

Highland
Conservatives



Road to Recovery

Highland Conservative Council Group
Alternative Budget Vision 2021/22

Summary

1.84% Council Tax Cut

Helping household budgets with a refund for the extra charge last year

£26 Million More for Our Roads

Stopping the crumbling decay and supporting local construction jobs

No Education or Childcare Cuts

Investing in our future and ending childcare worry so parents can get on

Total Services Protected From Cuts	£3.624m
Total Additional Investments	£4.464m
Total Extra Roads Spend (capital)	£26m
1.84% Council Tax Cut	£2.41m
Total Additional Savings Found	£8.088m
Of which new efficiencies	£2.766m

Additional Investment Priorities, 1

Investment Area and Detail	Yr. Cost (£m)
1.84% Council Tax Cut	2.410
<p>In 2020, an extra 1.84% of Council Tax was charged to be used for roads. This has been delayed, and by finding efficiencies elsewhere we can give this back to help household budgets while investing even more in roads</p>	
£25m Roads Repair Budget Increase	1.486
<p>We need to invest in our crumbling roads, fast. Every year the repair bill gets higher and higher and every Pound spent now, saves many more later. Local contractors are crying out for business, lets support jobs too.</p>	
£1m Roads Machinery Budget Increase	0.141
<p>There are many road repairs the Council can do itself. But equipment like jet patchers are short in supply. These do high quality, fast repairs and stop roads deteriorating.</p>	

Additional Investment Priorities, 2

Investment Area and Detail	Yr. Cost (£m)
Brown Bin Charge Freeze	0.168
<p>We all must do our best to recycle, reduce landfill waste and protect the environment. But the fee increase from £35 to £45 led to less people with brown bins and £15,000 less income. An increase means less recycling.</p>	
5% Burial and Cremation Fee Cut	0.153
<p>The Highland Council has some of the highest funeral fees in Scotland. The Highlands have 4% of the Scottish population, but accounts for 10% of Scotland's 'paupers funerals'. It's time to end funeral poverty and cut fees.</p>	
Budget for Planning Enforcement	0.050
<p>Currently, there is no defined budget for all planning enforcement matters. Meaning the costs for dealing with issues has to come from other budgets and often takes years. This budget removes cost concerns.</p>	

Additional Investment Priorities, 3

Investment Area and Detail	Yr. Cost (£m)
External Review of NC500 Impact	0.015
<p>The NC500 route has been great for tourism, but less great to our roads and the communities which have to use them daily, they shouldn't pay the price. But to make the improvements, we need to know the issues.</p>	
External Review of Council Communications	0.010
<p>Communication is key, both with taxpayers and staff. With so much change, it's even more crucial Council Communications are reviewed in the whole.</p>	

Protected Services, 1

Removed Savings and Detail	Yr. Cost (£m)
Childcare Cuts, Fee Increase and Delay	1.737
<p>Budget proposals 1.06 and 1.07 make savings by delaying full-time childcare rollout, reduce nursery staffing and increase Out of School childcare fees seven times the rate of inflation. We can't squeeze families.</p>	
Mental Health and Wellbeing Budget Cuts	0.029
<p>Budget proposals 2.03 and 3.32 fund and promote key interventions in mental health, suicide prevention and wellbeing. These have never been needed more. No cuts can happen until full replacement plans are seen.</p>	
Education Pressures	0.456
<p>Budget proposals 2.13 and 3.09 need paused reviewed due to Covid. In 2019, too many Probationer Teachers led to unemployed teachers. Principle Teacher's workload is climbing, the old formula needs reviewed.</p>	

Protected Services, 2

Removed Savings and Detail	Yr. Cost (£m)
Removal of 13 Social Work Posts	1.737
<p>Budget proposal 3.14 deletes posts which have not been recruited to. Social Work is under huge pressure from Covid, if redesign is needed that should be carried out ahead of cuts.</p>	
Recycling Centre Hours Reductions	0.032
<p>Budget proposal 1.01 makes reduced hours permanent. These came in for a specific reason and shouldn't continue when not needed. There have been 3952 flytipping incidents in two years, cutting hours will not help this.</p>	
Home Adaptions for Disabled People Budget Cuts	0.050
<p>This statutory service provides grants to help disabled and elderly people stay in their homes by providing adaptations to their homes. A service user led review would be welcome, but they should be the priority, not savings.</p>	

Protected Services, 3

Removed Savings and Detail	Yr. Cost (£m)
Third Sector Contract Cuts	0.000
<p>Budget proposal 2.15 sets a £300k target over three years for savings in services Charities provide. A review may be needed, but those who use the services come first, not be prejudiced by setting a savings target first.</p>	
Early Years Development Contracts Ended	0.072
<p>Budget proposals 3.15 and 3.16 remove the budgets for programmes encouraging breastfeeding and play. These are critical for children's development, if targets have fallen short, cutting will only make it worse.</p>	
Roads, Lighting and Paths Reductions	0.122
<p>Budget proposals 3.17 and 3.20 delete roads and lighting posts, these are desperately needed and cutting them because they are empty doesn't help. The access paths budget is also being cut by 40%.</p>	

