

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Commercial Strategy, Estates and Property
Date:	29 September 2021
Title:	Savings Programme to 2023 – Revenue Savings Proposals – Property
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services and Director of Corporate Operations

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the detailed savings proposals for Commercial Strategy, Estates and Property services within the Culture, Communities and Business Services (CCBS) Department that have been developed as part of the Savings Programme to 2023 (SP2023) Programme.

Recommendation

2. To approve the submission of the proposed savings options contained in this report and Appendix 1 to the Cabinet.

Executive Summary

3. This report outlines the detailed savings proposals for Commercial Strategy, Estates and Property that have been developed as part of the Savings to 2023 (SP2023) Programme. The report also provides details of the Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) that have been produced in respect of these proposals and highlights where applicable, any key issues arising from the public consultation exercise that was carried out over the summer and how these have impacted on the final proposals presented in this report.
4. The Executive Member is requested to approve the detailed savings proposals for submission to Cabinet in October and then full County Council

in November, recognising that there will be further public consultation for some proposals.

Contextual Information

5. Members will be fully aware that the County Council has responded to reductions in public spending, designed to close the structural deficit within the economy, since the first reductions to government grants were applied in 2010/11 and then as part of subsequent Comprehensive Spending Reviews (CSRs).
6. Whilst in more recent years there have been no reductions in government grant to deal with, what small increases there have been have not been sufficient to cover inflationary increases, coupled with a continued (and growing) underfunding for social care demand pressures.
7. One of the key features of the County Council's well documented financial strategy and previous savings programmes has been the ability to plan well in advance, take decisions early and provide the time and capacity to properly implement savings so that a full year impact is derived in the financial year that they are needed albeit elements of more recent programmes have taken longer to deliver as they become more complex.
8. This strategy has enabled the County Council to cushion some of the most difficult implications of the financial changes which have affected the short-term financial viability of some Councils, with eight authorities having been granted exceptional financial support packages by Government in response to unmanageable pressures arising in 2020/21 and 2021/22. Furthermore, the County Council is accounting for the specific financial challenges arising as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic on a non-recurrent basis and expects to meet these challenges within the existing support package from Government, together with funding already set aside for this purpose. This is testament to the strength of the Council's underlying financial position owing to the success of its service transformation agenda and prudent financial management approach.
9. However, Covid-19 has impacted delivery of both the Transformation to 2019 (Tt2019) and Transformation to (Tt2021) programmes, with £45m of outstanding savings still to deliver. Whilst sufficient resources have been set aside to cover this delayed implementation, the need to commence the successor programme will require twin-tracked delivery of change programmes, presenting a significant challenge for services. SP2023 will seek to achieve an additional £80m of savings, bringing the total savings to be delivered over the next two years to £125m and cumulatively to £640m in total.

10. It is recognised that each successive transformation programme is becoming more difficult to deliver as the potential to achieve further permanent cost reductions through early intervention and demand management and prevention approaches is reduced. Given the level of savings already achieved and the shortened timescales for delivery, the SP2023 programme will focus primarily on services that may be reduced or stopped rather than on driving further transformative change, although opportunities for transformation, efficiencies and income generation will of course continue to be pursued.
11. The ongoing impacts of the pandemic continue to present capacity challenges for operational teams and their ability to support transformation programmes has been limited as a result. However, with the acute impacts of the pandemic beginning to recede, existing change programmes in Adults and Children's social care will continue to be progressed alongside delivery of the SP2023 programme.
12. The announcement of a further single year Spending Review covering the period to March 2022 has placed the County Council in a very difficult position in terms of future financial planning. Given the lack of any certainty after this period, the County Council has had no choice but to assume that savings required to meet a two-year gap of at least £80m will be required by April 2023 as we cannot take the risk of delaying the programme until 2024. Furthermore, the financial constraints created by Covid-19 mean that there will be no funding available to cash flow a savings programme beyond April 2023.
13. The business-as-usual deficit in 2022/23, forecast to be £40.2m, has been provided for and will be drawn from the Budget Bridging Reserve in line with our normal strategy. However, given the current medium-term deficit due to Covid-19 pressures and the resulting financial response package, which uses up all available financial flexibility and still requires significant additional government funding, it is critical that SP2023 is delivered by 1 April 2023.
14. Departments have looked closely at potential opportunities to achieve the required savings and unsurprisingly the exercise has been extremely challenging because savings of £560m have already been driven out over the past eleven years, and the fact that the size of the target (a further 10% reduction in departmental cash limited budgets) requires a complete "re-look"; with previously discounted options potentially having to be re-considered. It has been a significant challenge for all departments to develop a set of proposals that, together, can enable their share of the SP2023 Programme target to be delivered.
15. The County Council undertook an open public consultation called *Serving Hampshire – Balancing the Budget* which ran for six weeks between 7 June and 18 July. The consultation was widely promoted to stakeholders and

residents and asked for their views on ways the County Council could balance its budget in response to continuing pressures on local government funding, and still deliver core public services.

