

**New Efficiency Proposals for 2020/21 and beyond**

Service Directorate	Description of Proposal	Net Efficiency			
		2020/21 £'000	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Customers	Customer Service Centre staffing. Automation of the document verification process means that a vacant part-time post within the Customer Service Centre can be deleted with no adverse effect on service delivery.	(16)	(16)	(16)	(16)
Customers	Revenues and Benefits staffing. A reorganisation of duties within the team following recent retirements. The reorganisation is reflective of both the impact of Universal Credit and increased process automation. It is anticipated to result in cost savings without impacting negatively on service delivery.	(43)	(43)	(43)	(43)
Resources	Premises cost savings resulting from the development of the Town Lodge Site. The site is unoccupied and estimated savings are subject to satisfactory completion of the handover to the developer, which is expected early in the next calendar year.	(64)	(64)	(64)	(64)
Place	Reduction in business rates expenditure following Government announcement of intention to allow Rate Relief on Public Conveniences from 1 April 2020	(11)	(11)	(11)	(11)
Customers	Closure of the Document Centre. With the implementation of the Outbound Mail contract and the move to paperless Committee meetings, the residual work for the Document Centre is not enough to justify keeping it open. Arrangements are being made with a Local Government partner for the provision of print services for the residual work. The saving value includes the financial impact of the Outbound Mail contract and the residual print work that will be externally sourced.	(107)	(107)	(107)	(107)
Commercial	Revenue impact from acquisition of property investments in line with NHDC's Commercial Strategy and Property Investment Strategy. Investments acquired in line with these two Strategies will produce new income streams for NHDC over the short, medium and long-term, together with income growth potential to offset inflation. Efficiency value is net of estimated cost of associated professional advice and dependent on approval of corresponding capital investment proposal.	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Commercial	Agreement of full repairing lease for Mrs Howard Memorial Hall. The proposed capital investment to replace the boiler and windows will help to advance negotiations with the tenant. If agreed, the full repairing lease will place all maintenance obligations onto the tenant and generate rental income for NHDC. The capital investment will also improve the property's energy efficiency, potentially helping NHDC's ability to secure an increased rent at the next scheduled rent review.	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)
Commercial	Letchworth Town Hall rental income. NHDC owns Letchworth Town Hall and the asset is held as an investment property. Rental income follows the end of the rent free period of the lease to North Hertfordshire College from the 1st July 2019. The full repairing lease commenced in 2012 and expires on 2nd September 2037, contains no break options, and is subject to an upwards-only rent review mechanism.	(70)	(70)	(70)	(70)
Resources	Payroll function. Savings are anticipated from both payroll service licence costs, having procured a new payroll service from April 2020 that excludes licence costs for the use of the payroll system, and the integration of elections payroll. The new payroll contract was awarded for a period of five years.	(6)	(6)	(6)	(6)
Commercial	Agreement of tenancy for the 2nd floor at District Council Offices. Total office accommodation savings resulting from the DCO refurbishment of £50k were previously incorporated within the budget estimates. The efficiency value therefore represents only the additional amount anticipated now that the terms of the lease have been finalised.	(20)	(20)	(20)	(20)
Place	AFM income from Herts County Council. The receipt for recycling performance in 2018/19, received in 2019/20, significantly exceeded the budget expectation. The proposal is therefore to adjust the budget estimates to better reflect the Council's current performance. The reduction in the efficiency value beyond 20/21 is due to the HCC proposal to reduce the total amount allocated to collection authorities by 12.5% per annum (approximately £500k per year) for the next three years (impacting receipts from 2021/22). The actual saving achieved will however depend on the Council's recycling performance relative to other Hertfordshire authorities.	(156)	(87)	(26)	-
Chief Executive	Increase in anticipated level of investment interest income due to the reprofiling of the Capital Programme increasing cash balances available for investment. Efficiency value calculation is subject to update and refinement.	(133)	-	-	-
<b>Total Net Budget Reduction from new efficiency proposals</b>		<b>(631)</b>	<b>(429)</b>	<b>(368)</b>	<b>(342)</b>

