



Research Note 132 | 06 November 2013

201 Ways to Save Money in Local Government

Councils have received less money from central government since 2010. This has been necessary to help close the deficit. But local authorities shouldn't look to local taxpayers to plug the gaps in their finances by hiking Council Tax, a bill that has nearly doubled over the last decade. Council Tax hits those on low incomes and elderly people on fixed incomes the hardest.

Instead, local politicians should look to cut out wasteful spending and consider removing non-essential services. Many councils have worked hard to do so in challenging economic times, making significant savings.

As the 2014-15 financial settlement for local government is being decided, it is important that councillors up and down the country share as many ideas as possible to cut out wasteful spending.

Harry Phibbs, a local councillor in Hammersmith & Fulham for over seven years, has produced for the TaxPayers' Alliance a checklist of 201 ways for local politicians to save money.

Some councils may have carried some of these ideas out already. If so, there are other ideas out there: last year the Department for Communities and Local Government outlined 50 ways to save money.¹ The TaxPayers' Alliance has also produced dozens of research notes identifying areas of wasteful spending.

If we want to see big savings made, and those savings passed on to residents in Council Tax cuts, then it is important to share the success stories of local authorities who have managed to deliver better value for money.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/50-ways-to-save-examples-of-sensible-savings-in-local-government>



Compiling the list

Councillor Harry Phibbs explains:

"The scale of the ideas on this list is deliberately varied. Some items – such as outsourcing, sharing services and debt interest reduction – can each amount to tens or even hundreds of millions in annual savings for larger local authorities. Other items are more modest, amounting to a few thousand. Some could be shrugged off as mere common sense – missing the point that common sense is a rare and precious commodity in local government. Others are not solely, or even primarily, motivated by reducing cost: reducing bureaucracy is about allowing more freedom, not just achieving a lower cost due to fewer bureaucrats being needed. For instance, reducing the number of children in care is transformational for those involved and is not just a matter of cost cutting. Often reducing spending can be achieved not merely while maintaining a service but while enhancing it.

Cumulatively what follows amounts to more than a checklist: it is trying to engender an attitude of getting value for taxpayers' money. That is not always easy to achieve in the public sector. After decades of rigorous leadership Wandsworth Council has a culture where saving money is "a process not an event." Other councils – and local politicians from all parties – demonstrate this too. That approach, encapsulated in the final point in this list, is one of the most important and hardest to achieve."

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201 ways to save money

	Description
1	Share services with neighbouring councils.
2	Share services with other public sector bodies. "Joined up" government between the NHS and councils' adult social care departments is particularly important. It costs the NHS £255 on average to keep a patient overnight - around four times the cost per night of a nursing home. Yet often the elderly are stuck in hospitals waiting for places in nursing homes to become available. These patients would usually prefer to move out of noisy wards in dauntingly large and impersonal hospitals.
3	If you can't share services, share office space. If there is spare office space in the town hall, rent it out.
4	Try to negotiate joint procurement deals with neighbouring councils and other parts of the public sector.
5	Freeze recruitment.
6	Scrap political advisers.
7	Cut the number of press officers. Make sure you have no more than the number of local newspaper reporters.
8	Cut the number of Scrutiny Coordinators. One full time person to organise all the scrutiny meetings should be enough.
9	Cut the number of coordinators for assorted other committees and panels.
10	Place more children up for adoption. Reducing the number of Looked After children by placing more of them in permanent loving homes is principally good news for them. But it is also good news for the Council Tax payer. Social workers are often risk-averse about adoption but it overwhelmingly offers children better life chances than keeping them in care. (What is your performance as measured by the number of Looked After Children per 10,000 children in your area? What are the barriers to adoption caused by avoidable bureaucratic delay or politically correct prejudices?)
11	For those children who remain in care, where possible send them to boarding schools. A Policy Exchange paper, <i>A Better Start in Life</i> , said that the Government should issue some guidance with criteria of the type of children that should be prioritised and hold local authorities to account where such children are not being given this opportunity.
12	Where children remain in care, keep to a minimum the number in institutional children's homes. Place them for fostering in family homes. This is much better for the children. The specialist, highly-paid foster carers who can cope with "challenging" children are far less costly than the phenomenally expensive children's homes.
13	Minimise the use of taxis for taking children in care to and from school. The cost is huge as they usually require escorts as well. It also causes a stigma for the children being marked out as different. If the children are too young to go to and from school themselves, it is better for them to be picked up and dropped off by their foster carers.
14	Cut subsidies to private landlords. Many councils give private sector housing grants to landlords to enable the repair and adaptation of private rented. Can these subsidies be cut?
15	Do you have a Town Hall canteen? How many meals does it serve and what is its subsidy? Remember to take account of the cost of the space it is taking up. It should probably be closed. Council officers find better fare along the high street.