16. The consultation was clear that a range of options would be needed to deliver the required £80m of savings by 2023. Therefore, whilst each option offers a valid way of contributing in part to balancing the budget – plugging the estimated £80m gap in full will inevitably require a combination of approaches. For example, the Information Pack illustrated the amount of savings that would still be required even if council tax was increased by up to 10%. It explained that the £80m estimated budget shortfall took into account an assumed increase in ‘core’ council tax of 1.99% and an increase in the Adult Social Care Precept of 2% in both 2022/23 and 2023/24. The Pack also explained that if central government were to support changing local government arrangements in Hampshire, savings would still take several years to be realised. Residents were similarly made aware that the use of ‘spare’ reserves would only provide a temporary fix, providing enough money to run services for around 14 days.
17. As the consultation feedback confirms, a number of different approaches are likely to still be needed to meet the scale of the financial challenge. Consequently, the County Council will seek to:
 - **continue with its financial strategy**, which includes:
 - **targeting resources** on the most vulnerable adults and children
 - **using reserves carefully** to help meet one-off demand pressures
 - **maximise income generation** opportunities;
 - **lobby central government** for legislative change to enable charging for some services;
 - **minimise reductions and changes to local services** wherever possible, including by raising council tax by 3.99%;
 - consider further the opportunities for **changing local government arrangements** in Hampshire.
 - consider further the opportunities around **devolution of financial powers** in response to the Government’s County Deal and levelling up agenda.
18. Executive Lead Members and Chief Officers have been provided with the key findings from the consultation to help in their consideration of the final savings proposals for this report. Responses to the consultation will similarly help to inform the decision making by Cabinet and Full Council in October and November of 2021 on options for delivering a balanced budget up to 2023/24, which the Authority is required by law to do.

19. In addition, Equality Impact Assessments have also been produced for all of the detailed savings proposals and these together with the broad outcomes of the consultation and the development work on the overall SP2023 Programme have helped to shape the final proposals presented for approval in this report.

Budget Update

20. Members will be aware that 2019/20 represented the final year of the previous multi-year Spending Review period. Single year Spending Reviews were undertaken for 2020 and 2021 due to the significant levels of economic and fiscal uncertainty associated with the UK's departure from the European Union and impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic respectively. The Government's decision to suspend multi-year budget planning and revert to annual spending rounds for most departments means that the prospects for local government finance beyond 2021 remain uncertain.
21. In recent years, significant lobbying of the Government has been undertaken by Hampshire and the wider local government sector in order to ask them to address the financial pressures we are facing and to convince them to provide an early indication of the financial resources available to local authorities over the medium term.
22. At the time of writing, there has been no announcement from the Government regarding the 2021 Spending Round. Members will be briefed on the detail of the Spending Round as part of the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy when available.

Savings Programme to 2023 – Departmental Context/Approach

23. CCBS has taken a strategic and targeted approach to identifying its transformation opportunities and savings targets for SP2023.
24. Within CCBS, income generation is critical to the majority of departmental activity. The department currently delivers services that generate over £100m of income annually. In recent years, the department has focused on driving a commercial approach to maximise public value, reduce core-funding to income-generating services, and develop key IT infrastructure to realise efficiencies and respond to changing customer needs and expectations.
25. This direction of travel for the department has proved successful and continues for SP2023, albeit with the associated risks of operating in highly competitive markets with slim margins. Cost increases and market fluctuations present challenges, and these may be exacerbated by post-Brexit trading conditions.

