

# More Council money saving ideas for 2025-26

## Summary

The report is about the Council's plans to save money and what it will spend money on for the year 2025/26.

The Council has nine ideas to save money, which add up to £9.717m. These ideas are:

- One idea will save £0.6m and is just for noting.
- Six ideas will save £5.917m and the Council would like people's comments about them.
- One idea will save £0.6m and was already agreed at an earlier meeting.
- One idea will save £2.6m by looking at the Capital Programme.

Adding these savings ideas to the £33.840m already presented in the report to Council Executive Committee of the 5 November, the total savings, if approved following engagement and consultation, will be £43.557m for 2025/26.

Starting on December 3, 2024, people can share their thoughts with the Council on these ideas by filling out a survey online or by mail.

After this, in February 2025, Council Executive Committee will meet to talk about what people said. They will consider what people said when they make their recommendations on the budget ideas to Full Council. Full Council will then decide the Councils' budget for 2025-26.

Some ideas might need money to make them work, and this will come from the transformation budget.

The Council also plans to borrow less money, to save £2.6m, which is part of the £9.717m total savings within this report.

This report was not published in the Council's forward plan, but because the Council needs to save money, and it is important to look at these ideas early, the Council can report on now using Executive Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution.

## Equality & Diversity:

The report explains that we need to think about fairness for everyone when making the budget. Like before, we checked how the budget ideas might affect different people to try and make sure it is fair.

The budget helps the Council do important things, like supporting good health, addressing the impacts of low income, providing equal opportunities, and a clean environment.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Council has money problems, some of the worst in the country. Last year, £80m was spent more than was available, so Government was asked to help. This made a big hole in the budget of £120m. Next year, the Council expect to be short by £140m and will need to borrow more money to help fix this.
- 1.2 It might take at least five more years (until 2029/30) for the Council to fix these money problems. This may mean needing to borrow a total of £573m and save about £40m each year.
- 1.3 There are four main reasons for these problems:
  - The cost of taking care of children has gone up a lot, from £100m in 2019/20 to £250m in 2023/24.
  - The Council doesn't get enough money:
    - Funding cuts have hit Bradford hard.
    - Bradford's Council Tax is lower than other places, and most homes pay less.
    - Changes to how councils get money have been delayed, which would have helped Bradford get more money.
  - The Council has had to use a lot of its savings to pay for things. Last year, £48m of savings were used, leaving only £39.6m.
  - The Council has problems with how it works and manages things.
- 1.4 To fix these problems, the Council is working on:
  - Finding ways to save about £40m for 2025/26 and in future years.
  - Always looking for new ways to save money and getting approval for them.
  - Reducing the Capital Programme to borrow less money.
  - Selling assets to get £100m to pay off debt.
  - Keeping a close watch on spending.
  - Investing in better management to support financial stability.
  - Increasing savings and making a plan for reserves (savings), which will be part of the budget in March 2025.
- 1.5 It is very important for the Council to save money on time and within budget to keep the Government's support and avoid having someone else take over running the Council.
- 1.6 The Council needs to save money to become financially stable, which is what this report is about.
- 1.7 On November 5, 2024, the Council was shown plans to save £33.840m towards the goal of £40m for 2025/26. This report adds another £9.717m in savings,

making the total £43.557m.

- 1.8 The Council is also trying to find more savings now and next year to help with any extra costs, missed savings, or to start saving for 2026/27.
- 1.9 The planned savings for 2024/25 of £49m and the £43.557m for 2025/26 are very important for the Council's financial health and are much more than in previous years.
- 1.10 The next sections explain the savings for each part of the Council.

## **2. SAVINGS PROPOSALS FOR BRADFORD CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TRUST (BCFT) £0.6m**

### **Children and Families – Cllr Sue Duffy £0.6m**

- 2.1 The Trust planned to save £1.3m by spending less on places for care leavers to live and support them. Many care leavers who turn 18 stay in supported housing because there are not enough homes for them, they do not have enough help, or they are not ready to live on their own.
- 2.2 To help with this, an 18+ accommodation panel was created to find homes for care leavers who are ready to move out of supported housing. This is helping more care leavers get their own homes faster. Because of this, the savings have increased from £1.3m to £1.9m.