	Description
16	Charge to hold events in parks. Make sure you charge enough to reflect the need to clear up afterwards and protect the grass. Also ensure that the choice of events is sensitive to the wishes of residents. But often revenue can be secured for events which residents enjoy – annual fireworks, an ice rink, open air opera, farmers' markets, fun fairs, etc.
17	Stop funding translations/interpreting for Council documents and services. This money is much better spent teaching people English. But even redirecting some of it you should still find some room for Council Tax cuts.
18	Scrap arts subsidies. Giving subsidies to one theatre so it can run plays that residents would not be willing to finance by paying to go and see them is not a reasonable use of Council Tax payers' money.
19	Don't own and run museums and arts centres. Allow trusts to take them over. They will tend to do a better job and this will reduce maintenance costs for the council.
20	Don't employ Fair Trade Coordinators.
21	Don't employ Diversity Officers or ask residents to fill in monitoring forms for ethnicity, sexuality and religion.
22	Don't employ Climate Change Officers.
23	Old fashioned public lavatories can sometimes represent pretty poor value for money in terms of the cost of maintenance in relation to how often they are used. Often the buildings can be valuable capital assets. A better arrangement may be to pay pubs a small fee for agreeing to allow non-drinkers to use their loos free of charge.
24	Sell private sector advertising on council notice boards and the council website.
25	Even more revenue can be obtained by allowing advertising billboards on council land adjoining busy roads, where this is appropriate.
26	Cease funding Law Centres. (A double saving as they often sue the council so the Council Tax payers end up paying for the lawyers on both sides.)
27	Libraries: change the rota system to keep them open during lunch hours and also reduce staff numbers at the same time. Encourage volunteers to take over libraries. Often this has allowed for increased opening hours at reduced cost and increased numbers and satisfaction rates among visitors.
28	Cut spending on advertising. Of course, freezing recruitment will help.
29	Review school governor training/"support" and tailor it to individual needs. A lot of the time the bureaucratic jargon just puts people off becoming governors.
30	Stop spending so much money on management consultants. Managers and executives at councils are usually paid quite handsomely and the justification is often that they have expertise. Put it to use.
31	Close the Film Unit if your Council has one. It is good to have your council on the big screen and you can charge the film makers to generate revenue. But someone can take bookings as a side line – this doesn't need a full time post let alone a team. After all, a Film Unit which has greater spending than revenue doesn't make much sense.
32	Sell off council owned waste land for market housing.
33	Own fewer council buildings. This can mainly be achieved by reducing the number of staff but also by smarter working, even more staff working from home.
34	Use "hot desking".
35	Cancel your annual subscription to the Local Government Association. This is a surprisingly significant sum.
36	Cancel your subscription to the regional local government bodies - such as London Councils, the Association of North East Councils, etc. Often these subscriptions are even higher than the ones to the LGA.