**New Revenue Pressures and Investment Proposals**

Service Directorate	Description of Proposal	Investment			
		2020/21 £'000	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Place	Core waste services contract expenditure. Retention of the weekly collection of residual waste service for multi-occupancy properties, as per report to Cabinet 30.07.2019.	164	164	164	164
Place	Playground Maintenance. Delay the removal of play equipment at Betjeman Road and Farrier Court in Royston to 31st March 2021 to provide sufficient time to re-evaluate the current Green Space Management Strategy with regard to playground provision in the District and align this with a review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (as per report to Cabinet 30.07.2019).	4	-	-	-
Commercial	Employment of external RICS Registered Valuer to conduct the Council's annual valuations of its fixed assets, to include investment, surplus and various classes of operational properties.	20	20	20	20
Commercial	Appointment of external consultants to deal with the Arbitration of DCO ground rent.	4	-	-	-
Customers	Investigation of the potential for Artificial Intelligence (AI) software to automate processes to enable customer queries to be dealt with more efficiently and reduce the number of customer contacts. The use of AI software will be subject to a business case, which will need to identify savings on an invest to save basis. Estimated investment is for initial license costs associated with the software solution. On-going revenue costs will be met from the delivery of associated efficiencies.	35	-	-	-
Customers	Extension of temporary administrative support to Careline to the end of March 2021. This additional admin support will no longer be required beyond this date as more automated solutions are implemented over the course of the year.	21	-	-	-
Legal & Community	Creation of new post within the Policy and Community Engagement team to assist with the delivery of the administration's Environmental/ Climate and community engagement priorities.	37	37	37	37
Legal & Community	Creation of new post within the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Services team within Democratic Services to assist with the delivery of the administration's new initiatives/ approaches to community engagement. The team will be providing support to three new panels, with around 18 additional meetings and further scrutiny support in respect of task and finish group reviews.	34	34	34	34
Regulatory	The undertaking of any Conservation Area Reviews or other recommended additional work following the outputs from the Conservation Area Character Statement work. Many of the District's Conservation Area boundaries have not been reviewed for 20-30 years (or more) despite a statutory duty to do so. It is proposed that £40,000 is then also required for 2021/22 and 2022/23.	40	40	40	-
Regulatory	The undertaking of town centre strategy reviews, which form part of the documents supporting the Local Plan. It is proposed that the investment will be required in each of the next four years to cover all four towns.	40	40	40	40
Regulatory	Delivery of a single issue Local Plan review to incorporate any emerging Council Priorities re: Climate Change Emergency into formal planning policy for the District. Dependent on the outcome of current Council Priorities work, the estimated two-year programme (2020/21 & 2021/22) would include commissioning of evidence and examination.	40	40	-	-
Regulatory	Continuation of the Electric Vehicle strategy to incorporate any emerging Council Priorities re: the Climate Change Emergency / air quality. While details are not yet known, future implementation may require accompanying capital expenditure.	40	40	40	-
Regulatory	Additional investment required for any subsequent / replacement Local Plan to the one currently being examined. This maybe an NHDC plan or wider Hertfordshire strategic plan or combination.	50	50	50	50

