

2024/25 Budget amendments.

The Green Party

	Description	Additions £000	Reductions £000
1. Affordable warmth and climate emergency (HRA revenue)	<p>The cross party scrutiny review 'Warm, low bills, no carbon: a plan for Norwich's council homes' of 23/11/23 identified 21 proposed actions for the council to consider in order to progress towards its stated policy intention of net zero from its own activities by 2030 and net zero for Norwich by 2050. The actions proposed by the cross-party scrutiny task and finish group are designed to future-proof council housing stock, and to help reduce council tenants' energy bills.</p> <p>We have noted and welcome the additional resources of £160k for climate change, on an on-going basis which was set out in the administration's General Fund budget proposals.</p> <p>We also welcome the oral update given to cabinet in response to the task and finish group recommendations by Cllr. Jones and Cllr. Hampton which set out their broad agreement to many of the measures proposed.</p> <p>However, we do not believe that the additional resources in the administration's budget provides sufficient targeted resources to deliver the improvements necessary for the council's own housing stock, which can provide benefits for tenants by reducing their energy bills.</p> <p>We are proposing that a sum of £160k on an ongoing basis is also made available from HRA resources to support the implementation of measures in the same or similar way as envisaged for the General Fund. We would also encourage that for both the General Fund and the HRA resources there is a focus on leveraging additional funding to support these costs. Providing this additional capacity will also mean that the Environmental Strategy team has more capacity to tackle carbon emissions across the city, not just in the council's housing stock.</p>	160	160

	<p>We have confirmed with the Director of Housing and Communities and the Council's Interim CFO that permanent budget provision can be identified within the HRA to support this level of expenditure.</p>		
<p>2. Four yearly elections cycle (General Fund revenue)</p>	<p>The Council currently elects in thirds, meaning that for 3 years, the council will hold an election in each ward for one of three seats. In the fourth year, County Council elections take place. In addition, the Council runs general elections, referenda and the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections on behalf of third parties.</p> <p>An increase in postal votes and venue hire rates has been noted. Postage and printing costs were a particular challenge in 2023 due to increasing size of poll cards and inflationary uplifts in costs - some of these costs can be seen in the budget growth for elections staff and postage within the administration's budget.</p> <p>However, the Council can make savings if it were to switch to 4 yearly elections.</p> <p>On the assumption that elections for other bodies would take place in years other than the NCC elections or be fully funded, the estimated cost of an all-out NCC election is £300k and this cost can be spread over a four-year period using the existing elections reserve (i.e. c£75k per annum)</p> <p>The current budget provision for elections, is c£165k. and therefore overall an annual saving in the region of c£90k is possible by maintaining an ongoing budget of £75k per annum which is placed into the reserve; in years when an election occurs 75% of the costs can be drawn from the reserve and combined with that years base budget this will provide a budget of £300k to meet the estimated cost of the election.</p> <p>To the extent that there are unforeseen additional expenditures for example if there were to be a need for by election in any particular year this could be met from within the overall elections reserve or as a call on the council's general contingency.</p> <p>On the advice of the Monitoring Officer, we understand that to move to a 4-yearly election cycle, the Full Council would need to separately resolve to do so outside of the budget setting meeting and then undertake a boundary review which</p>		

	<p>would need to be concluded in sufficient time before the election. The law does not allow the first year of a District moving to a 4 yearly election cycle to take place in the same year as County Council elections, so the first opportunity to do this would be in 2026.</p> <p>We therefore propose that Council agrees to consider the case for moving to four yearly elections at a future meeting convened solely for that purpose in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health act 2007 (S33)</p>		
<p>3. Community Centres energy efficiency measures (General Fund capital)</p>	<p>Community Centres are owned by the city council but operated and managed by community groups that meet their own energy costs. These centres provide essential community-based services and activities for residents.</p> <p>Recent increases in utility costs have impacted these groups' ability to maintain cost effective services and have potentially put at risk some of those vital services.</p> <p>We believe that the council should assist in reducing the liabilities faced by these groups and, at the same time, contribute to the achievement of the net zero goal for the council's own properties and activities by 2030.</p> <p>This could be achieved by implementing a range of improved insulation measures or the installation of alternative energy sources dependent on the centre's energy efficiency characteristics.</p> <p>We believe that a capital budget of £400k would provide an initial investment to implement both alternative methods of improving energy efficiency but also provide a trial for the use of Community Municipal Investment Bonds (CMIB).</p> <p>In 2023 the Green Finance Institute presented to the Scrutiny Committee and described how a CMIB worked; they advised of other council's that had successfully adopted them and advised that a small trial scheme would be a good place to test the appetite for such a scheme in Norwich.</p> <p>We believe that the community groups utilising the community centres will be strong partners and advocates for measures which ultimately will improve the</p>	<p>400</p>	<p>(200)</p>

