To carry out a professional re-paint of this area will involve removing the base coats and sanding out to ensure a durable and professional finish.	Additional Expenditure	-	27	50	-	-

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R5	Enterprise	Purchase and laying of new carpet throughout the Lucas Room and hallway at Hitchin Town Hall to compliment the repainted walls.	Additional Expenditure	-	8	-	-	-
R6	Enterprise	Museum Visitor Services Assistant Supervisory Position. Upgrading a member of the existing front of house team to a team supervisor level to allow the curatorial team to focus on managing the museum collection and expanding and enhancing the quality of those services offered to the public. There is likely to be a need for additional hours to be awarded for this post over and above their substantive VSA role, and it is assumed this would be approximately half a day per week.	Additional Expenditure	7	7	7	7	7
R7	Enterprise	Purchase and installation of a screen in Mountford Hall at Hitchin Town Hall. We previously installed acoustic panelling within the hall which has vastly improved the sound quality at events but this has meant that the back wall of the stage now has distinct lines between the various panels. In order to maximise the quality of projected slides and film for events and screenings, the installation of a screen that can descend across the projection area of the stage for events is required.	Additional Expenditure	5	-	-	-	-
R8	Enterprise	Planned preventative maintenance at the Hitchin Town Hall and Museum community facility following an audit of the property. Maintenance would include the scheduled replacement of; gas safety system components, the frost protection of elements of the heating system situated on the roof, the thermostatic water valves on most sinks in the facility.	Additional Expenditure	-	9	-	-	-
R9	Legal & Community	Temporary appointment of experienced elections expert to support the Returning Officer during the all out District elections and the anticipated parliamentary election, with the additional parliamentary boundary, for resilience reasons.	Additional Expenditure	40	-	-	-	-
R10	Legal & Community	Purchase of equipment for forthcoming elections to enable the postal vote opening and scanning capacity to double. Due to moving to whole Council elections, there will be more postal votes to process. In addition the Authority will be responsible for two Parliamentary constituencies, with an increase in postal votes anticipated at General Elections. The current scanners also require replacement. The budget requested is for the purchase of 5 scanners, 5 laptops, 2 printers and 2 TVs and stands and includes the cost of associated licences.	Additional Expenditure	10	-	-	-	-
R11	Place	Commission consultants to prepare heat decarbonisation plans for District Council offices, Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum to ensure readiness for future rounds of public sector decarbonisation funding and / or invest to save capital proposals. This will include consideration of the issue of overheating at Hitchin Town Hall and Museum.	Additional Expenditure	40	-	-	-	-
R12	Place	Subscription to the Association for Public Sector Excellence (APSE). The subscription provides learning and development opportunities, free and discounted events, publications and advice to all staff covering a range of services e.g. waste, leisure, greenspace, commercialisation, museums, property etc..	Additional Expenditure	3	3	3	3	3
R13	Place	Subscription to APSE Energy. The subscription provides specialist learning and development opportunities around energy and climate change, free and discounted events, publications and advice to all staff.	Additional Expenditure	3	3	3	3	3
R14	Place	Leisure consultancy fees. Following completion of the North Herts, Stevenage & East Herts Sports Strategy, specialist consultants are required to develop a 'Long Term Built Leisure Strategy' that will address the outcomes and recommendations of the Sport Strategy, ensuring NHC deliver sufficient leisure provision in North Herts to meet demand arising over the period of the next Local Plan review (2040s).	Additional Expenditure	25	-	-	-	-
R15	Regulatory	Local Plan Review. The Council has previously approved two growth bids in the budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23, each for £60k per year over a five-year period (i.e. £600k in total) to fund the Local Plan Review. Following adoption of the current Local Plan in November 2022, the costs of its preparation have been finalised with total external (i.e. non-staff) revenue costs of £1.5m incurred from the commencement of work on the Local Plan in 2013. It is anticipated that the cost of the review will not be as high due to, inter alia, having a relatively recent plan to build upon. This third tranche of resource requested will provide a total working budget of £780k and should mitigate the need for significant growth bids in future years as any review of the Plan progresses. By early 2024, Cabinet will have been asked to resolve on the broad nature of any review, with any substantive work anticipated to commence in Summer 2024 following clarity on Government reforms; these presently advocate completion of Local Plans within a 30-month window (i.e. by end of 2026 based upon a mid-2024 start and significantly quicker than for the current Local Plan).	Additional Expenditure	60	60	60	-	-
