

## **Corporate Services-specific proposals**

### **Customer – Promotion of Online Services and Automation**

Relevant considerations linked to automation of existing services were considered as part of previous years' budget processes, with three such assessments undertaken relating to [print, mailing and scanning](#), the [customer contact organisational review](#) (including consideration of greater use of online services) and [roll-out of paperless \(i.e. online\) forms](#). The proposals in the budget framework represent a continuation of the broad principles underpinning these initiatives.

There is nonetheless a recognition that some service changes may reduce customer choice. Initiatives will therefore be designed/promoted to provide an accessible service model and align with service transformation plans (e.g. Smart City and 20-minute Neighbourhood) and wider strategic goals (e.g. ending poverty, addressing digital exclusion and promoting service inclusion).

### **Corporate Services – vacancy and turnover management**

The Corporate Services Directorate provides a range of enabling corporate support services across areas such as finance, human resources, legal, digital and policy and strategy development and delivery. The proposed savings will be delivered through effective vacancy management to deliver cumulative savings.

As vacancies occur, managers will need to review whether posts need to be filled, and if so whether this needs to happen immediately, or if the functions can be discharged in another more cost-effective way, if indeed they are still required. If the conclusion is that a vacancy does need to be filled, then the full range of options for doing this will need to be considered, including converting full-time roles to part-time, the recruitment of apprentices and any other options. Where a role is likely to be impacted by the planned implementation of technology, it may be appropriate to recruit on a temporary or fixed-term basis.

There is therefore not anticipated to be any material disproportionate impact of the proposals on those with protected characteristics, those vulnerable to falling into poverty, geographical communities or staff, nor on the economy or environment.

### **Corporate Services senior management**

This saving relates to a restructuring of senior management in two separate areas of the Directorate, with both posts having been vacated in 2022. The resulting loss of skills and experience has been managed by a transfer of knowledge within each service concerned. Non-filling of these two posts has therefore not led to any negative outcomes for equalities, human rights, carbon, climate change adaptation and sustainable development impacts.

### **Salary Sacrifice income**

The Council operates a range of salary sacrifice schemes which offer employees a number of tax-efficient benefits. These schemes also generate savings in employer's National Insurance and, in some cases, employer's superannuation contributions. The savings proposal reflects the forecast level of income recovery from existing levels of scheme take-up.

As such, there are not anticipated to be any new relevant impacts arising as a result of the proposal.

## **Council-wide proposals**

### **Council Tax and fees and charges**

The budget framework proposes a c.3% increase in Council Tax rates in 2023/24, below the level of inflation and wider growth in earnings. In the case of a Band D household, this would result in an annual increase of £41.36, equivalent to £0.80 per week. A Band A household would see a £0.53 weekly increase, with the Band H equivalent rise being £1.95. These increases follow a 3% increase in Council Tax levels in 2022/23. It is important to emphasise that support provided through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) will increase in line with increased Council Tax liabilities. This increase in payment therefore reinforces the existing safety net in place to support those on lower incomes.

A number of continuing initiatives to maximise take-up of CTRS and other support will also be undertaken, including:

- Close liaison with internal and external advice-giving agencies, including Local Offices, the Council's Advice Shop and Citizens' Advice Bureaux and other similar organisations across the city;
- Revised wording included in all Council Tax reminder notices; and
- Promotion of measures to maximise household income through the Welfare Rights Service and a range of other income maximisation techniques.

While most of the Council's fees and charges are not subject to an equivalent system of assistance, services take account of the ability to pay in applying these increases, with a range of concessions also maintained. HRA rents and related service and other charges are furthermore recommended to be subject to a below-inflation level of increase for 2023/24.

The Council's charging policy is influenced by developments at national level, particularly in the case of education services. Recent Scottish Government initiatives have seen the expansion of free school meals within primary schools, removal of charges for music tuition and also for some curricular activities. The Council has furthermore played a lead role in the expansion of the Scottish Welfare Fund, administration of Family and Low Income Pandemic Payments and provision of free school meals within the school holidays. For the reasons noted above, there is therefore not anticipated to be any material disproportionate impact of the proposals in respect of Council Tax or fees and charges policy on those with protected characteristics, those vulnerable to falling into poverty, geographical communities or staff, nor on the economy or environment.

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Corporate Services