## Appendix A

Regulatory	Creation of additional Principal Planning Officer post within Strategic Planning and Enterprise Team. Anticipated medium-term work programme includes projects requiring independent input at a relatively senior level. This includes (but is not necessarily limited to): Local Plan roll-forward, new settlement and forthcoming reviews of Luton and South Cambridgeshire local plans.	64	64	64	64
Regulatory	Integration of a permanent full time Economic Development Officer post within the Council's staffing establishment. This role is currently shared with East Herts for a fixed term (so there is currently no ongoing budget).	53	53	53	53
Regulatory	Creation of a part-time (0.5FTE) Contaminated Land officer post. The new role would increase capacity within the Environmental Health team to concentrate on air quality matters and emerging Climate Change Strategies.	26	26	26	26
Resources	Purchase and maintenance of software that will assist in the implementation the Council's Gender Pay Gap Action Plan.	3	2	2	2
Chief Executive	District Wide Survey. The contract for the next two rounds of the District Wide Survey, which is undertaken every two years, has recently been awarded at a slightly higher value than assumed in the current budget estimates. Investment therefore represents the increase in resource required.	-	2	-	2
Place	Introduction of a discounted annual rate of £20 for garden waste collection for eligible customers from 20/21. The discount would be offered to residents who are in receipt of housing benefit or universal credit (approx. 7000 properties). Estimated impact is based on the current overall uptake of the collection service at 50%, with approximately 3,500 customers moving to the discounted rate.	70	70	70	70
Chief Executive	Provision of e-bulletin service. Initially funded from the corporate Strategic Priorities Fund, subscribers can sign up to a range of topics including waste, jobs, news, parks and countryside. Current subscriber numbers total 8586 and have grown month on month since the service was launched in September 2018.	7	7	7	7
Chief Executive	Additional year of design and hosting of NH Now digital magazine. With the first edition in September 2018, NH Now magazine is produced 3 times a year and promoted via social media. Focus of magazine is on what makes North Herts a great place to live and work, including profiling community groups, local businesses, places to visit and events. While readership has grown, with only 3 editions produced more time is needed to grow readership and evaluate its success. Proposed to survey Citizens Panel for their views on the magazine next year.	2	-	-	-
Chief Executive	Permanent employment of a Digital Media and Engagement Officer. The current two year fixed term post is funded from the corporate Strategic Priorities Fund. The appointment to the role in March 2019 has however already had a significant impact on the level of engagement with the Council through social media, in particular Facebook, primarily through providing the capability to create more interactive content, e.g. videos, picture stories etc... It is therefore now proposed to make the role permanent from April 2020.	32	32	32	32
Place	Delay to the anticipated efficiency from the provision of a Crematorium at Wilbury Hills (see PE3). Delivery of the crematorium and the revenue efficiency is dependent on a successful planning application. The planning application was refused by Central Bedfordshire Council, but NHDC has submitted an appeal against this decision. Whilst the Council feels that there is a good chance of success in the appeal, it will delay the achievement of any savings. The timing and value of savings is based on the Council making a prompt decision to appoint a new partner to deliver the Crematorium (revised profile would see a £50k saving in 2022/23 and £100k per year from 2023/24 onwards). If the Council decided to build the Crematorium itself then the savings could be greater, but would probably take longer to achieve and would require funding to be allocated through the capital budget.	50	100	50	-
Resources	Renewable energy - gas. The investment value represents the estimated premium for purchasing renewable (green) gas. This is a premium of around 20% on current costs (an additional 0.7p/kWh compared with current rates of around 3.5p/kWh). The actual cost will depend on the availability at the point of agreeing to the change.	10	10	10	10
Resources	Hitchin Fountain. Lady Dixon has agreed to pay for a new floating fountain to go in front of the church in Hitchin. It is believed that this will provide a more reliable water flow than the old pump. The supplier is prepared to provide free maintenance for the first 2 years if the Council agrees to put up an in keeping plaque near to the fountain. The quote for this maintenance after the first 2 years is just under £3k per year.	-	2	3	3
Legal & Community	Additional Community Engagement Officer post. Facilitation of county wide crowdfunding platform, volunteer programme, governance and youth council/greater youth civic engagement, additional town talks and community engagement events, support of Co-operative Network council network and additional cabinet panels under the new Council Priorities 2020-2025	31	31	31	31
Chief Executive	Interest cost and minimum revenue provision charge in respect of borrowing to finance proposed property investments in line with NHDC's Commercial Strategy and Property Investment Strategy. <b>Currently assumed at zero, but borrowing will be required for Commercial investment</b>	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

## Appendix A

Legal & Community	Reverse reduction in Area Committee Grants so that maintained at £42k per year. See PE5.	8	15	20	24
<b>Total Net Budget Increase from new pressures and investment proposals</b>		<b>885</b>	<b>879</b>	<b>793</b>	<b>669</b>