Protected Services, 4

Removed Savings and Detail	Yr. Cost (£m)
Revenues, Transformation and Planning Job Cuts	0.622
<p>Budget proposals 3.01, 3.18, 3.27 and 3.34 delete posts which help bring in money or find more efficient ways of working. This includes graduate posts for young people. Reviews must be carried out first, not after cuts.</p>	
Health and Safety and Training Budgets	0.021
<p>Budget proposals 1.17 and 3.33 reduce training budgets in these areas. Training budgets in general have been gradually reduced, so if waste has been found it should be reinvested in more training.</p>	

Additional Savings, 1

Additional Savings and Detail	Yr. Cost (£m)
Reclaim of Historic VAT	0.688
<p>Two landmark 2017 and 2020 legal rulings allow the Council to reclaim VAT charged on leisure and sport pre-HLH, following the Council's unsuccessful legal challenge in 2007 for the same.</p>	
Delete Depute Chief Exec. / COO Post	0.140
<p>Following member decision to not recruit this post, this removes the budget provision for it permanently.</p>	
Terminate Inverness Town House Office Lease	0.400
<p>Following increase in working from home and desire for an element of this to continue as part of property rationalisation, notice be served at the soonest opportunity to terminate the lease for office space.</p>	

Additional Savings, 2

Additional Savings and Detail	Yr. Cost (£m)
Reduction of Agency Spend	0.350
<p>The previous review of agency staffing focused on one contract, with £1.3m of others in need of review. Reducing agency spend by permanent hire and implementing additional redesign opportunities identified.</p>	
Delete Depute Chief Exec. / COO Post	0.140
<p>Following member decision to not recruit this post, this removes the budget provision for it permanently.</p>	
Utility Savings From Underoccupation	0.450
<p>As restrictions continue, make safe assumption for reduction in utility costs. based on 1/3rd buildings making a 1/3rd saving.</p>	

Additional Savings, 3

Additional Savings and Detail	Yr. Cost (£m)
Reduction in National Insurance Liability	0.050
<p>Pension contributions are exempt from NI, however the current system of additional contributions deducts this from net pay. By taking contributions from gross pay, NI and tax are avoided.</p>	
Cease Long Term Plant hire	0.080
<p>A new policy for hire requests means that the cost of purchasing the item is considered. However this has not been applied retrospectively, where the Council pays for hiring snowplough blades over the summer.</p>	
Review of Printer Contract	0.100
<p>In the last three quarters, £100k has been saving in this budget alone. By reviewing asset need and changing behaviours this saving should be the floor for savings.</p>	

Additional Savings, 4

Additional Savings and Detail	Yr. Cost (£m)
Extending of Vehicle Lease/Delay Sell	0.025
<p>At the start of Covid, the top floor of Rose Street car park was used to store unused vehicles. By extending lease terms on the same mileage/delay sell of stock, £430 per lease vehicle alone can be saved.</p>	
Building Efficiencies by Salix Loan	0.040
<p>The Salix scheme is popular for replacing outdated boilers, however radiators also only have a 15-20 life span. By replacing these with more efficient units and smart lighting, 15% saving on spend is achievable.</p>	
Lease Scheme for Unused Artwork	0.020
<p>The Highland Council owns an art collection, however not all of it is on display. At the culture sector looks for savings, making the works in storage available for lease will generate revenue.</p>	

Additional Savings, 5

Additional Savings and Detail	Yr. Cost (£m)
Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Policy	0.030
<p>Many authorities already have these, as it is an enabler for home working. Such a policy allows staff, if they choose, to supply their own device for work but with Council data management and security in place.</p>	
Collect Fees for Emergency Plans	0.005
<p>The Council is responsible for producing Emergency Plans for high risk site. Each applicable HSE Directives and Government Legislation allow for cost reclaim of staff time in the production of these.</p>	
New Bereavement Services	0.013
<p>Budget proposal 2.01 sets a £12k target for income for new bereavement services. This includes memorial benches and plaques for those cremated without a lair. Previous Service discussions agreed £25k as reasonable.</p>	

Additional Savings, 5

Additional Savings and Detail	Yr. Cost (£m)
Unearmarking of Change Fund	0.592
<p>This level of use reflects the protection of posts/services which aim to change and transform the Council. This will be used to underwrite these and only a fraction would be used as savings will still naturally occur.</p>	
Use of Unearmarked Reserves	4.730
<p>Councils hold reserves for unforeseen scenarios, Covid is a 1 in 100 year event. An extra £4m of unaccounted funds were announced on Monday alone.</p> <p>Not all will be used as some is simply for underwriting anticipated savings or bringing forward planned spending. Reserves are up to nearly £30m, from ~£3m ~18 months ago. Now is not the time to build them up.</p>	