	Description
37	Cancel your membership sub to the Local Government Information Unit.
38	Cancel your membership subs to most other bodies of which you are members.
39	Cancel payments for diversity training/consultancy provided by such bodies as Stonewall.
40	Stop sending people off to conferences. One advantage of not being members of these bodies is that there won't be the same scope for sending staff off to their events at vast expense.
41	Sell surplus assets. This is a crucial means of reducing debt and thus the debt interest payments which are often a big component of what the Council Tax funds.
42	Sell council-owned farms. Also sell council-owned pubs, shops, golf courses, caravan sites, business parks etc.
43	To help identify those items on the point above publish an assets register.
44	If you don't have debt and have reserves in the bank. Why are you keeping the reserves? You will only end up being tempted to spend it on something. The reserves should be diminished by lower Council Tax. Remember whose money it is.
45	Spending on the disabled and elderly should be focused on practical help not funding politicised advocacy lobby groups. Total spending in this area could be cut leaving room for lower Council Tax while still spending more on voluntary groups such as Help the Aged that provide caring, practical help.
46	Employing full time Disabled Access Officers in the Planning Department is poor value for money. Planning applications have to meet statutory requirements for disabled access but it should not be for Councils to engage in "gold plating."
47	Use sprinklers in care homes, allowing a potential reduction in night staff and a safer situation for elderly residents. Homes that do not have sprinklers can be more dangerous when a fire occurs as it sometimes takes several members of staff to carry one resident to safety. This has been proven not only to save money but to save lives. The National Fire Sprinkler Network has done marvellous work on this.
48	Shop around for your insurance premiums.
49	Reduce staff training to the statutory minimum.
50	Cease paying staff to work full- or part—time for trade unions. Why should staff be paid for roles that they do not carry out? This costs taxpayers £113 million across the public sector.
51	Cease to collect trade union membership subscriptions - at least without charge.
52	Cease to provide trade unions with rent free office space.
53	Charge for use of the staff car park.
54	Review street lighting usage. Some councils have excessive street lighting. As with much else, this is probably due to a culture of being unduly risk averse over health and safety. Aside from the cost, we cause light pollution and increase our carbon footprint. Councillors should consult residents to see where the lighting is really needed or where it may be switched off 30 minutes or an hour earlier.
55	Alternatively, it might suit some councils to have periods where only half the lights are switched on (e.g. between 3am and 5am when scarcely anyone is using the streets).
56	Scrap the Local Authority clerking service for school governor meetings. One of the governors or the headmaster's secretary can take the minutes.
57	Outsource. Put all services out to tender as Essex is doing - already with annual savings of over £150 million.
58	Remember that voluntary and community groups as well as private firms may offer a better means of providing a service than the council's own workforce, for instance in providing additional assistance to children with literacy problems.

	Description
59	Encourage residents to use the Mail Preference Service which stops addressed junk mail and then saves the cost of disposing of it. Direct Mail "individually addressed advertising messages" accounts for 181,500 tons of waste nationally. Say a largish council has 1,000 tons of it to dispose of at a cost of £83 a ton: that's £83,000 a year it spends putting people's junk mail in landfill.
60	Ban mineral water at meetings. Use tap water instead. This has saved us £36,000 a year in Hammersmith and Fulham.
61	Save money on printing. Stop producing glossy brochures. The thicker the paper, the shinier the pages, the brighter the colours the more residents think: "So this is what my Council Tax goes on." The printing bill for a typical council is millions of pounds.
62	Turn down the temperature in the town hall and other council buildings. How low does the temperature get before the heaters come on? We used to have the windows open and the heaters blasting away at the same time.
63	Cut transaction costs by offering a discount to those who pay by direct debit, for instance for the Council Tax.
64	Cut transaction costs by facilitating as much as possible via the website - eg allow parking permits to be renewed online. It also may make sense to offer discounts for payments online.
65	Take a tough line in dismissing staff for persistent absenteeism. Monitor those who particularly claim to be sick on Fridays and Mondays. This will be easier, having ceased funding full-time union posts as the unions string out hearings for as long as possible. More positively, look at ways to improve the health of council staff. Flu jabs represent good value for money in reducing genuine sickness.
66	Keep a tight grip on spending on agency staff.
67	Encourage staff to suggest efficiencies. Offer a prize for the best suggestions. But also allow anonymous entries.
68	Ensure that the number of staff engaged in health and safety enforcement is kept to the statutory minimum.
69	Councils should not be running leisure centres. They could still pay for subsidised swimming for local residents or particular groups should they so choose. This will tend to be more cost effective than running the whole operation.
70	Where appropriate use cattle and sheep to graze on council land rather than spending money on grass cutting.
71	Combine the post of Finance Director and Chief Executive.
72	Ensure that grit and road salt is bought efficiently and at a good price. Don't get caught out with low stocks as a huge premium is often charged.
73	See if cafes could be opened in redundant park buildings, thus allowing a revenue stream to the council in rent.
74	Assess whether the staff employed to collect fees cost more in salaries than the income they gather in. For instance, if you are employing three people to collect £15,000 a year from cafes for having tables and chairs on the pavement, this is not good value for money.
75	Where extra spending would secure a desirable objective consider whether the money could come from sponsorship rather than the council. For instance new street trees could be funded by encouraging households to sponsor a new tree in their street, Christmas lights can be sponsored by local business.
76	End garden waste collection. Apart from the financial cost, it can do more harm than good for the environment. Much better value is promoting composting, for instance by offering everyone a free composter.