**Efficiencies earmarked in 2019/20 (and/or beyond) resulting from previous decisions**

Service Directorate	Description of Proposal	Efficiency			
		2020/21 £'000	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Customers	Restructure of Revenues team. The use of technology means that the service can absorb these changes with no impact on service delivery.	(6)	(6)	(6)	(6)
Resources	Reduction in the number of audit days delivered by the Shared Internal Audit Service. Proposed to reduce from 400 days in 2017/18 to 360 days in 2018/19, 320 days in 2019/20 and 300 days from 2020/21 onwards. External Audit no longer place reliance on the work of Internal Audit in respect of key financial systems, hence the substantive testing element of this work is no longer required. The Council generally have good controls and therefore there is scope to reduce the time spent on service audits and still retain capacity to target any identified risk areas. The Audit Manager has advised that at 300 days, SIAS would still expect to be able to provide their annual assurance.	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)
Place	Provision of a Crematorium at Wilbury Hills. Delivery of the crematorium and any revenue efficiency is dependent on a successful planning application. The estimated efficiency value is based on the proposed terms of the lease, with NHDC receiving an annual base rent of £10k (indexed annually by RPI) plus a percentage (up to a maximum of 10%) of the turnover generated from the Crematorium. The eligible percentage of turnover would be linked to the number of cremations that take place over a 12 month period.	(50)	(100)	(100)	(100)
Legal & Community	Cease MOU and contractual payments to identified Community Groups. Baldock Town Centre Partnership. Grant ceasing at the end of 2020/21. Amounts to be paid: 2018/19 £6.8k, 2019/20 £4.6k, 2020/21 £2.3k. Hitchin British Schools Museum. Ceasing at end of 2019/20. Amounts to be paid: 2018/19 £4.5k, 2019/20 £2.2k. Sports North Herts. Ceasing at end of 2019/20. Amounts to be paid: 2018/19 £3k, 2019/20 £1.5k. Arts Council for North Herts. Ceasing at end of 2019/20. Amounts to be paid: 2018/19 £5.5k, 2019/20 £2.8k. Stevenage and North Herts Women's Resource Centre. Ceasing at end of 2019/20. Amounts to be paid: 2018/19 £0.7k, 2019/20 £0.4k.	(9)	(11)	(11)	(11)
Legal & Community	Rolling reduction in area committee grant budgets equivalent to 20% of annual provision. <b>CBP 20/21 UPDATE: Saving amounts extended to 2023/24</b>	(8)	(15)	(20)	(24)
Legal & Community	Removal of budget provision for District Council elections in 2021/22 as no elections scheduled to be held.	-	(89)	-	-
<b>Total Net Budget Reduction from earmarked efficiencies</b>		<b>(78)</b>	<b>(226)</b>	<b>(142)</b>	<b>(146)</b>

**Investments earmarked in 2020/21 (and/or beyond) resulting from previous decisions**

Service Directorate	Description of Proposal	Investment			
		2020/21 £'000	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Regulatory	Review of Social Housing stock- On a four yearly basis, procure consultants to analyse the condition of housing stock in North Herts and/or support activity on measures aimed at resultant findings/current priorities (e.g. helping residents introduce energy efficiency measures).	20	-	-	-
Regulatory	Local housing market analysis- Appoint consultant biannually to provide information and analysis on the local housing market in order to inform the development of housing policies and strategies. <b>UPDATE CBP 20/21: Remove expenditure budget in 2023/24 as expenditure is biannual</b>	8	-	8	-
<b>Total Net Budget Increase from earmarked investments</b>		<b>28</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>-</b>

