

Medium Term Financial Plan

Initial Equality Impact Assessment of Budget Proposal 2024/25



1. The Proposal

Budget Theme: The way we work - service delivery models and efficiencies.

Budget reference: TWWW01

Budget proposal 2024/25 (£): £754,000

The following savings are included within this Theme:

Directorate Reference	Service Area	Budget Proposal	2024/25 Budget reduction
ASS15	All directorate	Review of staffing structures	£152,000
CSD03	Legal & Democratic Services	Review the resources required to deliver legal, democratic and scrutiny services as well as registration services; this will look to reduce costs and / or increase income.	£40,000
CSD04	Contracts	Review the scope and scale of support provided to the council through external contractual arrangements	£10,000
CSD06	Corporate Finance	Reduction in former employee pension costs following changes in demand	£10,000
CSD07	Support Services Contract	New savings arising from the re-design of the contract and digital transformation	£389,000
PD25	Place-making & Growth	Review Placemaking & Growth management and structure	£93,000
PD28	Place-making & Growth	Reduce the base budget for Driving Growth Projects	£20,000
PD29	Planning	Reduce the base budget for the Local Plan	£20,000
PH04	Public Health	Look to deliver savings through re-procurement on contracts	£20,000

Total	£754,000
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Theme Narrative:

Ongoing programme to review how the council delivers its services to ensure they are fit for purpose and provide value for money. This includes making sure that we obtain best value from our contracts, reviewing delivery models and staffing structures, implementing process improvements, and reallocating resources to those services in greatest need.

Summary of changes:

The proposals (ASS15- PH04) are not expected to have a direct impact on residents or members of the public as they relate to delivering better economy and efficiency in the way we work as well as looking at how we fund some of our services through use of one-off reserves and income. Where council staff are affected, our organisational policies will apply in compliance with the public sector equality duty and applicable legislation and are therefore not anticipated to have an adverse impact on any group.

PD25, PD28 and PD29 may have indirect impacts on residents or member of the public, as these may reduce the overall quantity, scope or speed of placemaking and growth initiatives that can be undertaken, particularly if new activity is requested. The specific impacts are difficult to assess at this point but will be further considered as part of consulting on and confirming the final changes.

CSD07 – the need to ensure the access needs of protected groups will be considered in the development of digital services.

ASS15 - All directorate

Review of staffing structures

Review senior staffing structures when restructuring opportunities arise. Any proposed changes to structures will be made following the council's consultation process, in dialogue with unions and subject to policy around restructure including opportunities for redeployment etc. At this stage, no posts have been identified. As part of the organisation's broader approach to Organisational Development in 2024 a review of roles and responsibilities will be undertaken to ensure parity and fairness. A further EIA will be developed as a part of this review.

CSD03 - Legal & Democratic Services

Review the resources required to deliver a range of internal support services including legal, democratic and scrutiny services.

The review to assess and implement technological and digital solutions to work processing including use of Generative Intelligence (Gen AI) capabilities to meet more demand and increasing levels of demand by use of such processes and

allowing service users to self-serve with limited support. Future of registration services at end of initial contract term to be reviewed and look to reduce costs and / or increase income. Other income streams such as legal recharges to external third parties to be increased in line with market.

CSD04 - Contracts

Review the scope and scale of support provided to the council through external contractual arrangements, some of which are currently subject to a re-procurement process. This activity seeks to ensure best value for the taxpayer and so will assess what services are delivered in the future and the associated pricing structures and models. Contracts included within this area include the archiving and artefact, internal audit, and information governance contracts.

CSD06 - Corporate Finance

Reduction in former employee pension costs following changes in demand.

This is a technical adjustment based on previous employee numbers and the actual cost is lower than in previous years.

PD25 - Place-making & Growth

Review Placemaking & Growth management and structure.

A saving of £93,000 has been proposed for 2024/25 which would equate to a reduction of 1 – 2 posts (including overheads/oncosts). This could potentially be met through the deletion of vacant posts, however at present no specific decisions have been made. Any proposed changes to structures will be made following the council's consultation process, in dialogue with unions and subject to policy around restructure including opportunities for redeployment etc.