	<p>energy efficiency of the council's assets and at the same time reduce their own running costs to support their on-going viability. This will support diverse populations, diverse activities and ultimately also encourage adoption of low carbon systems, allowing the council to become a leader in this field in communities. Fuel costs look set to rise and the council will have to continue to replace heating systems as they become obsolete, so this also represents a saving.</p> <p>We have initially assumed therefore that half of the cost could be met by investigating and launching a CMIB for Norwich as has been adopted by several other councils. The remaining 50% (£200k) would be met from the council's capital resources. The council's interim CFO has confirmed that there are capital resources available to support this match funding if approved. The exact phasing of that expenditure to be determined and added to the capital programme once the business case has been prepared and the timeframe for issuance of a CMIB determined.</p>		
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The Liberal Democratic Party

	Description	Additions £000	Reductions £000
1 Provision of visitor and other information (General Fund revenue)	<p>Information technology and the ways in which consumers access visitor information have changed dramatically over the last twenty years - and continue to do so. The customer's decision making 'journey' is becoming more complex, as the ability to access and share detailed content increases.</p> <p>Whilst the Internet is the primary medium for gathering information pre-visit, one size does not fit all - some studies have shown that tourists perceive information coming from other tourists as being more trustworthy, while others have shown that both official channels and user generated content have a similar influence on tourists' decisions.</p> <p>It is also clear that tourists plan their trips less, postpone decisions until they are on the trip and look for more information at destinations. Therefore, the success of destinations will depend on their ability to provide the information that tourists need at any moment by adopting the most appropriate tools.</p> <p>We understand that Visitor Information Centres (VIC) have a number of fixed cost elements and also that there may be opportunities for some supplementary income streams such as in-centre advertising or concessions to offset costs. However, VICs can be a source of civic pride and can also deliver significant value to communities.</p> <p>The need to deliver dynamic information in-destination is also something highlighted by residents and others to promote Norwich as a place of cultural interest and excellence; we are proposing that an options appraisal is carried out to inform the most appropriate way of delivering, in conjunction with partners, an efficient and effective information service appealing across a broad range of audiences.</p> <p>In discussion with the council's interim CFO an estimated provision of £5k has been identified from one-off reserves to undertake a business case aimed at</p>	5 One-off	
		100 Permanent FYE	50 Additional savings 40 Budget growth 10 Income from advertising

	<p>understanding the content that is required to appeal to visitors and maximise the benefits gained as well as identifying sources of income from sponsorship or advertising to partly support the on-going costs of this activity.</p> <p>Additional on-going costs will be met through the identification of additional permanent savings and the use of the additional grant received at the final settlement.</p>		
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The Norwich Independent Party

