

Extract from Budget Consultation:

Environment and Communities Committee proposals

Details about the purpose and responsibilities of the Environment and Communities Committee can be found [here](#).

The Environment and Communities Committee Budget for 2023/24 is £48.3 million. Expenditure is forecast to increase by £8.2 million next year. Over 40% of this increase relates to waste services. These increases are caused by having more houses and higher tonnages of waste per house as well as reductions in the value of recycled materials. The remainder is split between a reduction in available reserves, requirements to review the local plan and other inflation factors such as pay.

When reviewing the Council's funding from 1 April 2024 Councillors agreed that the affordable budget for Environment and Communities should reduce by £1.1 million. This means savings of £9.3 million would have to be identified. The Council has already implemented the Green Waste charging scheme and revised grounds maintenance regimes, it has reduced Library opening hours, and pensions costs have also fallen. These changes reduce financial growth requirements by £4.0 million. This still means savings of £5.3 million are required to mitigate the increasing expenditure. Managing large scale change presents financial risks, but the Council has very low reserves to protect against risk. The Council should therefore aim to over-achieve savings targets where possible.

A total of 7 savings proposals have been put forward from services overseen by the Environment and Communities Committee, totalling £4.0 million of savings for 2024 / 25, and brief detail of each of these proposals are given below.

More details of how these savings will be delivered will be presented in High level business cases that will be considered by committees in January and February 2024.

Proposal EC1: Refresh wholly owned company overheads and contributions

Review of ANSA Environmental Services and Orbitas Bereavement Services to consider whether a company operating model is achieving its original objectives to increase commercial opportunities that offset increased direct costs, opportunities that could not otherwise be accessed by a Local Authority. The review will consider how the current company financial positions can more directly support the Council's immediate financial requirements.

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £1.0 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*
Your support or opposition for a proposal does not constitute a 'vote' for or against - this consultation informs a decision-making process - as such it is important that you provide additional information about why you support, oppose or are not sure.

- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

Proposal EC2: Strategic Leisure Review (Stage 2)

The second stage of the Strategic Leisure Review will run from 2024/25 and will focus on the medium-term financial sustainability of the commissioned leisure services. This includes, but is not limited to: reviewing pricing for leisure services across the borough; reduction in corporate landlord costs via asset transfer; exploring potential invest to save capital schemes removing all current programme allocations that cannot be delivered on an invest to save basis; removal of historical subsidies relating to free car parking; use of public health and other one off grants and; partnership working with Town Councils to secure contributions towards safeguarding provisions in their local area.

Full consultation on this proposal closes on 7 January 2024, with consultation results to be taken to Environment and Communities Committee for consideration in the New Year 2024.

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £1.3 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*
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- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

Proposal EC3: Reduce costs of waste disposal and number of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC)

Mitigate the impact of contract inflation and tonnage growth, through new or revised contracts and review of commissioner contract risk budgets. Emergency reduction of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) to four core sites at Alsager, Crewe, Knutsford and Macclesfield from 1 April 2024 in advance of the formal HWRC review being presented to Committee later in 2024.

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £0.75 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*
Your support or opposition for a proposal does not constitute a 'vote' for or against - this consultation informs a decision-making process - as such it is important that you provide additional information about why you support, oppose or are not sure.

- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

Proposal EC4: Fund libraries a different way

Seek alternative funding to maintain either current or a reduced level of service delivery, including partnership working with Town and Parish Councils to secure contributions towards safeguarding service provision in their local area. As part of this continue to push forward with new income generation initiatives within the wider library estate, utilising the building assets to offer new third-party services to the public.

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £0.37 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*
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- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

Proposal EC5: Reduce costs of street cleansing operations

Revise street cleansing operations boroughwide to secure operational efficiencies.

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £0.2 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*
Your support or opposition for a proposal does not constitute a 'vote' for or against - this consultation informs a decision-making process - as such it is important that you provide additional information about why you support, oppose or are not sure.

- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

Proposal EC6: Reduce revenue impact of carbon reduction capital schemes

Appendix A – Environment and Communities Budget Consultation proposals

Capitalisation of the carbon team. Delay council funded capital projects, prioritise securing and delivery of external grant funded carbon reduction initiatives.

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £0.34 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*

Your support or opposition for a proposal does not constitute a 'vote' for or against - this consultation informs a decision-making process - as such it is important that you provide additional information about why you support, oppose or are not sure.

- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

Proposal EC7: Increase Garden Waste charges to recover costs

Increase garden waste charge for new subscriptions taken out for 2025 collections (payments from October 2024) to £59.

Potential savings for 2024/25 = £0.05 million

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal? *Tick one box only*

Your support or opposition for a proposal does not constitute a 'vote' for or against - this consultation informs a decision-making process - as such it is important that you provide additional information about why you support, oppose or are not sure.