PD28 - Place-making & Growth

Reduce the base budget for Driving Growth Projects by £20,000 per annum.

This base budget contributes to a reserve to fund one-off initiatives to support placemaking and growth. Reductions in the budget are relatively minimal will be managed through careful prioritisation and programming, including consideration of any equality impacts where required. The reserve associated with this budget is programmed over several years and has built up a degree of capacity to absorb the impact of the reduction over the Medium-Term Financial Plan period.

PD29 - Planning

Reduce the base budget for the Local Plan by £20,000 per annum.

This budget is used to fund one-off costs involved in creating a new Local Plan, including the costs of the required Examination in Public. It also funds technical studies and policy work required to ensure that development is deliverable and sustainable.

Reductions in the budget are relatively minimal and will be managed through careful prioritisation and programming to minimise impacts. Officers will continue dialogue with bodies such as Homes England to access alternative external funding sources where possible. The reserve associated with this budget is programmed over several years and has built up a degree of capacity to absorb the impact of the reduction over the Medium-Term Financial Plan period.

PH04 - Public Health

Look to deliver savings through re-procurement of contracts with external providers. This will include the potential to gain efficiencies through joint commissioning with other local authorities and other partners, e.g. the Integrated Care Board. Service models are regularly reviewed against local needs and evidence about what can help a shift towards prevention and early intervention and improve outcomes, including reducing inequalities.

CSD07 - Support Services Contract

New savings arising from the re-design of the contract and digital transformation.

Our support services contract is due to expire in September 2025. In reviewing the way the contract is delivered, recommendations have been made to disaggregate the contract and deliver these via a number of smaller ones which will introduce greater flexibility and reduce the margin we pay to contractors due to removal of the subcontracting arrangements. Where possible, we will negotiate staggered end dates for these which will enable earlier savings.

To achieve efficiencies in delivery, we will follow our digital first strategy, meaning that where services can be automated and delivered digitally they will.

To ensure we are protecting vulnerable residents, we will also be conducting research to find out more about those who are digitally excluded in North Somerset, including those with accessibility needs, older residents, and those on a low income. This will happen in advance of any launch or refresh of digital services.

Is any of the proposals within this theme a continuation of a previous medium-term financial plan saving? Yes No

If yes, please insert reference number and year of assessment? N/A

If yes, please describe what steps you have taken to review the equality impacts from previous years? N/A

2. Customer equality impact summary

Will the proposal have a disproportionate impact on any of these groups?

Budget Proposal	Equality Impacts – Please consider any potential equalities impacts based on the protected groups below. Please answer High (H), Medium (M), Low (L) or None (N)										Positive (+) or Negative (-)
	Disabled People, including those who are neurodiverse	Race	Men or Women, including those who are pregnant	Sexual Orientation	People on a low income	Age	Religion or belief or none	Marriage or civil partnership	Gender reassignment	Other, for example parents, carers or the Armed Forces. *	
ASS15	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N		
CSD03	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N		
CSD04	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N		
CSD06	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N		
PD25	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	-
PD28	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	-
PD29	L	N	N	N	L	L	N	N	N	L	-
PH04	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N		
CSD07	L	N	N	N	L	L	N	N	N		-

3. Explanation of customer impact

ASS15 - All directorate

Review of staffing structures

It is not anticipated that there will be any impact on equality groups because of this proposal.

CSD03 - Legal & Democratic Services

Review the resources required to deliver a range of internal support services including legal, democratic and scrutiny services as well as registration services and look to reduce costs and / or increase income.

It is not anticipated that there will be any impact on any equality groups because of this proposal.

CSD04 - Contracts

Review the scope and scale of support provided to the council through external contractual arrangements in respect of Internal Audit and Archiving, i.e. the storing of historic records and artefacts.

It is not anticipated that there will be any impact on any equality groups because of this proposal.

CSD06 - Corporate Finance

Reduction in former employee pension costs following changes in demand.

It is not anticipated that there will be any impact on any equality groups because of this proposal.

