

PROPOSED BUDGET AMENDMENT FROM THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

The Conservative party proposes the following budget amendments:

To hire two Met Police officers to patrol Havering's parks	£0.160m
Reverse the decision to close Gidea Park and Harold Wood Libraries	£0.188m
Fund new Parks CCTV	£0.500m
Appoint two new Planning Officers	£0.130m
Reduce the Capitalisation requirement	£0.562m
Total Cost	£1.540m

This would be financed by:

Delay implementation of Food waste collection to April 2026 - including removal of cost of bin liners (£0.27m) from cost projections	£1.540m
Total Saving	£1.540m

The proposal also recommends:

To allocate £1m of CIL (currently unallocated) for a library refurbishment programme to refurbish and maintain the properties

Recognition that these are only savings for FY25-26 and that this will create additional pressures on the MTFs. With that in mind, we also propose that we will explore the use of additional revenue generation by renting library space out (potentially to gyms).

The additional Planning Officers will initially help improve the customer service on existing planning applications but with a recognition that better customer service will then lead potentially to a higher volume of pre planning application advice requests and the associated income that will come with that.

Strategic Director of Resources Financial implications:

The Council is required by law to implement food waste collection by 1st April 2026. Currently the Council is planning to phase the roll out of this service incurring costs and has budgeted for £2.1m of costs in 2025/26. The Council is expecting grant funding from the Government to help mitigate set up costs but the timing and value of this grant has yet to be announced. Of these costs £0.83m will be incurred in 2025/26 prior to go live and as such are not included in the saving proposal. This however includes £0.27m for bin liners, which this proposal recommends are not purchased. As such the saving in 2025/26 would be £1.540m. However, it is recognised that the bin liners may encourage increased resident take-up of the new service and therefore reduce the overall residual waste tonnages that need to be disposed of. This could lead to significant savings beyond the cost of the bin liners when the new waste contract is re-procured.

Investment in new CCTV for Parks is a capital cost and there will be additional revenue running costs to monitor this service. This has not been factored into the proposal above and is likely to generate additional pressures in 2025/26.

The library saving was agreed by Council in February 2024, to be implemented over a two-year period. This forms part of the Council's Improvement and Productivity Plan and the Council will be held to account for delivery of this saving, as part of the £15.3m overall savings put forward for 24/25.

The food waste collection could be delayed until April 2026 but this would increase project risk through the legal requirement to be fully operational on day one. If this proposal was approved, the saving would be one off in 2025/26 and must be reversed after 2025/26 so it does not create a pressure for 2026/27

The proposals to generate additional income from 2026/27 onwards through the renting of library space (potentially for gyms) would need a full business case to be developed to confirm both initial costs and any subsequent additional income. It cannot be confirmed therefore that this project would produce enough income to mitigate the costs listed above in 2026/27.

This proposal could be actioned with the associated risks above but it is not a proposal I can recommend as the Council's S151 Officer. The Council budget requires £70m of exceptional financial support to balance.

My recommendation would be for any additional savings identified through the alternative budget proposal process be used to reduce the Capitalisation Direction required, instead of funding new investment/growth items. Any government grant announcements made relating to the roll out of food waste collection will be used to offset against the service delivery on an ongoing basis. It would be my recommendation to reduce the cost of the service in line with the new burdens funding Havering receives.