26. Set against this background, the department's SP2023 proposals focus on continuing to develop services to be increasingly efficient and customer focused, and ensuring non-statutory services are self-sustaining over the long term. Different delivery models will be explored where appropriate to support this, and services will continue to maximise the collective benefits of partnerships and collaborative working.
27. Further digital innovation will be critical to the success of proposed changes. CCBS services require a strong, highly effective web presence offering customers the ability to transact easily online. Many of the department's SP2023 proposals are dependent upon exploiting digital tools and growing digital skills to improve productivity and interactions with customers.
28. The savings target set for CCBS is £3.361m of which £650,000 relates to savings from Commercial Strategy, Estates and Property. The savings target for Commercial Strategy, Estates and Property is comprised of:
 - Property Services £300,000
 - Transformation and Business Services £350,000

Property Services

29. Property Services is proposing to continue to drive efficiencies in its service delivery, with a particular focus on the implementation of new and improved digital platforms to improve outcomes and customer satisfaction. In particular, this will include delivery of Phase 2 implementation of the Concerto Asset Management System, exploiting digital tools to capture, analyse and report asset intelligence. This implementation is expected to benefit the management of the whole County Council estate. In addition, changes in future ways of working post-Covid, coupled with opportunities to exploit more digital ways of working, are expected to generate savings in areas that support the wider organisation's core requirements including soft facilities management and office support services.

Transformation and Business Services

30. Transformation and Business Services comprises a number of different CCBS teams and their SP2023 savings are proposed to be achieved in a number of ways. The Hampshire Broadband Programme will be reviewed in line with the new national programme. Revenue budget for the team will be removed and programme gainshare will be used to meet the budget needs of the future programme. In addition, a review of the Business Support and Transformation teams will be undertaken to make efficiency savings from more joined-up and efficient operating models. CCBS will also review how customer contact is managed within the department, seeking ways to encourage greater customer self-service using digital channels, reducing dependency on more costly contact methods, and enabling associated cost savings to be made as a result.

Summary Financial Implications

31. The savings target that was set for CCBS was £3.361m of which the savings from Commercial Strategy, Estates and Property services comprise £650,000 and the detailed savings proposals that are being put forward to meet this target are contained in Appendix 1.
32. The requirement for SP2023 was for the savings to be achieved in full by financial year 2023/24. The Department is planning to meet this requirement and has therefore not needed to set aside any funding in its Cost of Change reserve against timing shortfalls. The proposals for Commercial Strategy, Estates and Property savings could deliver early achievement of £133,000 .

Workforce Implications

33. Appendix 1 also provides information on the estimated number of reductions in staffing as a result of implementing the proposals.
34. Seven Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts would potentially be affected. The Department would seek in the first instance to achieve any required reductions in posts through natural turnover and vacancy management within the relevant services. However, there may remain a balance that would need to be managed down between now and the implementation date.
35. The County Council's approach to managing down staff levels in a planned and sensitive way through the use of managed recruitment, redeployment of staff where possible and voluntary redundancy where appropriate will be continued.

Climate Implications

36. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.
37. Given that this report deals with savings proposals it is difficult to assess any specific climate change impacts at this stage, but assessments will be undertaken for individual proposals, if appropriate as part of the implementation process.

Consultation, Decision Making and Equality Impact Assessments

38. As part of its prudent financial strategy, the County Council has been planning since June 2020 how it might tackle the anticipated deficit in its budget by 2023/24. As part of the MTFs, which was last approved by the County Council in September 2020, initial assumptions have been made about inflation, pressures, council tax levels and the use of reserves. Total anticipated savings of £80m are required and savings targets were set for departments as part of the planning process for balancing the budget.
39. The proposals in this report represent suggested ways in which departmental savings could be generated to meet the target that has been set as part of the SP2023 Programme. Individual Executive Members cannot make decisions on strategic issues such as council tax levels and use of reserves and therefore, these proposals, together with the outcomes of the *Serving Hampshire - Balancing the Budget* consultation exercise outlined below, will go forward to Cabinet and County Council and will be considered in light of all the options that are available to balance the budget by 2023/24.
40. The County Council undertook an open public consultation called *Serving Hampshire – Balancing the Budget* which ran for six weeks from 7 June to the 18 July 2021. The consultation was promoted to residents and stakeholders through a range of online and offline channels including: the County Council's website, social media channels, Hampshire Perspectives residents' forum and Your Hampshire e-newsletter; in County Council libraries and buildings and on electronic noticeboards in GP surgeries and healthcare settings; via media releases to the local TV, radio and written press; via targeted social media advertising; and through direct mail contact to a wide range of groups and organisations across Hampshire (such as district and parish councils, schools, voluntary and community sector groups and organisations, service providers), which promoted onward dissemination, as well as response. Information Packs and Response Forms were available in hard copy in standard and Easy Read, with other formats available on request. Comments could also be submitted via email, letter or as comments on social media.
41. The consultation sought residents' and stakeholders' views on several options that could contribute towards balancing the revenue budget, and any alternatives not yet considered – as well as the potential impact of these approaches. The consultation was clear that a range of options would be needed to meet the required £80m savings by 2023. For example, the Information Pack illustrated the amount of savings that would still be required even if council tax was increased by up to 10%.
42. The options were:
- Reducing and changing services;
 - Introducing and increasing charges for some services;

