

Committee: Blueprint Uttlesford Board

Date: 05/03/25

Title: Blueprint Uttlesford Update

Report Author: Lance Porteous, Director of Finance,
Revenues and Benefits

Summary

1. This report is to update the Blueprint Uttlesford Board on the current position and outlook now that the 2025/26 Budget and 5-year Medium Term Financial Plan have been agreed by Council.

Recommendations

2. The Board notes the current Blueprint Uttlesford position and outlook set out in this report.

Financial Implications

3. Financial implications are set out throughout this report.

Background Papers

4. The last Blueprint Uttlesford review was reported to Cabinet, 24 October 2024.

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None directly. As savings items are developed for delivery, separate reports will detail this.
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None directly. As savings items are developed for delivery, separate reports will detail this.
Workforce/Workplace	None directly. As savings items are developed for delivery, separate reports will

	detail this.
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Situation

6. As part of the Budget Setting Process for 2025/26 the budget gap which Blueprint Uttlesford is tasked with closing has increased from £7.351m in 2024/25 to £8.467 in 2025/26, as shown in Table 1 (Table 4 in the MTFP).

Table 1: 5-Year Rolling Medium Term Financial Target

Previous Gap	7,351
Savings to Date	(2,535)
New Savings Requirement	3,651
Revised Gap	8,467

7. This savings, identified in the latest version of the MTFP to be delivered via Blueprint Uttlesford, is £8.467m, of which £2.535m has already been delivered and detailed in Table 3. The new savings requirement is the total budget gap reported in the MTFP. This was identified during the budget setting process and is due to the expected reduction in external funding.
8. As presented in the MTFP approved by Council on 25 February 2025, the delivery of the remaining £5.975m has been reprofiled, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Revised Blueprint Financial Plan

Blueprint	Delivered	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver
Total	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
8,467	2,535	495	2,672	609	636	1,520	5,932

9. The above table reflects an overall slippage of 6 months in delivery from the initial Blueprint timescale from 2025/26 onwards, as well as the delay of the benefits from sale of asset for £1.8m from 2025/26 to 2026/27.
10. The financial benefits delivered to date are listed in Table 3.

Table 3 – Blueprint Financial Benefits Delivered

Service Area	Benefits Achieved £'000s
Dunmow depot sale	21
Local Highways Panel	100
Grants (stage 1)	250
Revenues and Benefits (stage 1)	66
Museum (stage 1)	39
CMT (stage 1)	115
Car Parking	534

Highways Rangers	86
CSC Thaxted staffing	13
Planning	282
Waste Services	143
Communities	49
Mailroom	46
Facilities	43
Revenues and Benefits (stage 2)	21
Homelessness	17
Others	10
Assets/Finance - refinancing Phoenix loan	700
Total	2,535

11. The financial benefits planned for delivery and their expected delivery year are listed in Table 4.

Table 4 – Blueprint Financial Benefits to be Achieved

Service Area	Benefits to be Achieved £'000s
<u>2025/26</u>	
London Road rent	200
Facilities	40
<u>2026/27</u>	
Sale of asset - 2% cost of borrowing (By Mar 26 sale)	1,799*
Car parking	150
LCTS	30
Dunmow depot sale	79
Running Waste Vehicles on Biofuel	(100)**
Total	2,198

12. *The savings in borrowing costs from the sale of Aspire are by far the largest component of the future identified benefits. This has been conservatively allocated to 2026/27, however negotiations are current and a decision imminent. If the sale is confirmed this month, the benefits could begin to be realised from October 2025.

13. **It is likely that c.£100k of the 2026/27 benefits will need to be utilised to begin running the Council's waste vehicles on biofuels.

14. It should be noted that no financial benefits have been identified for the financial years 2027/28, 2028/29 or 2029/30 as yet, although work is ongoing between finance and services to do so.

15. This leaves the current total of unidentified Blueprint savings at £3.734m, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 – Unidentified Blueprint Savings

Blueprint	Delivered (Table 3)	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver
Total	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
8,467	2,535	495	2,672	609	636	1,520	5,932
Further Financial Benefits Identified but not yet delivered (Table 4)		-240	-1,958	0	0	0	-2,198
Unidentified Blueprint Savings		255	714	609	636	1,520	3,734

Scenarios

16. Agreeing a sale for Aspire would be ideal but it's not a done deal yet. There has also been a very recent development whereby an approach has been made to the Council to sell its 50% share in Stane Retail Park. If this is agreed £500k+ of financial benefits could be realised.