- Support
- Oppose
- Not sure

Do you have any comments about this proposal? *Write in below*

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Detailed list of proposals:

Reference	Item	Description	2024/25 budget change £m
EC1	Refresh wholly owned company overheads and contributions	As per consultation extract	(1.000)
EC2	Strategic Leisure Review (Stage 2)	As per consultation extract	(1.305)
EC3	Reduce costs of waste disposal and number of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC)	As per consultation extract	(0.753)
EC4	Fund libraries a different way	As per consultation extract	(0.365)
EC5	Reduce costs of street cleansing operations	As per consultation extract	(0.200)
EC6	Reduce revenue impact of carbon reduction capital schemes	As per consultation extract	(0.336)
EC7	Increase Garden Waste charges to recover costs	As per consultation extract	(0.045)
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	MTFS 80 (Feb 23) - Waste Disposal - Contract Inflation and Tonnage Growth (updated forecast)	Waste Disposal - Contract Inflation and Tonnage Growth – additional pressure, which includes changes to legislation around ability for the Council to charge for rubble waste at HWRCs.	+3.577
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Pay inflation (including additional pay inflation required for 2023/24 shortfall) – CEC & ASDV	This proposal includes incremental increases for eligible staff and nationally negotiated pay awards. Average increases are forecast at c.3% for 2024/25. This may not apply evenly across pay bands due to implications of the Living Wage. The proposal also recognises the additional impact of the higher than budgeted 2023/24 final pay award	+1.944

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Reference	Item	Description	2024/25 budget change £m
Saving included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Pension Costs Adjustment	This item relates to pension contributions funded by the Council. Contributions can be reduced from 2023/24. This results from a successful financial strategy to secure stability in the funding of future pension liabilities. The effect is a reduction in overheads in pay cost budgets following a change in the employer's contribution rate confirmed by the Cheshire Pension Fund	(0.151)
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	MTFS 90 (Feb 23) Strategic Leisure Review	Growth item to replace savings of £1.291M achieved in 2023/24 against stage 1 of the review.	+1.250
Saving included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	MTFS 91 (Feb 23) – Green Spaces Maintenance Review	Year 2 saving associated with an operational review aimed at the reduction of existing maintenance regimes to parks, public open spaces and other green spaces - specifically but not limited to frequency of grass cutting, tree and flower bed planting and other related grounds maintenance activities. Opportunity to allow rewilding of specific areas and promote increase in biodiversity	(0.200)
Saving included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	MTFS 92 (Feb 23) - Review Waste Collection Service - Green Waste	Year 2 income forecast from subscription charge introduced October 2023.	(3.150)
Saving included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Review MTFS 92 (Feb 23) Garden waste subscription financial model in line with latest subscription levels and with actual observed position on any waste migration	Review of existing scheme business model to make adjustments with intelligence of actual subscription rates and any adverse impacts related to waste migration to other collection streams.	(0.429)
Saving included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	MTFS 93 (Feb 23) Libraries - Service Review	Year 2 of savings associated with recent adjustments to library opening hours, along with initial income generation opportunities	(0.200)
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Explore a Trust delivery model for Libraries and other services	Undertake feasibility works relating to the potential to implement a Charitable Trust based operating model for library service plus potential to also include other arts, culture and recreational services within the same alternative delivery vehicle. This is to release savings around both operational costs and also efficiencies across the corporate estate.	+0.150
Saving included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	CCTV	Opportunities for additional income generation – the £30,000 saving in 2024/25 is a current estimate	(0.030)

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Reference	Item	Description	2024/25 budget change £m
section (see consultation extract)		subject to additional service improvements / investment.	
Saving included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Congleton Town Council Collaboration Agreement – Grounds Maintenance	A 20% reduction in grounds maintenance elements of the grant payable to the Town Council, in line with the same level of reduction taken from the Council's own Green Spaces Maintenance Review (MTFS 91)	(0.062)
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Closed Cemeteries	Closed cemeteries will transfer over to CEC as the highest tier authority with a statutory obligation to maintain - revenue implications relate to forecast costs of future annual grounds maintenance activities.	+0.005
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Environmental Hub maintenance	This facility is a key operational site used to support the Council's waste services. Since opening the facility, the regular maintenance of this site has been funded from within the Council's Facilities Management budget. This is not a permanent solution for such an important site, so this proposal now fully reflects the ongoing increased costs of operating such a modern waste transfer station facility. This approach also ensures ongoing compliance with statutory environmental permits, specifically relating to the requirement for an odour control system	+0.023
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Review Closed Landfill Sites	The Council has responsibility for a number of closed landfill sites across the borough for which it holds a provision. The proposal relates to a risk-based review of these closed landfill sites to understand their residual liability for the coming years.	+0.300
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Land Charge Income Adjustment	Due to national legislative changes where some land charges services will be delivered by HMLR, there will a reduction in income to the Council	+0.050
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Building Control Income Alignment	The Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010 authorises recovery of costs associated with Building Regulation applications (Fee Earning Activity) only. CIPFA produced guidance to support these Regulations, isolating costs from other activities. Fee earning activity represents 75% of total costs and income should reflect this hence the adjustment needed. Budget / Income realignment after return to in-house provision	+0.203
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Local Plan Review	It is a statutory requirement to review the Local Plan within prescribed timescales. This will determine amongst other things the amount and location of future housing and other economic development in the Borough. It is highly complex requiring significant technical evidence, significant public consultation	+0.255

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Reference	Item	Description	2024/25 budget change £m
		and three stages of formal examination by Government inspectors.	
Growth included in narrative section (see consultation extract)	Planning income	Due to current national downturn in application submissions planning application income is below target. Planning fees are set nationally by the Government and cannot be adjusted locally.	+0.400
Overall Committee Target			(1.132)
Total growth proposals			+8.157
Total savings proposals			(8.226)
Shortfall against Target			(1.063)