

# Savings proposals (Executive Decisions)

The following proposals require Executive Decisions. Some of these proposals will be subject to public consultation and this is stated in the decision required. Many of these proposals also require significant work ahead of implementation. By taking the decision at this time, the work can start on consultation, and detailed design for delivering the service change and saving so it can take effect from the financial year 2024/25.

These proposals are in addition to those outlined in the accompanying report and to actions implemented under delegated authority to the Chief Executive and his senior officer team.

The range of savings / income generation in the proposals below:

|                          |               |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Savings</b>           | £1.2m - £1.4m |
| <b>Cost avoidance</b>    | £10m+         |
| <b>Income generation</b> | £0.40m        |

## Service Delivery

### **Reduction in budget for Parks and Grounds Maintenance**      Environment and Place

The Council proportionately has above average spend levels on its parks and grounds maintenance service, in relative terms compared to other Unitary Authorities. As this service benchmarks above similar Local Authorities, it is proposed the budget will be reduced by 5%. Initially we will look to improve the efficiency of the workforce and operational assets before considering any change to service standards.

**£200-250k saving p.a. 2024/25**

*Decision to reduce budget by 5% from 2024/25*

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### **Alternate weekly recycling and waste collection**      Environment and Place

The recycling and waste collection contract is currently in live procurement and the Council must take a decision on the collection frequency to proceed to the next stage.

Following the first stage of procurement it is evident that a full weekly collection service will be considerably more expensive than moving to alternate weekly collections (retaining weekly food waste collection). The new contract is due to start from April 2025 with any changes to the current service taking effect later that year.

**£10m+ cost avoidance (over the life of the contract) 2025/26**

*Decision to proceed with alternate weekly recycling and waste collection as part of the ongoing Waste procurement*

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### **Private Sector Leasing**      Environment and Place

Invest to save - set up leasing arrangements with a number of landlords in order to secure them working with us rather than other councils and to reduce the numbers in bed and

breakfast and temporary accommodation. Would require some form of incentive over and above guarantees over our offer, liabilities and length of contract, but would speed up access to properties and be cheaper than ad hoc sourcing.

**£25-100k (net over 2 years)  
2024/25**

*Decision to proceed with pilot of 10 properties  
(scaleable)*

**Family Centre Review**

Children’s and Education

There are currently nine Family Centres delivering services across the city. It is proposed to review the future Family Centre offer as part of a strategic move to a four-locality hub model.

Alongside this, it is proposed to explore the possibility of repurposing those buildings not retained as Family Centres.

Any proposed changes, including which Family Centres would be affected, will be subject to a six-week public consultation before a final decision is made.

**£300-400k saving p.a.  
2024/25**

*Decision to proceed to public consultations*

**Review event offering and cost recovery**

Adults and Communities + Environment and Place

Ensure that all events run directly by the council are cost neutral either via sponsorship or through bringing additional income into the council via car parking / pier revenue for example. This could mean stopping or limiting the number of events we run.

Where the council is asked to support events, this will be a charged function to ensure the council will not be funding commercial / charitable or other non-council organised events.

Ensure all smaller council led events (other than civic events) are cost neutral.

**£140k saving p.a.  
2024/25**

*Decision to agree full cost recovery or cost neutrality for all events other than civic events*

**Reduce service delivery across Cultural Services**

Adults and Communities

Limit the opening hours or days of opening for specific services across Southend to reduce running costs.

Libraries: Close two libraries whilst ensuring provision is available across the four localities.

Three of the four remaining libraries to reduce opening hours by one day a week. The central library will maintain a 6-day service

Museums: consider closing one hour earlier each day to achieve saving opportunities. Saving will be dependent on the final decision made on number of libraries to remain operating.

**£200k saving p.a.  
2024/25**

*Decision to proceed to public consultation*

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Community services</b>   | Adults and Communities                                       |
| <p>Stop current method of delivery for community navigator services and deliver through existing and planned core social care teams.</p>  |  |
| <p>Following the decision by Essex County Council to pull out of shared funding of the service it is proposed to stop the service and seek to deliver support to the residents of Southend via our new prevention and enablement team. This team will be developed and operate as part of the restructure of Adult Social Care Services and utilise existing funding within that service.</p> |  |
| <p><b>£280k saving p.a.<br/>2024/25</b></p>   | <p><i>Decision to proceed to public consultation</i></p>     |
| <b>Community response service and Telecare system charging</b>  | Adults and Communities                                       |
| <p>Stop the community response service that responds to out of hours call system alerts.</p>  |  |
| <p>We will bring our telecare offer in line with the approach used by South Essex Homes for new cases that require this approach. This is also mirrored across most local authorities and those regionally where additional responder services are not commissioned.</p>  |  |
| <p>We will work with the small number currently using the service to ensure there are safe and responsive options available to them as part of their care package.</p>  |  |
| <p>We will introduce charging in line with the cost and approach currently used by South Essex Homes</p>  |  |
| <p><b>£100k saving p.a.<br/>2024/25</b></p>   | <p><i>Decision to proceed to public consultation</i></p>     |
| <b>NetPark</b>  | Adults and Communities                                       |
| <p>Stop NetPark arts project.</p>   |  |
| <p>The NetPark arts project is a discretionary service that delivers an art therapy-based service for adults with dementia.</p>   |  |
| <p>The service is not budgeted for, so continuation adds a cost pressure to services. Attempts to secure wider funding from partners has unfortunately been unsuccessful.</p>   |  |
| <p><b>£50k cost avoidance<br/>2024/25</b></p>   | <p><i>Decision not to continue with NetPark</i></p>          |
| <b>Concert series</b>   | Adults and Communities                                       |
| <p>Review the evening council concert series at the Plaza Centre and consider either reducing or stopping it or raising admission fee to ensure that it is cost neutral.</p>  |  |
| <p>Reduce number of music events at the bandstand to one per week as opposed to the current full weekend offer.</p>   |  |
| <p><b>£14k saving p.a.<br/>2024/25</b></p>  | <p><i>Decision to remove subsidy from concert series</i></p> |

## Fees and Charges

### Increasing all fees and charges All Services

An 10% increase of all the Council's fees and charges. Currently the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) assumes a 7% increase

Exceptions:

**Parking** – The 7% increase in parking income will be delivered through specific schemes and not through a universal price increase to fees and charges. Schemes to be considered:

- Extend on-street parking charging areas
- Two Tree Island parking including overnight camper van parking
- Review all 'season tickets' and other passes

**Burials** – 20% increase to help manage burial demand (as land supply is limited) and encourage crematorium use and bring charges in line with other Local Authorities.

**£300k income p.a.  
2024/25**

*Decision to increase all fees and charges by 10%  
(Parking income by 7% and Burials by 20%)*

### Museum service – special exhibition fee

Adults and Communities

Charge an admission fee for special exhibitions and events as well as education and information sessions such as access to the archive.

Based on 2022-23 audience figures, estimate this could generate £4,000 p.a. with no additional costs incurred. Entrance at the point of entry would remain free.

**£4k income p.a.  
2024/25**

*Decision to introduce admission fee*

### Pier

Adults and Communities

Review all Pier charges and ticketing arrangements including Adopt a Plank fees.

Increase the ticket price by 25p in addition to the inflationary uplift that will be applied.

Introduce a range of pricing options for annual passes for regular resident and tourist visitors who make use of the Pier.

Review overall expenditure to ensure full cost recovery and explore opportunities for a commercial operator for the Pier.

**£100k income p.a.  
2024/25**

*Decision to proceed with revised pricing and exploring commercial operator for the Pier*