## **3. SAVINGS PROPOSALS TO BE CONSULTED UPON AS PART OF THE BUDGET ENGAGEMENT (£5.917m)**

### **Healthy People and Places - Cllr Sarah Ferriby - £0.737m**

#### **Sport and Leisure - £0.497m**

- 3.1 The plan is to save £0.497m on sports facilities. This includes saving £0.091m by closing Baildon Recreational Centre and making other changes to save £0.406m. Another report to Council Executive Committee will explain this in more detail.

#### **Street Scene – Commercial Opportunity - £0.24m**

- 3.2 This plan will save money by:

- Stopping grounds maintenance for businesses.
- Reviewing prices for renting commercial land.
- Looking at current lease agreements.

### **Leader of the Council & Corporate Portfolio Area - Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe - £5.18m**

### **Spending Panel Outputs - £1m**

- 3.3 In April 2024, Bradford asked the Government for special financial help.
- 3.4 As part of this, Bradford made plans to control spending better. The Council started a Spending Control Panel on April 1, 2024, to review all spending.
- 3.5 Data was collected on how well this control was working by looking at:
- The value of spending requests, approvals, and rejections.
  - How much spending was avoided compared to previous years.
- 3.6 It is hard to see the full impact of these panels yet, but two benefits are:
- Checking if spending is necessary or just within budget.
  - Improving decision-making skills, like writing better business cases.
- 3.7 By carefully reducing spending by 0.2 percent across the board, the Council can save £1m per year.

### **Fees and Charges - £2m**

- 3.8 This plan will save money by increasing fees and charges by six percent, raising £4.8m. This will help cover inflation and reduce the need to borrow money.
- 3.9 This means prices will generally go up by six percent in 2025/26
- 3.10 Some fees, like Green Waste and Parking charges, are not included to avoid counting them twice.
- 3.11 A two percent increase in fees was already planned, adding £1.5m more income.
- 3.12 A £1.3m reserve will be set aside to handle any issues with these price increases, making the net savings £2m in 2025/26.

### **Third Party Spend - £1.5m**

- 3.13 As part of the Council's plan to save money, the Procurement Service is trying to save £2m from third-party suppliers in 2025/26. They already planned to save £0.5m and now aim to save another £1.5m.
- 3.14 In 2023/24, the Council spent about £435m on third-party suppliers. Not all of this spending can be changed, but the Council will try to spend less in the future. The Council will look at current contracts and find ways to save money or make more money.
- 3.15 Here are the specific plans:
- Save £0.6m by using payment cards more with certain suppliers.

- Save £0.7m by using a special service for hiring consultants to get better deals.
- Save £0.2m by getting better deals on gas and water supplies.

### **Enabling Efficiencies with Digital Technology - £0.68m**

3.16 This plan suggests using digital technology to save £680k in 2025/26.

3.17 The idea is to make things work better in the Council by using technology like system integration, digitising processes, and using robots to do some tasks.

3.18 There are many ways to use digital technology to save time and money:

- Using technology to do manual tasks faster, like entering data or writing notes.
- Connecting different systems so the same information does not need to be entered multiple times, which saves money.
- Digitising processes to save staff time on administrative tasks.
- Using voice automation and chatbots to help manage and reduce the work the Council has to do.
- Integrating systems to manage things like streetlighting and bin emptying more efficiently.
- Using smart technology like sensors to help target resources better.
- Using technology to transcribe meetings, which saves time for social workers.
- Expanding the use of digital forms to make internal processes like payroll and meeting management easier.

3.19 The savings depend on the digital infrastructure being developed by the Council's digital transformation programme. More details on the savings will be worked out as the programme develops.

