

Council: 19 February 2025 - Amendments to the Budget

The following proposals for amendments to the budget have been received.

No.	Proposed and Seconded by	Amendment	Note from Section 151 Officer (rule 3.1.16.4 Council Procedure rules)
1	Tim Gibson and Ashley Wise	Following the late announcement that the NIC grant funding allocation from central government does not cover the estimated costs arising from the change in threshold at which NIC will be payable by employers and the increase in the NIC rates from 13.8% to 15% it is proposed that reserves are used to offset the additional cost of £50,000.	Given the late notice of this change to the budgeted income for this grant allocation for 2025/26 an increase in the use of reserves is an acceptable proposal. However as reported in my s25 report the ongoing use of reserves to balance the budget is not sustainable and so a deliverable savings plan needs to be developed from 2026/27.
2	Charles Gibson and Mike Baldock	<p>£100,000 to be taken from reserves to reverse the proposed reduction to playgrounds.</p> <p>£47,000 to be taken from reserves to reverse the proposed cancellation of members grants</p> <p>£12,500 to be taken from reserves to contribute towards the running of the Hop Festival</p> <p>£36,000 to be taken from reserves to reverse proposed reduction to the loneliness project</p> <p>£15,000 to be taken from reserves to reintroduce a budget for projects to combat climate change.</p>	The use of reserves to support the amendments will increase the use of reserves to deliver a balanced budget to c£677k. The level of reserves for 2025/26 will tolerate the increase, however the ongoing reliance on the use of reserves is not sustainable and as noted above a deliverable savings plan needs to be developed from 2026/27.
3	Lloyd Bowen and Julien Speed	<p>Amend the fees and charges in the following areas:</p> <p>Pre planning advice</p> <p>Amend planning advice fees as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for major applications for 10-29 properties to £2954.17 + vat, • major applications for 30-49 properties £100/per property + VAT. • for LARGE major (50+ houses or flats) of £100 per house/flat +VAT and for commercial over 10,000spm a fee of £5000+VAT. 	<p>The proposed increased fees for the top of the 30-49 properties bracket is significantly more than the fees charged by other authorities within Kent. In some cases this would be more than is charged for 50+ schemes or strategic sites and could impact on the uptake of planning performance agreements.</p> <p>I recommend that the changes, if agreed, are monitored over the financial year to assess the impact on expected income targets and any adverse effects are addressed within the financial year.</p>

		<p>Sports facility fees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freeze facility fees at the current rate for junior/mini football the costs covered from the proposed increases to other pitch fees. 	This amendment has no overall impact on the proposed base budget as the lost income from freezing the pitch fees is covered from other increases in income.
4	Lloyd Bowen and Mark Tucker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend car parking fees on Leysdown Promenade from March to December. Currently March to October. 	There is no adverse implications to this budget proposal assuming that costs of enforcement for the extended period is covered by the recovery of penalty charge payments and/or additional income from parking fees.
5	Hannah Perkin and Charles Gibson	<p>£38,000 from adding charging to the two car parks on Sheppey originally set for charging in the Parking Review 2024 then amended at Community committee. £30,000 scrapping 30 min minimum parking £5,983 SRA saving by merging Community committee with housing and health.</p> <p>Creating £73,983</p> <p>To be used to introduce a flat rate parking charge across the Borough between 6pm and midnight at £2.50 Estimated cost £70,000 with the remaining to be used to reduce the budget gap</p>	This amendment has no overall impact on the base budget position as the proposed savings/increases in income are to be offset by the additional cost of an overnight flat rate fee for parking.
6	Hannah Perkin and Charles Gibson	<p>£38,000 from adding charging to the two car parks on Sheppey originally set for charging in the Parking Review 2024 then amended at Community committee. To be used to reinstate the £15,000 reduction to Swale community voluntary service with the remaining £18,000 to go towards reducing budget gap.</p>	This amendment has no overall impact on the base budget position as the proposed increases in income are to be offset by the additional cost of the grant payment and reducing the proposed use of reserves.
7	Hannah Perkin and Charles Gibson	<p>If amendment 12 falls: £38,000 from adding charging to the two car parks on Sheppey originally set for charging in the Parking Review 2024 then amended at Community committee. To be used to reinstate the cuts to public conveniences.</p>	This amendment has no overall impact on the base budget position as the proposed increases in income are to be offset by removing the saving proposed from public conveniences.

8	Hannah Perkin and Charles Gibson	<p>To merge community committee and health and housing committee saving £5,983</p> <p>To disband the economy and property committee and move it's function to Policy and resources saving £5,983</p> <p>Resultant £11,966 to be used to fund Swale CVS</p>	<p>This amendment has no overall impact on the base budget position as the proposed savings are to be offset by the additional cost of the grant payment.</p>
9	Hannah Perkin and Charles Gibson	<p>If Amendment 8 falls:</p> <p>To disband the economy and property committee with its functions reverting to P&R saving £5,983</p> <p>Utilise this to reduce fund additional biodiversity planting. (Sea grass or native bluebells)</p>	<p>This amendment has no overall impact on the base budget position as the proposed savings are to be offset by the additional cost proposal.</p>
10	Hannah Perkin and Charles Gibson	<p>To merge the housing and health committee and the community committee resulting in a £5,983 saving to go towards reducing budget gap.</p>	<p>This amendment has no overall impact on the base budget position as the proposed savings are proposed to reduce the use of reserves.</p>
11	Elliott Jayes and Tom Nundy	<p>To take out the 100k saving from playground reduction to fill this shortfall with increasing any fees and charges to 3% on any fees and charges (excluding taxi licencing) that haven't been raise to at least 3%. To charge for coach parking on the land opposite shingle bank (as per the Community and leisure committee minute number 749 1st march 2023) any fees from the shingle bank parking scheme if the community committee agree to implement. To Withdrawal from the gateway in Sheerness (20k) any further to be taken from reserves.</p>	<p>If amendment 2 is agreed, the proposed saving from a review of playground provision will have been withdrawn from the budget proposals.</p> <p>In the event that amendment 2 is not agreed, then this proposal will require further consultation on the proposal to increase fees and charges by a minimum of 3% where this is not already the case and excluding taxi licencing and introduction of the charging for coach parking opposite shingle bank. It should be noted that P&R committee on 30 March 2024 resolved that increased income from the Shingle Bank Parking scheme was initially to be used to offset the costs of retaining 3 free car parks in Sheppey (as recommended by Community Committee on 6 March 2024) and so if implemented this income is already ringfenced to address a previous budget shortfall.</p> <p>The increased take from reserves from this proposal would be lower than the proposal in amendment 2 given the proposed cost reductions, however the position on the increased use of reserves is still valid.</p>

			The proposal for withdrawing from Sheerness Gateway is not immediately deliverable but could be considered in the future.
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A further budget amendment was received by the cut off point of 4.30pm on Monday 17 February , however there was insufficient information in the amendment to validate the proposal and so it has not been included in these papers. Further clarification was sought from the proposing councillor, but a response was not received.