**Savings incorporated since 2019/20 Budget approved by Council in February 2019**

Service Directorate	Description of Saving	Saving			
		2020/21 £'000	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Regulatory	Car parking income. Increase in car parking income projection based on actual parking income receipts recorded in the first three quarters of 2018/19, which were higher than anticipated.	(88)	(88)	(88)	(88)
Commercial	Ongoing impact of commercial rent uplifts agreed in the quarter (included within the 'other minor variances' total in table 3)	(17)	(17)	(17)	(17)
Chief Executive	Apprentice Levy. Original estimate based on 'paybill' of £12million. Paybill since defined as only payments to employees subject to employer NI contributions. For 2019/20 total estimated is £10million, with estimated levy payable of £35k (included within the 'other minor variances' total in table 3).	(10)	(10)	(10)	(10)
Customers	IT Support & Maintenance. Cost of remote data communications reduced due to HCC retendering their data networks infrastructure. Use of the tender portal for software contracts over £10k enhanced competition, which resulted in lower renewal prices for several contracts (included within 'other minor variances' total in table 3).	(13)	(13)	(13)	(13)
Resources	Premises Insurance. Sales invoices are raised to various leaseholders to recover premises insurance costs. The income raised reduces the total net cost of buildings insurance to the Council (included within 'other minor variances' total in table 3).	(10)	(10)	(10)	(10)
-	Staff costs. Annual saving in employee costs from the two voluntary redundancies agreed by Full Council in February 2019.	(107)	(107)	(107)	(107)
-	Net total of minor permanent budget adjustments requested at quarter 1 ('other minor variances' total at Q1)	(33)	(33)	(33)	(33)
<b>Total Savings incorporated since 2019/20 budget agreed in February 2019</b>		<b>(278)</b>	<b>(278)</b>	<b>(278)</b>	<b>(278)</b>

**Budget Pressures and Investments incorporated since 2019/20 Budget approved by Council in February 2019**

Service Directorate	Description of Pressure	Pressure			
		2020/21 £'000	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Place	Water and Sewerage costs for Amenity Areas. Invoices based on actual meter readings received for the splash parks highlighted that the estimated bills received previously were significantly underestimated (included in 'other minor variances' total at Q3).	8	8	8	8
-	Net total of minor permanent budget adjustments requested at quarter 3 2018/19 (included in 'other minor variances' total at Q3)	5	5	5	5
Place	Income from paper collected for recycling. Shortfall in income recorded for 2018/19 was indicative of the continuing fall in paper tonnages collected. Tonnages in 2018/19 were 14% lower than the prior year.	26	26	26	26
-	Business Rates expenditure. Phased withdrawal of transitional relief. Relief was granted where there were significant changes in the rateable value of Council assets from the 2017 revaluation, most notably in respect of several Council car parks.	10	10	10	10
<b>Total Net Budget Increase</b>		<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>

**Previously agreed changes, including updates to amounts**

Proposed revised amounts in yellow

Service Directorate	Description	Pressure / Saving			
		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Commercial	Recruitment of two additional officers to the Commercial Support Team within the Commercialisation Service Directorate. The new posts will lead on the development of a housing investment company and explore new commercial opportunities, while also mapping out, supporting and developing internal services to increase commercial capacity. It is estimated that additional annual resource up to a maximum of £125k is required to meet the cost of the new positions; with maximum additional expenditure in 2018/19 of half this amount (£62.5k) should the recruitment process be successful. The Council's Senior Management Team recommended that the cost of the first two years of these posts should be funded from the Special reserve.  UPDATE CBP 2020/21: Profile of pressure updated to reflect appointment to posts at the start of 2019/20 (zero spend in 2018/19)	-	125	125	125
Chief Executive	Reduction in annual interest payments relating to outstanding loans with Public Works Loans Board. The annual interest payments reduce as the loan principal is repaid.  UPDATE CBP 2020/21: Estimates updated and extended to 2023/24	(1)	(2)	(3)	(5)
	Annual interest (fixed at 3.5%) receivable from NHDC loan to SLL for purchase of gym and fitness equipment at Hitchin and Royston Leisure Centres, approved by Council in August 2017, decreases as the loan principal is repaid.  UPDATE CBP 2020/21: Interest income estimate extended to remove interest income budget in 2023/24 (loan principal will be fully repaid by the end of March 2023)	3	7	11	13
Chief Executive	District Wide Survey (estimated cost £16k) and Citizens' Panel (estimated cost £8k) take place in alternate years.  UPDATE CBP 2020/21: Proposed to reprofile budget for Citizens' Panel from a biannual £8k budget to an annual £4k budget as the postal survey of the Panel every two years will no longer take place. There will instead be more regular engagement, including putting on focus groups.	(12)	4	(12)	4
<b>Total Net Budget Impact</b>		<b>(10)</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>137</b>