	Description
77	Save money relocating some council operations to parts of the country where costs are lower. Westminster Council has saved very substantial sums by moving back-office processing operations and telephony services which don't require specialist knowledge. There are now 250-300 staff in Dingwall employed by a company called Vertex working for Westminster Council, undertaking a great range of services.
78	Freeze councillor allowances.
79	Reduce storage costs and insurance costs by making sure the council is not keeping equipment that is never used.
80	Cut down the number of cars for the Parks Constabulary. It's better to have them patrolling on foot anyway.
81	Review all the items you charge for. Cease offering services you charge for which run at a loss and merely duplicate what is offered commercially or by charities.
82	Cease charging where the transactions costs are greater than the revenue. For example charging schools to use parks for sports days. Towing cars away for mild parking offences can break even or run at a loss, despite the heavy fines charged.
83	Compare your charges to other Councils. Do your tariffs make sense to residents?
84	Open cafes in the corner of libraries where there is some space. This could produce revenue as well as attracting more library users.
85	Rationalise the number of council departments.
86	Look at the cost effectiveness of housing grants. How many people are employed administering these grants? How many go to owner occupiers who even if cash poor are asset rich and could be eligible for equity release schemes to fund home improvements.
87	Scrap requirements for contractors, for instance, requiring a building firm tendering for work to produce an "equalities policy". All firms have to abide by plenty of statutory requirements on equality as it is. Councils should not be involved in gold plating. It imposes a double cost. Putting off contractors tendering who can't be bothered with an equalities policy possibly means ending up with higher costs. There is also the staff time taken up with the "assessment" of the equalities policies.
88	Cease funding racially separatist interest groups.
89	Seek an arrangement with central government that the council is given some financial reward for reducing bills to central government, for instance in reducing welfare dependency.
90	Art leasing: often councils have valuable works of arts that aren't on display and cost money in storage and insurance. Sometimes selling them may not be appropriate or even legally possible if they have been given to the council. But revenue could also be obtained from leasing the works of arts.
91	Art sales provide an alternative to leasing, especially for highly valuable works of art. Often it is most valuable works that are kept in storage due to security considerations. For these reasons there may also be concerns about leasing. The option of a council just keeping its art collection in storage is wrong on both cultural and financial grounds.
92	Town Halls and other municipal buildings often sit empty at weekends. Take a more aggressive and creative stance in seeking revenue from bookings. Consider using private agencies for this.
93	Charge for teaching other councils how to set up specialist services. For instance if you have a CCTV control room whose manager has the relevant qualifications, there could be substantial revenue in him or her running occasional courses in how to operate it.