	Description	Additions £000	Reductions £000
1. Reduction in temporary accommodation costs (one-off feasibility study from general fund reserves and then potential capital investment)	<p>The costs of placing people in temporary accommodation continues to rise and put pressure on the council's limited resources. The quality of some temporary accommodation and the impact that poor quality accommodation can have on the quality of life and life chances of those placed there also cannot be underestimated.</p> <p>One of the ways that these issues can be addressed is through the council providing its own accommodation to reduce the costs of private sector temporary accommodation or other expensive placements such as B&B or hotels.</p> <p>There are several approaches that the council could take to acquiring suitable accommodation for temporary accommodation for example through the purchase of modular accommodation which can be obtained to Passivhaus standards and placed on land owned by the council on a meanwhile basis or through the purchase of street properties where they provide value for money.</p> <p>To ensure that the most appropriate approach is adopted it is proposed that an initial feasibility study is commissioned from one-off resources and that this is used to inform a business case for the development of options. The business case should set out a timeline and action plan.</p> <p>It is also felt that this area should be the subject of a scrutiny review who could explore the wider issues associated with temporary accommodation and make recommendations for cost effective solutions considering the feasibility work commissioned including the action plan.</p> <p>The review should consult with and seek the views of councillors, service users and organisations within Pathways and the Financial Inclusion Consortium to the scrutiny review of temporary accommodation.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>One off</p>	

	<p>The council's interim CFO has confirmed that one-off resources for a feasibility study can be met from reserves and any future capital investment would be subject to the approval of a full business case which would identify funding options.</p>		
<p>2. Licensing services (General Fund revenue)</p>	<p>Licensing and enforcement activities maintain the safety of consumers including those who use bars, restaurants live in HMO's or use taxis to name a few.</p> <p>We would like to explore ways in which licensing and enforcement activity can be increased to improve the safety of and reassure consumers.</p> <p>However, we do understand that the digitalisation of regulatory services, which is currently being undertaken, is expected to identify opportunities for efficiencies and that further work will be necessary to identify actions which could also improve the performance and capacity of those services.</p> <p>We are therefore proposing that one-off resources of £150,000 are made available to take forward some immediate work in this area and to understand the impact of the actions already in train.</p> <p>We also believe that when this work has concluded this could be an area where a scrutiny review could add further insight.</p> <p>As part of the scrutiny review councillors, private hire operators, Hackney drivers and licensed premises managers/staff should be consulted and asked to input on any licensing or other policy changes that might be helpful.</p>	<p>150 One-off</p>	

<p>3. Income generation from wedding venue hire (General Fund revenue)</p>	<p>We are aware that the council is exploring the best way to maximise the benefits from all its assets.</p> <p>We believe that there are income generating opportunities that can be obtained from further hiring of spaces and providing supporting services across a range of city council assets; such opportunities could for example include wedding services.</p> <p>We would propose that a small sum is made available to specifically explore the opportunities for commercial activities as a strand of the asset reviews being undertaken and to gauge the interest in those services to give them the best chance of success.</p> <p>The council's interim CFO has confirmed that one-off resources for a feasibility study can be met from reserves and that activities which generate sufficient income to recover costs and deliver additional revenue can be taken forward on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>5 One off</p>	
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Financial Implications

The council's interim Chief Finance Officer has been involved in the development of the proposed budget amendments set out above and has confirmed that they are all possible to approve and be incorporated in setting a balanced budget should members agree to do so.

Recommendations

The Council is asked to consider the following recommendations:

1. The addition of £160,000 to the 2024/25 HRA revenue budget on an on-going basis to address climate change needs within the HRA.
2. The Council agrees to consider an option to move to four yearly elections at a future council meeting convened solely for that purpose.
3. The inclusion of £400,000 to the council's general fund capital programme (2024 – 2029) to support investment in energy efficiency measures in the council's community centres. Funding for half of the cost to be generated through the issuance of Community Municipal Investment Bonds.
4. The development of a visitor information business case to inform future provision. The business case to be funded from £5,000 of one-off resources with on-going provision of £100,000 being added to the 2024/25 general fund revenue budget to support and implement the outcomes from the business case.
5. The use of £10,000 of one-off resources for a feasibility study to inform future capital investment in measures to reduce the on-going costs of temporary accommodation. Measures would be subject to the approval of a full business case including the identification of funding options.
6. The use of £150,000 of one-off resources are made available to support increased licensing and enforcement activity.
7. The use of £5,000 of one-off resources for a feasibility study to inform opportunities for income generation opportunities from the use of city hall or other suitable venues including in particular the provision of wedding services.
8. To ask the Scrutiny Committee to include a review of Temporary Accommodation in their work programme.