## **4. SAVINGS PROPOSALS ALREADY PUT FORWARD TO EXECUTIVE AND SUBJECT TO ONGOING CONSULTATION (£0.6m)**

### **Healthy People and Places - Cllr Sarah Ferriby - £0.6m**

4.1 The Safe and Sound Service is a community alarm system run by Bradford Council. It helps people and their families feel safe and independent. If an alarm goes off, someone is contacted right away, and family members or a response team can help. In 2026, there will be a national switch to digital, so the Council is updating the equipment and improving services for people with dementia. The Council agreed on September 3, 2024, to ask people what they think about

these changes, which could save £600k.

## **5. CAPITAL PROGRAMME REVIEW (Revenue Savings £2.6m), TO BE CONSULTED UPON AS PART OF THE BUDGET ENGAGEMENT**

5.1 The review of the capital programme suggests:

- Removing some projects completely - £40.3m
- Reducing borrowing for some projects - £28.7m
- Reviewing funding for projects - £17.7m
- Allowing for extra planning - £10m

5.2 This will save a total of £96.7m, with £2.6m saved in 2025/26.

### **5.3 Here are some projects being removed to reduce Council borrowing by £40.3m**

- **Strategic Acquisition** – £20m: Remove this project because no specific plan was made.
- **City Hall** – £7.5m: Planned improvements to City Hall are not a priority, so remove this project.
- **One Public Sector Estate** – £1m: Planned office hub with other public organisations is not progressing, so remove this project.
- **Renewable Energy (Solar Farm)** – £3m: Remove this project until a full business case is made.
- **District Heat Network** – £1.5m: This project is now being developed by a private company, so Council borrowing is not needed.
- **Electric Vehicle Leasing** – £0.323m: Remove this project until a full business case and other funding options are explored.
- **Strategic Transport Priorities** – £0.965m: Remove this project and review each case individually.
- **SEND Capital Works** – £6m: A Government Grant is now available, so Council borrowing is not needed. Remove this project.

### **5.4 Reduce the scope of schemes that require Council borrowing by £28.7m**

- **Squire Lane - £7m**: The Council will spend £7.9m instead of £14.9m on this project. The total budget will be £27.9m, with £20m coming from a grant and £7.9m from the Council.
- **City Village - £6.5m**: The Council will spend £6.5m less on this project. Most of the money will come from outside investments.
- **Saltaire Residential Care Home - £12.8m**: This care home is no longer needed, so the Council will save £12.8m.
- **Property Programme - £2.3m**: This project helps maintain Council buildings. The Council will spend less because they have fewer buildings now.
- **Carbon and Other Management Efficiencies P2 - £0.143m**: The Council will remove the remaining budget for this project.

## 5.5 Financing Changes

- **Disabled Facilities Grants - £6.6m:** These grants will be fully funded by annual grants, so the Council will not need to borrow money.
- **Empty Homes - £3.8m:** This project will be funded by selling properties or other income, so no borrowing is needed.
- **IT - £6.7m:** IT improvements will be paid for as part of the Council's regular budget.
- **Playable Spaces - £0.538m:** This project will be funded by a special community fund, so the Council will not need to borrow money.

## 6. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

- 6.1 The Council's budget has some risks.
- 6.2 The Council is yet to hear how much money it will receive from government to run its services. This is being watched and reported in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and will be talked about more in the March and January reports.
- 6.3 Saving money is hard, but the Council is planning carefully to save more than £40m. This helps cover any extra costs, add to savings, or starts savings for 2026/27. The Council is also checking the budget regularly.
- 6.4 Budgets can change during the year. To handle this, the Council is agreeing on plans early, sharing budget details sooner, and having directors find extra savings if needed.
- 6.5 These plans are managed by the Bradford Budget Emergency Response Team (BBERT) and are checked regularly by Council's Executive and Scrutiny committees.