	Description
94	Speed up the planning process. Give clear guidelines about the basics such as good design in the initial stages but reduce the gold plating demands on matters such as health and safety and disabled access. A lot of officers spend their time on such matters but the statutory requirements are quite onerous enough.
95	Put in an arrangement whereby the council leader and cabinet members have a firm grip on spending. The threshold for where spending needs to be authorised by the leader has been reduced from £300,000 to £100,000 in my borough. Of course, there is no point in doing this if the leader is a pussycat who waves everything through.
96	Any recruitment of new posts should be approved by the Vacancy Management Panel chaired by the council leader.
97	Don't be too proud to constantly check if other authorities are achieving lower costs or higher standards for a service and, if so, whether they are achieving this through greater efficiency. Benchmark. Benchmark. Benchmark. After that do some more benchmarking.
98	Set maximum word limits on the length of reports submitted by officers. Long reports that nobody reads are a waste of officer time and a means of avoiding accountability for spending.
99	Set limits to the length of responses to Member Enquiries. They should answer the question raised and not be essays on the general subject. Saving officer time allows for fewer officers to be employed.
100	Youth Clubs and Youth Centres. These should not always be run by the council: they are typically pretty drab, dreary institutions when they are. Some of the money saved by closing them could go in higher grants to charitable and community groups which run youth groups, or partnership arrangements with the private sector or groups like the Prince's Trust which provide facilities for the young.
101	Scrap pointless award ceremonies. Staff that have performed well deserve recognition but there are cheaper ways to do this than by holding expensive and frivolous events.
102	Check the list of those outside bodies being given free or subsidised office space by the council. They could well be in buildings which could be sold.
103	Where post offices are threatened with closure see if there would be space for them to be relocated in a council library. This would offer an income stream while also saving an important local service for the community.
104	Cease employing European Officers. I understand they are particularly prevalent on county councils. Essentially they are propagandists for European integration.
105	Ensure you have the highest possible penalties for staff engaged in fraud.
106	Cease employing Work Experience Coordinators.
107	Scrap all "nanny state" posts. "Five a Day" officers, etc.
108	Use energy saving light bulbs.
109	Review areas where the council is operating in competition with the private sector. My council used to own and run a high street laundrette, for example. Central Bedfordshire also owned garages.
110	Look at the eligibility criteria for some of the services offered. Should pensioners all be treated the same or should the age limit sometimes be raised which might allow extra help for the very old as well as saving money? For instance, the London-wide TaxiCard scheme where the London Boroughs each pay hundreds of thousands of pounds a year: should we reassess eligibility?
111	Sell off redundant park lodges by the entrances to parks and other facilities for market housing. Apart from the revenue, often these beautiful buildings become eyesores when left empty with their windows boarded up, etc.