- Lobbying central government for legislative change;
- Generating additional income;
- Using the County Council's reserves;
- Increasing council tax; and
- Changing local government arrangements in Hampshire.

43. Information on each of the above approaches was provided in an Information Pack. This set out the limitations of each option, if taken in isolation, to achieving required savings. For example, supporting information explained that the £80m estimated budget shortfall took into account an assumed increase in 'core' council tax of 1.99% and an increase in the Adult Social Care Precept of 2% in both 2022/23 and 2023/24. The Pack also explained that if central government were to support changing local government arrangements in Hampshire, savings would still take several years to be realised. Residents were similarly made aware that the use of 'spare' reserves would only provide a temporary fix, providing enough money to run services for around 14 days.

44. Therefore, whilst each option offers a valid way of contributing in-part to balancing the budget – plugging the estimated £80m gap in full will inevitably require a combination of approaches.

45. A total of 2,027 responses were received to the consultation – 1,931 via the Response Forms and 96 as unstructured responses through email, letter and social media.

46. The key findings from consultation feedback are as follows:

- Agreement that the County Council should carry on with its **financial strategy** now stands at 45%, compared with 52% in 2019, and 65% in 2017. This involves targeting resources on the most vulnerable people; planning ahead to secure savings early and enable investment in more efficient ways of working; and the careful use of reserves to help address funding gaps and plug additional demand pressures (e.g. for social care).
- The data suggests that respondents are concerned about the implications of further service changes and charges and increasingly feel that the solution lies with nation Government.
- Both data and verbatim comments indicate the respondents want the County Council to **lobby central Government** for further funding and to allow additional charging in a number of areas:
 - 87% agreed with lobbying for additional funding to deliver social care services for adults and children.

- 69% agreed with lobbying for increased central government grant funding for libraries
- 66% agreed with updating the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act to enable service modernisation
- 62% agreed with means testing/ charging for Home to School Transport (HtST)
- 60% agreed with charging £10 for issuing an Older Person’s Bus Pass
- 51% agreed with making change to the charging approach for non-residential social services
- However, there were exceptions, namely that:
 - Most respondents (52%) did not feel that it would be appropriate to lobby for charges relating to Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs)
 - 47% disagreed (compared to 38% who agreed) that councils should be permitted to charge a 25% per journey fare for concessionary travel
- A clear majority of respondents (63%) agreed that the County Council should explore further the possibility of changing local government arrangements for Hampshire.
- No majority view was achieved for any of the other proposals, but the weight of opinion veered slightly towards agreement with:
 - The position that reserves should not be used (48% agreement vs 42% disagreement);
 - That existing service charges could be raised (45% agreement vs 33% disagreement);

And towards disagreement with:

- Introducing new service charges (47% disagreement vs 41% agreement)
- Reducing or changing services (49% disagreement vs 36% agreement)
- A slight majority of respondents (52%) preferred that the County Council raise **Council Tax** by less than 3.99%. This compared to 21% of respondents whose first choice was to raise council tax by 3.99% and 27% who would choose an increase of more than 3.99%.
- Suggestions for income generation most commonly related to charges that the County Council could apply. There was also frequent mention of changes to how Council Tax is collected, delivering efficiencies in Council services, ways that the Council could save costs to its operational budget, and suggestions that the County Council could improve its return on investments and adopt more commercial practices.
- Around half of respondents specified impacts that they felt would arise should the County Council continue with its financial strategy and approve the proposed options. Almost half of these related to the protected equalities characteristic of age (47%) – most often the effect on children and young people – with impacts on poverty (33%), disability (30%), and rurality (23%) also commonly mentioned. The potential environmental impacts were also

noted in a third of the comments submitted (34%). The specific nature of the perceived impacts primarily related to reduction in service quality or availability and the personal financial impacts of increased taxation or charging.