PD25 - Place-making & Growth

Review Placemaking & Growth management and structure.

The services in scope are not directly customer-facing, however there may be indirect impacts on residents in reducing overall capacity to deliver placemaking and growth initiatives, particularly where new activity is requested. In that placemaking and growth activities seek to promote economic and social inclusion, this could impact on all of the groups above, but this impact should be relatively low. Impacts will be mitigated as far as possible through the prioritisation of activity, use of reserves, and through seeking efficiencies in delivery.

PD28 - Place-making & Growth

Reduce the base budget for Driving Growth Projects.

This may have indirect impacts on residents in reducing the ability to deliver a full range and scope of placemaking and growth initiatives, or in reducing the speed at which they are delivered, particularly where new activity is requested. In that placemaking and growth activities seek to promote economic and social inclusion, this could impact on all of the groups above, but this impact should be relatively low. Impacts will be mitigated as far as possible through the prioritisation of activity and through seeking efficiencies in delivery.

PD29 - Planning

Reduce the base budget for the Local Plan. This may have indirect impacts on residents in reducing the funding available to carry out technical studies in support of the development and delivery of the Local Plan. In some cases this could include indirect impacts for some of the groups above, specifically those on a low income and those with disabilities, as the work includes technical and policy work on matters such as affordable and accessible housing, and on assessments of infrastructure to support growth.

However, this risk is believed to be manageable in the light of the stage that the plan has reached and because the reduction in budget is relatively minimal. Further mitigation will be undertaken through careful prioritisation and programming; use of reserves; and accessing external funding where available.

PH04 - Public Health

Look to deliver savings through re-procurement on contracts.

It is not anticipated that there will be any impact on equality groups because of this proposal.

CSD07 - Support Services Contract

New savings arising from the re-design of the contract and digital transformation.

To achieve efficiencies in delivery, we will follow our digital first strategy, meaning that where services can be automated and delivered digitally, they will.

To ensure we are protecting vulnerable residents, we will also be conducting research to find out more about those who are digitally excluded in North Somerset; including those with accessibility needs, older residents, and those on a low income because we know those groups have a higher tendency towards being digitally excluded. This will happen in advance of any launch or refresh of digital services – which are yet to be designed. Because we will be in a position to better understand the needs of our residents in terms of digital services, and where particular groups may need more support to access our services – for that reason, the initial EIA assessment is for a low negative impact at this stage, although the outcome should be that those who can access services online do so, which will free up resources for those who are not able to.

Please describe how you will communicate these changes to your customers

Changes to the way services are delivered will be shared using our established communication channels and subject to a specific communications plan where necessary – e.g. for revenues and benefits this will be via council tax inserts, email directly to residents. We will also use notices in libraries and our partnerships to share with individuals and communities.

4. Staff equality impact summary

Are there any staffing implications for this proposal? **Yes** No

Explanation of staff impact

The council has a total headcount of 1,552 and the details below provide an overview of the current make-up:

- 881 (or 57%) are full time employees and 671 (43%) are part-time
- 74% are female employees and 26% are male employees.
- 4% are from a Black and Minority Ethnic group, 85% are not, 11% unknown.
- 3% of employees are >65 years of age, 38% aged 51-65, 27% aged 41-50, 19% aged 31-40, 12% aged 21-30 and 13% aged <20.

Where council staff are affected, our organisational policies will apply in compliance with the public sector equality duty and applicable legislation. Impacts within this proposal are noted below:

- ASS15 – potential to impact on 2 posts, both of which are vacant.
- PD25 – proposal is not yet fully scoped although initial review has indicated that this has the potential to impact on at least 1 vacant post, although a wider review may be carried out when further information is confirmed.

6. Review and Sign Off

Service Manager Review

Insert any service manager comments here:

Is a further detailed equality impact assessment needed? **Yes** No

If 'yes', when will the further assessment be completed?

More detailed EIA to be made alongside our research on North Somerset Digital Exclusion.

A further EIA will be developed and shared with decision makers as a part of the review of staffing structures as the project progresses.

Service Manager: Amy Webb

Date: 19 January 2024