	Description
112	Generally claims of "spend to save" or "investment" should be treated with scepticism. But within budgets there will sometimes be genuine possibilities. For example, providing more litter bins might be a more cost effective way of reducing street litter than employing more road sweepers.
113	Performance-related pay for departmental managers. If they come in under budget, they get a bonus. If they come in over budget, they get their pay docked.
114	Do not have children's playgroups directly run by the council. Instead better value for less money can be achieved through funding this much-needed resource via the voluntary sector, community groups and independent groups of mothers.
115	Would it make sense for a county council and its constituent districts to form a unitary authority? Councillors in Wiltshire have said this has saved a fortune through efficiency savings after they formed a unitary authority in 2010.
116	Fewer CRB checks. For example, they are not needed for school governors or other volunteers who are not on their own with children.
117	Where CRB checks are needed, avoid duplication and reduce the cost. North Hertfordshire District Council reports: "We make applications for CRB checks to our Council for Voluntary Service who can carry these out at a lower cost than statutory agencies such as the police, but the fees they receive, a small profit for them, pays for their employee to work every afternoon as well helping the voluntary sector."
118	Encourage mobile working. Also from North Hertfordshire: "We have implemented mobile working, sending benefits assessors etc. to the homes of our customers, meaning it removes the need for them to travel, means documents can be checked in the home rather than sent or brought to the office and officers' reports are sent back to base electronically. That has already saved us around £70,000, no small amount."
119	Mystery shopping. Make an arrangement with a neighbouring authority to mystery shop the other authority's services. This saves money compared to using external companies to carry out this service.
120	Double-sided printing. From West Berkshire Council staff suggestion scheme: "ICT were already on the case and are assessing usage of all printers across WBC. Duplex printers are already in place in some services – it was agreed that the duplex option would be set to mandatory on these to encourage proper use of the printers and save paper. Once the assessment is complete, the services with the largest demand for printing, such as electoral services, benefits and exchequer etc. will be provided with duplex printers first. Also ICT will be replacing old equipment when it breaks with duplex printers where possible."
121	Chipping felled tree branches and shrubs for footpaths & mulch.
122	Catering administration. From New Forest District Council: "Savings of £16k resulted from the deletion of a catering administration post, with duties being absorbed by other employees. The element of the saving relating to the Council's staff canteen (pantry) was £3,380 with the balance relating to other establishments, principally leisure facilities."
123	Joint procurement. Also from the New Forest: "Copier Paper/Furniture – These savings resulted through entering into joint procurement arrangements with Test Valley Borough Council for both photocopier paper and furniture."

	Description
124	Cutting payments by cheque. One council reports: "Traditionally the Council paid its suppliers by cheque. Taking into account the time spent printing and enveloping each payment, the cost of the cheque stationery and the envelope in which it was posted, as well as the actual price of the stamp and the fee from the bank, every time we paid a supplier it would cost roughly 53p. What we've now done is moved to BACS as our default method of payment. In the past there were a couple of things which put us off doing this. Firstly, there would be a need to contact our suppliers to find out their bank details and convince them that electronic payment was the way forward. Secondly, in order to minimise subsequent queries, we thought that we would still post remittance advices to the suppliers telling them that payment was on its way - this, of course, would negate some of the saving. However, times have moved on and most suppliers now include bank details on their invoices and request electronic payment. Very often email addresses are printed on invoices as well. All this meant that we could readily move over to BACS payment for very many of our suppliers, with remittance advices sent by email. Obtaining the missing information from other suppliers was simply a question of making a few phone calls. We are now making 83% of our supplier payments by BACS and emailing the remittances. In a year we make around 11,000 payments, so we will now be saving around £4,000 annually".
125	Have just one phone bill. From Winchester City Council: "The idea: To work with BT to replace the many bills that the Council receives monthly and quarterly for each of its telephones with one single monthly itemised bill supplied either by email or on disk. Results: Reduction in the amount of time taken in administering the payments for each telephone bill and the cost of making the making payment; reduction in the amount of paper used for the bills. Estimated annual saving of about £1,500."
126	Replace power-sapping screens with cheap Thin Film Transistor screens. From Amber Valley Borough Council: Introduction of TFT screens - reduction in power usage £1,230 per annum.
127	Bite sized training. From Windsor and Maidenhead: "Instead of having external training we now hold internal bite size training events for staff, that are filmed and put on the internal internet site so that staff can view at any time."
128	Review council-owned car parks with a view to selling them.
129	Rationalising the subscriptions. From Guildford Borough Council: The council recently reviewed its various subscriptions to magazines, newspapers and periodicals. This has saved around £10,000 through rationalisation and increased use of the internet.
130	Provision of website payment facility for Penalty Charge Notices. The website payment facility for parking penalty payments was switched to the system provided by the company supplying the parking enforcement administration system. The new system provides a more reliable and effective system for online payments than the older in-house system which proved to be problematic. The improved quality of service has led to an increase in the number of payments processed electronically (which provides savings on the more costly processing of cash or cheque payments) and allowed staff to concentrate on other duties as opposed to processing payments, calls and enquiries.
131	Fully use "community rooms." From North Warwickshire District Council: "Under used community rooms - each of our blocks of flats had been allocated a community room for social purposes but it was clear from monitoring the usage patterns that a few were literally never used. After consultation with the residents, some have been returned as single bedroom flats, generating income for the council of approximately £2.5k a year and also reducing the housing waiting list. So far we have converted three back to flats and are looking to convert a further two."
132	Stop meddling with private nursery schools - eg duplicating checks done by Ofsted.