## 7. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 7.1 The law says the Council must manage its money properly.
- 7.2 The Council has to check its income and spending during the year. If they find out they are losing money, they must take action to fix it.
- 7.3 The Equality Act 2010 says the Council must:
  - 1) Make sure they:
    - Stop discrimination and unfair treatment.
    - Help everyone have the same chances.
    - Encourage good relationships between different groups of people.
  - 2) Even if someone is not part of the Council, they must still follow these rules when doing public work.

- 3) To help everyone have the same chances, the Council must:
- Remove or reduce disadvantages for people with certain characteristics.
  - Meet the different needs of these people.
  - Encourage them to join in public life and activities.

4) For disabled people, the Council must consider their disabilities.

5) To encourage good relationships, the Council must:

- Challenge and tackle prejudice.
- Promote understanding.

6) Sometimes, the Council might treat some people more favourably to help them, but this does not permit other action the Act prohibits.

7) The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

- 7.4 The Council has checked how their plans might affect people with these characteristics to make sure they are fair.
- 7.5 The law also says the Council must always try to improve how they work, considering cost, efficiency, and effectiveness. They must ask for opinions from people who pay taxes, use their services, or have an interest in the area.

## **8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **a. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Council will look at how budget savings might affect community safety. They will talk about any issues that come up in future meetings.

### **b. HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

- 8.2 Any human rights issues from this report are included in the Equality Impact Assessments.

### **c. TRADE UNIONS**

- 8.3 The Council has big money problems and needs to change how services are provided. This might mean some workers could lose their jobs. The Council will try to avoid this and help workers through the changes. If 20 or more workers might lose their jobs, the Council must talk to the Trade Unions about it. If 100 or more workers might lose their jobs, the Council must start talking to the Trade Unions at least 45 days before the first job loss.

### **d. BUDGET ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION, AND EQUALITY IMPACT**

- 8.4 The Council will ask people what they think about their budget ideas for



2025/2026. They might need to ask again if the Government changes the budget.

- 8.5 People can share their thoughts from December 3, 2024, to January 19, 2025. They can do this online, by mail, or through social media.
- 8.6 Everyone is encouraged to share their thoughts, especially about how the budget might affect different groups of people. The Council has checked how the budget might impact these groups and has shared this information online here: [Budget EIAs 2025-26](#).
- 8.7 If the budget is accepted on March 6, 2025, the Council will keep checking the impacts.
- 8.8 The results of the consultation will be shared on February 18, 2025. The Council will consider the feedback before finalising the budget on March 6, 2025.
- 8.9 Besides the main budget consultation, the Council will also run other consultations for specific changes to services.

#### **e. IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

- 8.10 Any impacts on children and young people are included in the Equality Impact Assessments.

### **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The Executive is asked to:
- Understand the Council's money problems and the need to save a lot of money over the next five years.
  - Note the savings proposal for BCFT of £0.6m in section 2.
  - Approve starting the consultation on savings proposals of £5.917m in section 3.
  - Note the savings proposal of £0.6m in section 4, which is already being discussed.
  - Approve the savings of £2.6m in section 5 related to reducing the Capital Programme.
  - Require a report back in February 2025 on the consultation results.
  - Note that these proposals (ideas) will be discussed at the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny meeting on January 23, 2025.
  - Note that these savings are part of the overall budget process, and the full 2025/26 budget will be approved in March 2025.

### **10. APPENDICES**

There are no appendices to this report.

## 11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- [The Council's Revenue Estimates for 2024/25 \(General Fund and Housing Revenue Account\), Council, 7 March 2024](#)
- [The Council's Revenue Estimates for 2024/25 \(General Fund and Housing Revenue Account\), Council, 7 March 2024](#)
- [2025/26 Revenue Budget Savings Proposals](#)

Various working papers have been created to support each budget saving idea. These papers are part of the normal process of developing a budget. In the future, the Council might make these papers available to the public for the 2026/27 budget, following the usual rules about the publishing of sensitive information.