

An overview of the Council Savings Programme

Like all local authorities, we are facing increasing financial pressures, in part due to the national picture, with funding from Government reducing, as well as increasing demographic pressures from the needs of an ageing population. We have a legal obligation to have a balanced budget and have undertaken extensive programmes to adapt in response to these financial pressures.

We are facing difficult decisions. From 2011 to 2015 we have already saved nearly £45m p.a. in annual spending through our transformation and council savings programmes. By the end of 2015/16, these programmes are targeted to have delivered £56m p.a. of savings.

The Council Savings Programme (CSP) is a six-year savings programme which is running from the 2014/15 financial year to 2019/20. Over the next four years, from 2016/17 to 2019/20, we need to make an additional £23m p.a. of savings. The CSP is subject to more detailed consultation on each individual proposal before implementation and potentially other options may come forward.

The CSP was originally agreed by Full Council in February 2014 and full details can be found [here](#). However, it is important that the overall priorities are kept under review, and since that time, additional financial pressures and other changes have required some changes to the initial CSP. This has included additional services and council functions being reviewed in order to balance the budget.

We are becoming a smaller council, delivering fewer services directly, and need to make sure our more limited resources are focused on our 'core' activities. At the same time we will look to work more closely with local communities, strengthening and encouraging community partners to allow local people to take greater control over and responsibility for local services to ensure that people's needs are met.

In reviewing services for the future, our core focus will be on services that:

- Deliver jobs, homes and infrastructure
- Improve educational outcomes
- Maintain safe and clean communities
- Close the gaps - income, education & health
- Safeguard vulnerable children and adults
- Meet assessed needs for children and adults

The size and complexity of projects will vary, with individual savings targets ranging from around £30,000 to £2.7 million p.a. by 2019/20. Some are extremely complex, involving working with

partners and changing the way we deliver services, whilst others are relatively straightforward and involve, for example, top-slicing budgets or only minor service changes.

There are a number of approaches that we need to consider, and views on these are being sought through the consultation:

- Targeting resources on the most vulnerable and people most in need
- Reducing the quality of some services provided
- Increasing fees and charges for some services
- Making more services available online
- Making more efficient use of council assets such as land and buildings
- Scaling back or stop providing some services
- Stopping provision of some discretionary services to protect services to older people and the vulnerable
- Changing working practices to make better use of technology and more efficient ways of working
- Working in partnership and sharing services with other councils and public sector agencies
- Transferring services to other organisations like commercial companies
- Transferring services to other organisations like community groups, social enterprises and town and parish councils
- Encouraging more people to volunteer their time to become involved in the delivery of services

Some of the proposals currently being considered as part of this work include:

- Creating new community 'hubs' bringing together some library and customer services in order to reduce overheads and property costs
- Expanding capacity at some leisure centres in order to increase income and usage, reducing the amount they are subsidised by local taxpayers
- Involving the local community in delivering some local services, such as maintaining some sports facilities and other public spaces
- Reviewing bus services that are supported by the council, retendering contracts and transferring services to commercial operators, reducing the amount they are subsidised by local taxpayers
- Streamlining the way we collect, dispose of and recycle waste
- Making more use of digital technologies to improve customer services and reduce costs
- Reviewing the way we provide care for adults in care homes, day services and in people's homes

Children, Adults and Health (CAH): savings of £4.9m (4.7% of budget)

This department provides support to people who need it at different stages in their lives and ensures they are kept safe and well. It is responsible for the provision of: education, children's social services, support for older people and people with disabilities, residential and social care, and non-NHS public health services.

CAH spending accounts for over half of the council's budget. It faces the challenge of supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities, rising demand for services as the population grows and ages, and a reduced budget to deliver services.

Changes to these service areas will come from:

- Resources being more targeted to ensure vulnerable adults and children are kept safe from harm and as an absolute priority those at immediate risk are safeguarded
- Work focusing on early intervention and prevention to reduce the use of high cost services before situations escalate or get worse
- Focusing on raising school standards and supporting young people into employment
- Reviewing some discretionary services

A number of existing and planned projects have been re-profiled in the light of changing circumstances and where savings previously anticipated have been found not to be possible, some alternative projects have been proposed to meet the planned targets.

For example, a national strategy to integrate council-run social care with local health services had been planned to help achieve almost £6.8m p.a. in savings by 2019/20. This is still a key priority, but given current pressures on both health services and the social services budget, savings that are likely to be achieved over this period have been reduced, with the aim of achieving £2m p.a. initially.

Alternative projects are being proposed that cover the remaining £4.8m p.a. in required cost savings. Services that will be explored that may help to meet this target include:

- Day Services
- Housing Related Support
- Integrating community equipment service
- Commissioning preventative services
- Youth Services

Environment and Community Services (ECS): savings of £6.6m (13.4% of budget)

The ECS department provides a range of services that support where you live, your community and your local environment including: planning, housing advice, waste services, highways, transport, parks and open spaces, litter clearance, libraries, arts, heritage, sports and leisure, environmental health, trading standards and community safety.

Changes to these service areas will come from five areas:

- Working in partnership and sharing the costs of delivering services with others
- Working with communities to deliver services locally and enabling local communities and community groups to take greater ownership and control of services
- Reducing costs and reviewing services where the provision currently exceeds what we have to provide by law
- Reducing overhead and management costs where possible

A number of existing and planned projects have been re-profiled in the light of changing circumstances. For example, we now plan to implement a new Waste Strategy in one go, rather than phased over a number of years. Similarly, our work to find sustainable community-based partners to take on some of our sports pitches and pavilions may now take longer, to give more time for successful negotiations to ensure those facilities are secured.

Chief Executive and Corporate Resources (CECR): savings of £6.6m (34% of budget)

This department provides the front of house customer and welfare services, as well as the support services the council needs to operate, including: housing and council tax benefit, communications, customer services, finance, property, IT, human resources, legal and decision making support to councillors.

It is important as the council continues to change shape over the coming years that the support and professional services the department provides to the rest of the council also change. These changes will predominantly come from two key areas:

- Continuing the drive to become more efficient, making better use of resources and technology, changing working practices and improved procurement.
- Ensuring that as the council becomes smaller, its support arrangements and the costs associated with running it are reduced accordingly, which includes a thorough review of the council's buildings and how they are used, and opportunities for shared services with other councils.

Council-wide savings of £4.75m

These savings will come from encouraging more people to access services online, from reviewing staff pay, management structures and other staff policies. Increasing economic growth in South Gloucestershire and ensuring that a growing population also leads to increased collection of business rates and council tax, helping to offset a fall in government grants.

For further information and to get involved

Further information about the council's savings plan is available from our [website](#).

You can also take part in any consultations that are taking place about specific changes that could affect you. Further information about current or past consultations is available from our [website](#).

📞 01454 868009

🌐 www.southglos.gov.uk/csp

✉️ consultation@southglos.gov.uk