

Progressive Group Alternative Budget amendments

Our priorities aim to secure: good governance, meet our communities' needs, protect our environment, and maintain front line services.

Our balanced budget proposal looks to invest in generating appropriate income in order to protect front line services. It has been reviewed by the S151 officer as a balanced budget.

This budget It will result in saving and generating £2.25m of the £2.3m savings required. Close monitoring and review will be necessary to consider the impact on next year's budget (which could have a £760,000 deficit) and the medium term final plan. The General Fund working balance will be £3.2m.

We support Exeter City Council remaining in the Business Rates Pool (£900,000). Given the national pressure from Government on Local Authorities the Council's assumption to keep in reserve an additional £300,000 for the pay award is not included as it is not expected to be awarded.

Amendment 1: Good Governance

A. Scrutiny officer (Grade H £51,800) to progress the scrutiny function as set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance - hold the Executive to account & help secure value for money. The post would be funded 50% by General Funds and 50% HRA uncommitted working balance so that all the work of the Council is covered. This would be funded by the removal of the recently approved additional Comms Officer post (£58,000) and reduction to a print version of the Citizen to once a year. The Citizen continues to be covered by advertising.

B. Over the year the use of **external consultants** where the expenditure is outwith approved budgets would not be permitted.

C. To undertake a **review of projects with funds earmarked by CIL and S106 funds** to ensure progress, viability and to set a deadline of December 2025 for commencement and March 2027 for completion of any remaining earmarked funds.

D. To fund any costs of **Local Government Reorganisation** required in 25-26 from the 'transformation reserve' of £308,000 to avoid impact on front line services.

Amendment 2: Meeting our Communities' Needs

A. In addition to support with office costs, a grant of £50,000.00 to support **Citizens Advice Service** while it develops alternative income sources. To negotiate a contract based on savings to Council as a result of CA's work to bring in additional money to the council e.g. rents and council tax and other bad debts.

B. Improve Management of HMOs - immediately review and adjust fees to ensure the service breaks even and can provide support to improve standards in the HMO sector. This would generate an additional £99,000.00. A reduction in fees for those landlords meeting nationally recognised standards for HMO licensing will be offered. In future years develop and implement a selective local licensing scheme from the additional income generated from the new scheme rates

C. To support and develop Exeter's work on **climate change**. Sell carbon literacy training sessions and move £7k from an old earmarked fund for work on climate change with communities. This will generate £27,000.00

Amendment 3: Protecting our environment

A one 1 year project to enable the development of a **Biodiversity Strategy for Exeter**. (£45,000.00) This would be led by the Council working with an open partnership of community organisations and partners (supported by a one year part time post Grade H (0.5 - £29,000 over the year). Specialist ecologists would be commissioned to inform the strategy development. To be funded by repurposing 'old' earmarked funds: (Countryside) of £15,000 and (Habitat Assessment) £30,000. The strategy would be able to be used in future years to inform Biodiversity Net Gain opportunities from developers.

Amendments 4: maintaining our front line services

A. To protect and maintain the very limited number of **public toilets** (£0.15m). To operate a **doorstep glass collection and recycling service** £850,000 a year running costs from 26-27, to be funded by income below sale of glass / commercial glass collection contracts and reduction in general fund surplus in year 2+.

B. To **generate income to reinvest in front line services such as street cleaning** and protect services from further cuts and meet rising demand by increasing income: Discretionary Services Additional Marketing income £25,000.00; Ringo transaction charge passed to Customer £80,000.00; Introduce fees at free car parks £50,000.00; Introduce commercial activity in car parks using managing agents (e.g. APCOA) £50,000.00; Introduce an emissions/weight parking charge in city councils to reduce pollution and reduce structural impact on the Council's multi-storey car parks: £320,000.00. Move Howell Road and Triangle car parks to central zone parking - £370,000.00. Additional income at Matford Centre £30,000.00; and capitalising appropriate salaries Engineering infrastructure revenue capitalisation £70,000.00.

C. Undertake a **leisure services review** to protect leisure services from closure. For leisure centres operating at where income is less than 50% of costs undertake a review to increase casual users, including reducing charges for children and introduce new activities to increase use to improve financial performance to achieve income at 50% of costs over three years. Expected to generate £15,000.00 in year 1 minimum. For leisure centres operating where income is more than 50% of cost undertake a review to increase income to break even over two years. Expected to generate £25,000.00 in year 1 minimum. Reinvesting the increased financial performance in year 1 in specialist advice (£40,000) to improve business performance in future years.

D. Corn Exchange With the introduction of a new management structure in 2024 and increased activity - including third party ticket sales, increased performances, ticket sales & the introduction of a left luggage facility for visitors at the box office to the city should result in increase income - with a target of £100,000 surplus in 2025 - 26 and thereafter generate a similar surplus.

E. Reallocate £200,000.00 ECL - Corporate Property Support (required for bringing forward sites for sale) back into General Funds from earmarked reserves. Future development of any sites to be funded on a case by case basis by grant or refunded from sale of property..

F. To reduce General Fund operating surplus to 14% or £3.2m of General Fund balance (whichever is lowest p.a.) to allow reserves of £3.2m and enable funding of frontline services £874,000.00. Stop budgeting for Pension Contributions where an individual are not in the Pension scheme £100,000.00. Remove the duplication of funding in Culture: £200,000.00 Complete move to digitalisation over 3 years saving the Council £300,000.00

G Additional income as a result of Government laying legislation to double **planning fees** from 1 April 2025 is noted and expected to generate an additional £252,000.

General fund capital programme Amendment 1

Introduction of **doorstep glass collections** - set up costs Estimated Glass collection startup costs (First 12 months) Scenario 4 - 12 tonne electric RCV. Funded by capital receipt available and /or grant. It is assumed year 1 (25-26) is set up costs only. £2,000,000.00