R16	Regulatory	Additional 3 year career-grade Planning Officer / Senior Planning Officer post (grade 8 - 10). This will create additional capacity and resilience across the strategic planning service in delivering any local plan review alongside implementation of the current plan (SPDs, masterplanning), neighbourhood planning and other duties. Investment profile reflects anticipated recruitment by October 2024.	Additional Expenditure	30	60	60	30	-
R17	Regulatory	Principal Planning & Implementation Officer. Existing Grade 11 post was reduced to 24.5 hours as part of an internal restructure reflecting the post holder's working arrangement and to fund the increase of other posts to full-time to meet business needs. Budget is requested to allow the post to be advertised / recruited to at 37 hours per week (FTE).	Additional Expenditure	23	23	23	23	23
R18	Regulatory	Provision of Specialist planning advice: Landscape, trees, ecology etc. The planning service requires specialist, qualified technical advice on key disciplines to inform decisions and (e.g.) the discharge of conditions (DOCs) relating to detailed landscaping schemes on development sites. Following the adoption of the Local Plan, a number of outline permissions are being considered on allocated sites. Should these be granted they will be followed by detailed reserved matters applications and conditioned to provide additional detail on the provision of green space, landscaping and / or trees. The Council's previous landscape officer retired in April 2021 and was not replaced and there is not a dedicated planning tree officer. The advice might take the form of an additional establishment post or used to fund a service-level agreement with Hertfordshire County Council (or other provider) to deliver these services. Requested investment based upon a Grade 10 post.	Additional Expenditure	60	60	60	60	60

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R19	Regulatory	Planning service administrative support. There is presently a shortage of administrative support across the planning service to support or co-ordinate meetings and minutes, project and programme management, document management, website updates etc.. There will be additional administrative burdens relating to monitoring arising from the recent restructure and provision of additional capacity in the enforcement service. Funding equivalent to a Grade 6 Technical Support post is sought. This may be disaggregated into more than one post and / or used to backfill existing duties where current postholders have taken on additional responsibilities or workload in relation to the above.	Additional Expenditure	40	40	40	40	40
R20	Regulatory	London Luton Airport Development Consent Order application. The Planning Inspectorate should have concluded their examination into Luton Airport's expansion plans by February 2024. This request for funding is to support the work arising from a positive decision from the Inspectorate, such as implementing monitoring levels and the enforcement of the approved scheme	Additional Expenditure	20	-	-	-	-
R21	Regulatory	Hertfordshire Growth Board. Resource request is to support the work of Hertfordshire Growth Board including the North East Corridor in its work around future growth plans.	Additional Expenditure	20	-	-	-	-
R22	Regulatory	Hitchin Station Eastern Access. Resource requested to continue the work on the Sustainable Travel link linking east and west Hitchin. The revenue investment budget approved last year for 2023/24, together with funding from HCC, has enabled an options appraisal to be undertaken. The budget requested for 2024/25 will enable work to continue on the project.	Additional Expenditure	20	-	-	-	-
R23	Customers	Opening of the Customer Service Centre (CSC) to in-person visitors without the need for an appointment. Some CSC staff have been redeployed to support the development of a new software solution to support customer interactions with the Council, improving the experience and making processes more efficient. To facilitate both the opening and to enable this additional work to continue, there is an additional staffing cost.	Additional Expenditure	80	-	-	-	-
R24	Enterprise	Economic Development Officer. To continue with a part-time (shared post with East Herts) Economic Development Officer post in 2024/25. This will help complete and deliver the Council's Enterprise Strategy. The strategy itself will need to consider the level of resource (and funding of that resource) for 2025/26 onwards.	Additional Expenditure	27	-	-	-	-
R25	Managing Director	Introduction of a graduate training programme. The graduate training post would be for a fixed term of two years commencing in September 2024.	Additional Expenditure	25	42	21	-	-
R26	Managing Director	Revenue cost of internal borrowing required to finance the proposed capital programme 2024-2034. Amounts are additional to those estimated to finance the proposed capital programme 2023-2033 (see below). Value only reflects estimated Minimum Revenue Provision, as additional impact of lost interest income is included in the interest income projection.	Additional Expenditure	(31)	530	939	1,073	1,171
R27	Managing Director	Interest income return from treasury investments. Estimates represent change in interest income based on the proposed Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury) 2024-2034.	Income Reduction	(129)	(73)	26	206	284
R28	Managing Director	Contingency budget for project management to support the delivery of key projects in the Council Delivery Plan over an 18 month period.	Additional Expenditure	67	33	-	-	-
Total Net Budget Increase from new pressures and investment proposals			Total Additional Expenditure	683	1,014	1,325	1,298	1,366
			Total Income Reduction	(104)	(23)	76	256	334
			Total Investments	579	991	1,401	1,554	1,700