	Description
133	Stop employing "virtual headmasters" for children in care – they prove ineffective – much better to find boarding school places for those children who genuinely have to be in care. (See 11.)
134	Publish corporate credit card use online, in real time. Cut out wasteful and frivolous spending on cards and impose sanctions for those who abuse them.
135	Would it make sense for your council to merge the role of Chief Executive with another? East Hampshire District Council did this successfully with Havant Borough Council.
136	Cut down on how many flights officers and councillors take. Make more use of video conferencing for important meetings.
137	Merge pension funds. Checks fees against performance and other councils.
138	Give high priority to Troubled Families programme. The financial rewards for this extend well beyond the direct financial grant rewards from central government.
139	Publish all spending on suppliers - not just items over £500.
140	Also publish all spending by cost code. This will allow transparency on how much each section of the council is spending. Most spending is on salaries rather than procurement.
141	Make spending transparency intelligible. The Spotlight on Spend system by Spikes Cavell is a good way of doing this. It shows how much it spent on different categories of spending rather than just a list of payments.
142	Don't inflate the cost of pay-offs by including gagging clauses.
143	Don't pay mileage rates above the HMRC approved level.
144	Use a Car Club for staff. This has saved Croydon Council half a million pounds.
145	Cut housing waiting lists down to realistic levels. Allowing people on the list with no chance of ever gaining a council tenancy just increases the number of housing officers needed to administer the process and gives people false hopes.
146	Reduce procurement bureaucracy. Make it easier for small firms to pitch.
147	Scrap "Equalities Impact Assessments."
148	Don't fund "sock puppets" and "fake charities." These are campaign groups that survive in large part on taxpayers' money, rather than donations. They often campaign for even more money to be spent on a pet project. See the Institute of Economic Affairs paper <i>Sock Puppets</i> for more information.
149	Don't allow staff to use first class train tickets. On the rare occasion a special offer makes first class a cheaper option, sufficient proof should be offered.
150	Keep planning bureaucracy to the statutory minimum.
151	End the practice of social workers spending time demanding foster carers seek approval over children in their care having haircuts, routine health procedures, use of social networking sites, sleep-overs with friends school trips, and holidays with the foster carer.
152	Prioritise "reablement." This is the process of making practical adjustments which allow the elderly to return to living in their own homes.
153	Prohibit social workers from delaying children in care being placed for adoption on the grounds there is no "ethnic match" available.
154	Stop providing free meals for councillors.
155	Share data with DWP on benefit entitlement to tackle fraud.
156	Encourage staff to offer mutuals. This offers competition for improved service at reduced cost.
157	Cease funding the Chartered Institute for Housing.
158	Cease funding think tanks unnecessarily.