17. Below are the impacts of a few possible scenarios surrounding these asset sales.

Table 6 – Sale of Asset Scenarios

Sale of Assets	Delivered 2025/26	Delivered 2026/27
	£'000s	£'000s
<u>Scenario A - Completion 30/09/25</u>		
Already Assumed	0	-1,799
Sale of Aspire	900	899
Sale of 50% of Stane Retail Park	250	250
Change in Benefit	1,150	-650
<u>Scenario B - Completion 31/03/26</u>		
Already Assumed	0	-1,799
Sale of Aspire	0	1,799
Sale of 50% of Stane Retail Park	0	500
Change in Benefit	0	500
<u>Scenario C - No Sale</u>		
Already Assumed	0	-1,799
Aspire	0	0
Stane Retail Park	0	0
Change in Benefit	0	-1,799

Table 7 – Overall Impact on Blueprint – Scenario A

Blueprint	Delivered	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver
Total	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	By Vesting Day	2028/29	2029/30	Total
£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
8,467	2,535	495	2,672	609	3,776	636	1,520	5,932
Further Financial Benefits Identified		-240	-1,958	0	-2,198	0	0	-2,198
Change due to Sale of Asset		-1,150	650	0	-500	0	0	-500
Benefits Still to Identify		-895	1,364	609	1,078	636	1,520	3,234
Accumulated Total Benefits to Deliver		-895	469	1,078	1,078	1,714	3,234	3,234

Table 8 – Overall Impact on Blueprint – Scenario B

Blueprint	Delivered	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver
Total	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	By Vesting Day	2028/29	2029/30	Total
£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
8,467	2,535	495	2,672	609	3,776	636	1,520	5,932
Further Financial Benefits Identified		-240	-1,958	0	-2,198	0	0	-2,198
Change due to Sale of Asset		0	-500	0	-500	0	0	-500
Benefits Still to Identify		255	214	609	1,078	636	1,520	3,234
Accumulated Total Benefits to Deliver		255	469	1,078	1,078	1,714	3,234	3,234

Table 9 – Overall Impact on Blueprint – Scenario C

Blueprint	Delivered	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver	To Deliver
Total	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	By Vesting Day	2028/29	2029/30	Total
£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
8,467	2,535	495	2,672	609	3,776	636	1,520	5,932
Further Financial Benefits Identified		-240	-1,958	0	-2,198	0	0	-2,198
Change due to Non Sale of Asset		0	1,799	0	1,799	0	0	1,799
Benefits Still to Identify		255	2,513	609	3,377	636	1,520	5,533
Accumulated Total Benefits to Deliver		255	2,768	3,377	3,377	4,013	5,533	5,533

Next Steps

18. There is a serious need for the members and officers to deliver not only the £2.198m of financial savings targets already identified in Table 4 but also the remaining £3.734m of unidentified Blueprint savings in Table 5, as these have been assumed in the MTFP approved by Council. However short the Council comes in delivering these savings could reduce the Councils reserves exponentially.
19. The above tables show how crucial the sale of these assets could be in achieving Blueprint Uttlesford's remaining savings targets.
20. To this end, this work will be foremost within the Budget Setting Process for 2026/27, and the following Blueprint items are being reviewed.

Table 10 – Existing 2026/27 Blueprint items under Review

YEAR 3 - 2025/26 for 2026/27								
Service Area	Original Target	Early year achieved	Revised Target	Blueprint Board		Revised Target	Achieved	Blueprint Board March probable reductions
				October review				
Planning	357,909	-282,000	75,909	0		75,909	0	75,909
Mailroom	43,224	-46,000	-2,776	0		-2,776	0	-2,776
CMT (stage 2)	108,000	0	108,000	0		108,000	0	108,000
Democratic	25,923	0	25,923	0		25,923	0	25,923
Elections	25,923	0	25,923	0		25,923	0	25,923
Legal/Information Governance	62,177	0	62,177	0		62,177	0	62,177
Climate Change	30,764	0	30,764	0		30,764	0	30,764
London Road rent	100,000	0	100,000			100,000	0	200,000
NHB replacement	800,000	0	800,000	-240,000		560,000	0	0
Car parking	0	0	0	0		0	0	150,000
Museum (stage 2)	0	0	0	233,627		233,627	0	0
	1,553,920	-328,000	1,225,920	-6,373		1,219,547	0	-543,627
								675,920

Nb: The figures in table 10 are for review only and don't necessarily tie in with the other figures within the report.

Risk

21. MHCLG have announced that Local Government Reform for Essex will likely go live in April 2028 so there is a risk that preparation for LGR may frustrate Blueprint Uttlesford work over the next 3 financial years. There is also the risk that undelivered savings will leave a MTFS gap going into a merger with neighbouring Councils.

Risk Analysis

22.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
12	3	4	Ongoing Blueprint Uttlesford work between members and officers.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.