- Efficiency savings were the most common focus of additional suggestions, incorporating staffing, contractor and Member costs, process efficiencies and more effective use of building space.
- The 96 unstructured responses to the consultation, submitted via letter / email or on social media, primarily focussed on the perceived impacts of the proposals, stating concern about reductions to services and the need to focus on reducing costs and lobbying national government for additional funding in preference to raising local taxes.

Proposals following consultation feedback

47. Executive Lead Members and Chief Officers have been provided with the key findings from the consultation to help in their consideration of the final savings proposals. As the consultation feedback confirms, a number of different approaches are likely to still be needed to meet the scale of the financial challenge. Consequently, the County Council will seek to:
- **continue with its financial strategy**, which includes:
 - **targeting resources** on the most vulnerable adults and children
 - **using reserves carefully** to help meet one-off demand pressures
 - **maximise income generation** opportunities;
 - **lobby central government** for legislative change to enable charging for some services;
 - **minimise reductions and changes to local services** wherever possible, including by raising council tax by 3.99%;
 - consider further the opportunities for **changing local government arrangements** in Hampshire.
 - consider further the opportunities around **devolution of financial powers** in response to the Government's County Deal and levelling up agenda.
48. The proposals set out in Appendix 1 have, wherever possible, been developed in line with these principles. As outlined above, CCBS' approach to its SP2023 proposals is focused on developing efficient and sustainable customer- focused services, maximising income generation opportunities where appropriate to support this.
49. Following the Executive Member Decision Days, all final savings proposals will go on to be considered by the Cabinet and Full Council in October and November – providing further opportunity for the overall options for balancing

the budget to be considered as a whole and in view of the consultation findings. Further to ratification by Cabinet and Full Council, some proposals may be subject to further, more detailed consultation.

50. In addition to the consultation exercise, Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been produced for all the savings proposals outlined in Appendix 1 and these have been provided for information in Appendix 2. These EIAs have considered feedback from the public consultation in shaping savings proposals where appropriate and will be considered further and alongside a cumulative EIA by Cabinet and Full Council. The cumulative assessment provides an opportunity to consider the multiple impacts across proposals as a whole and, therefore, identify any potential areas of multiple disadvantage where mitigating action(s) may be needed.
51. Together the *Balancing the Budget* consultation and Equality Impact Assessments have helped to shape the final proposals presented for approval in this report.
52. If the recommendations in this report are agreed, no further formal public consultation (Phase 2) will be required on the proposals.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes/No
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes/No
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes/No
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes/No

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Medium Term Financial Strategy Update https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s53375/MTFS%20-%20Cabinet%20FINAL.pdf	Cabinet - 14 July 2020 County Council – 16 July 2020
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken for each of the savings options and these are included as a separate appendix to this report (Appendix 2).

Commercial Strategy, Property and Estates – Proposed Savings Options (Subject to consultation where appropriate)

Ref.	Service Area and Description of Proposal	Impact of Proposal	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	Full Year Impact £'000	Estimated Staffing Impact FTE
CCBS01	Property Services: Service efficiencies through further exploitation of systems, digital technology and service reviews	Service reviews would be driven by changing organisational requirements e.g. office space, printing but may impact internal and external service users and customers. Some changes to staff roles / ways of working to realise business efficiencies.	100	300	300	0
CCBS05	Transformation and Business Services: New operating model for CCBS HantsDirect service. Review and integration of Broadband, Transformation and Business Support functions	Some changes to staff roles / ways of working to realise business efficiencies and drive service integration with the potential for some staff reductions depending upon implementation options. Changes to encourage greater customer contact via self-service likely to mean that ways in which customers can contact the department will be more limited for those with capacity and who have the ability to self-serve.	33	350	350	7
Total			133	650	650	7
Other CCBS savings:						
Executive Member for Recreation, Heritage and Rural Affairs			1,533	2,591	2,591	13-15
Executive Member for Performance, HR and Partnerships			0	75	75	2

Ref.	Service Area and Description of Proposal	Impact of Proposal	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	Full Year Impact £'000	Estimated Staffing Impact FTE
	Deputy Leader		0	45	45	1
	Total Culture, Communities and Business Services		1,666	3,361	3,361	23-25