	Description
159	Ensure there is no subsidy from the Council Tax payer for services provided to schools. These services should only be offered to schools willing to fully fund them from their school budgets.
160	Encourage trusts to take over allotment sites - reducing running costs and allowing them to be better run.
161	Publish the job titles of all members of staff. This doesn't need to include salary information but it will give taxpayers and other staff members in the council a sense of the council's priorities and allow unnecessary jobs to be rooted out.
162	Use credit checks to establish illegal subletting in council properties - freeing up these properties would reduce the cost of temporary accommodation.
163	Use of telecare to provide more independence to older people.
164	Energy bill transparency. Smart metering has cut bills in Windsor and Maidenhead. ²
165	Bringing in Statutory Sick Pay for the first three days of sickness absence.
166	Improving digital communications can save staff time. For instance, providing a subscription service for email alerts means residents can indicate the sort of thing they are interested in. Parents will be interested in school closures, motorists will be interested in road closures, etc. This means that fewer residents will call help lines unnecessarily.
167	Fund the voluntary sector through commissioning - something for something - rather than grants - something for nothing.
168	Maximise transparency of council papers on the council website to reduce the cost of Freedom of Information requests. The more information that is available via "self-serving", the less the administrative burden.
169	Don't spend money on youth gimmicks such as youth parliaments. Instead look at initiatives that don't really cost money. Hosting school debating competitions at the town hall, for instance – which can also provide a positive opportunity for children from state and independent schools to mix. These can be organised by the schools themselves without employment of Youth Workers.
170	Take part in Social Impact Bonds. With these Bonds, people are able to invest in social projects and be paid a return from the taxpayer if the projects are successful.
171	More houseboats to increase mooring fees and help maximise the New Homes Bonus.
172	Cease spending money installing road humps.
173	It may be sensible to reduce the number of traffic lights. As well as improving traffic flow this will reduce costs.
174	Review terms and conditions for the workforce to look at finding savings and greater flexibility.
175	If you have them, scrap chauffeur driven cars for council leaders and mayors.
176	End automatic pay rises for staff.
177	Allow paying for parking by mobile phone. This reduces the need to collect money from the machines every day, and makes the whole process easier.
178	Incentives for recycling – for example vouchers can be negotiated with local retailers. Windsor & Maidenhead have offered Marks and Spencer vouchers in the past.
179	Make consultations shorter and cheaper – and real.
180	Provide council tenants with rewards for carrying out their own repairs.
181	Scrap "Localities Programme". Councils operating these tend to duplicate the work of others and that means an extra layer of management. It is extra cost on top of those in children's services departments providing practical benefits.

² <http://www.conservativehome.com/localgovernment/2011/10/will-the-digital-democracy-help-councils-save-money.html>

	Description
182	Scrap clothing allowances for mayors, their spouses or any other staff.
183	Offer an interactive iPhone application which allows residents to access services residents can report up to 45 different issues such as a missed bin collection or broken streetlight, 'Find my nearest', which locates amenities such as libraries and parks using GPS signals, news, events, jobs and a postcode-driven bin calendar. This lowers administration costs (it costs £1.50 less to process an iPhone enquiry compared to telephone contacts).
184	Personalisation of adult social care saves money on staff and allows users decide for themselves what services suit their needs.
185	Withdraw funding for speed cameras.
186	Investigate savings through bulk purchasing rather than using endless different suppliers at various prices for the same product. Haringey Council once bought bottled water from 14 different companies.
187	Where there are genuine "invest to save" opportunities, for instance in reducing energy bills or increasing online transactions, then use council reserves.
188	Reduce the number of councillors.
189	Don't spend any money on town twinning.
190	Don't spend any money seeking design advice from the modernist Commission for the Built Environment (CABE.)
191	Cease providing private health care for senior bureaucrats.
192	Don't just renew contracts. Retender.
193	Encourage staff to buy and water their pot plants on a voluntary basis rather than paying contractors to do this
194	Avoid meddling bylaws which involve increased staff costs to enforce.
195	Don't pay membership subs for the Royal Town Planning Institute.
196	If care homes are under-occupied, close some of them.
197	Quality Assurance arrangements for adult social care: at Hammersmith and Fulham this performance management makes sure that our social workers are up to the job and that the process is effective. Introducing it has saved £1 million and improved the service to vulnerable.
198	Don't advertise for jobs in <i>Guardian</i> when you really do need to recruit - use your council website instead.
199	Review council-owned garages. Where under-used look to sell, lease or redevelop.
200	Keep under review what services are offered. Changes can occur for a number of reasons – demographic factors and trends, legislative change, new alternative services provided from elsewhere, and changes in residents' preferences.
201	Stop producing leaflets for silly reasons, like Tameside's walking guide that included instructions for staff on what posture to adopt when walking.