

Merton Council Council

1 March 2023

Supplementary Agenda 2: Amendments

6 Amendments to the Business Plan

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Liberal Democrat Amendments to the Business Plan

Amendment 1: Cost of living – improve health and social care

That after Recommendation 1A), new Recommendations 1AA-1AD be added and that after Recommendation F, new Recommendation G be added:

1AA) Welcoming the provision in the MTFs for LLW to be mandated in all future contracts - an achievement requiring all round effort across parties in the Council and in civil society - and noting it is estimated there are approximately 1150 staff employed by care homes in Merton who will not benefit from the recent decision to commission Future Homecare Arrangements from this October, requests Cabinet add to and extend the use of the Cost of Living Fund to support residents who work as care workers in any setting who can establish they are not currently paid the London Living Wage. This is to be funded by £100,000 from the repeat CS Corporate Governance budget underspend of £2.2m (reprofiled accordingly).

1AB) As adjusted by the deletion of saving CH112 Closure of Eastway Day Centre (£180k in 2023/24) and use of the appropriate amount of repeat CS Customers, Policy and Improvement budget underspend of £2.5m (reprofiled accordingly) to fund this service.

1AC) As adjusted by deleting previously agreed saving CS02 Introducing Charges for Blue Badges (£15k) and use of the appropriate amount of repeat CS Corporate Governance budget underspend of £2.2m (reprofiled accordingly) to fund this service.

1AD) As adjusted by extending library opening hours for those libraries currently closed midweek (£42k) and use of the appropriate amount of repeat CS Corporate Governance budget underspend of £2.2m (reprofiled accordingly) to fund this service.

G) And notes with concern the significant multi-million pound cuts to the South West London Health Services budget outlined at the recent Merton Health & Wellbeing & Merton Health and Care Together Committee Seminar, and requests Cabinet to both campaign against and take any necessary action to mitigate these cuts.

Amendment 2: Improving air quality and helping to address the climate emergency

That after Recommendation 1A), new Recommendations 1A1-1A3 be added as follows:

1A1) As adjusted by a new growth proposal, additional air quality monitoring for NO₂ and particularly fine pm_{2.5} particulate matter costing £40k, funded from the use of the appropriate amount from the repeat E&R Senior Management budget underspend of £210,000 (reprofiled accordingly) to purchase and maintain this service.

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1A2) As adjusted by a new growth proposal, additional cycle parking facilities in parks and open spaces, funded by up to £50K from the repeat E&R Senior Management budget underspend of £210,000 (reprofiled accordingly) to purchase and maintain this service.

1A3) To request Cabinet better align its parking charges schemes with their stated aims to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality, by:

- considering the implementation of a low mileage/low use discount or rebate for residents' parking permits, on the basis that it is the driving of vehicles that reduces air quality and increases carbon emissions. This would encourage less driving, and would particularly mitigate the impact of higher parking costs for those on low/fixed incomes who can't afford to switch to newer and more environmentally friendly vehicles; and
- considering amending its flat rate diesel levy on residents' parking permits to accommodate ULEZ principles, so vehicles exempt from ULEZ are also exempt from the diesel levy.

Amendment 3: Action on cost of living emergency 1

That after Recommendation 1A), add new Recommendation 1AAA, and after Recommendation F, add new Recommendation G1 as follows:

1AAA) To ensure that Merton maintains comprehensive council tax support provision to assist those households who cannot afford to pay, requests Cabinet modify and extend the Council Tax Support Scheme for the year 2024/25 support to those residents who are struggling through the cost-of-living emergency, but fall just outside the current eligibility criteria and therefore do not currently qualify for council tax support. This is to be funded by at least £100,000 from the repeat CS Corporate Governance budget underspend of £2.2m (reprofiled accordingly).

G1) Notes that revenue recovery is an essential part maintaining council finances, but requests Cabinet review its use of bailiffs/recovery agents and their operating protocols to ensure they're appropriate in the current cost of living crisis.

Amendment 4: Action on cost of living emergency 2

That after Recommendation B, add new Recommendation B1

B1) The Council Tax Strategy for 2023/24 be adjusted by a further and additional rebate of 1% to Council Tax bands A and B (£105K). This is to be funded from reducing the budget on providing staff to be employed in the Labour Group office to £180,859, which still represents an increase of 18% on the budget for 2022/23.

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Amendment – Agenda Item 4

Amend recommendation 1 by adding the following wording: “subject to the following amendment:

Use £1,000,000 from the “For use in future years budgets Reserve” to:

- i) Defer saving ENV2023-2411 Management of Parking Permits at a cost of £500,000 for one year;
- ii) Use £250,000 to establish the Merton Children’s Sport Fund;
- iii) Use £250,000 to repair cycle lanes across the borough.

After Recommendation F to add:

Recommendation G:

The Council encourages the Cabinet to embrace a new ambitious vision for Merton that addresses the challenges of the 2020’s:

- To continue to provide funding for the Merton Children’s Sport Fund over the coming years;
- To prioritise and ensure the successful management of regeneration opportunities and projects in Morden, Mitcham and Wimbledon, for town centres, green spaces and housing;
- To develop new planning policies that local residents can have confidence in;
- To look into establishing a scheme to incentivise and lessen the financial and administrative license burdens for the operation of pop-up and street market offerings, including considering the suspension of street licence charges for a period;
- Increase support for apprenticeships and encourage businesses to hire new apprentices by actively promoting government apprenticeship support schemes;
- Investing in greener, low carbon and well-designed community infrastructure to improve amenity, green spaces, wellbeing and air quality within the borough;
- Ensuring the council prioritises sustainable travel and safe cycling by recognising the need for low carbon provision in future development plans;
- Invest in innovative and new technology based solutions to combat the climate emergency and the pollution crisis in Merton, such as green walls and city trees, and also increase funding and take opportunities within new developments to deliver significantly higher levels of tree planting across the borough;

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- Accelerate the introduction of electric vehicles charging infrastructure (including fast charging) for residents and those visiting the town centres;
- Invest in children's active sport and fitness and consider opportunities for further use of the borough's greenspace to achieve this goal;
- Focus on children's wellbeing and mental health impacts caused by the Covid19 pandemic and work towards preventative mental health schemes available for all children in Merton;
- Develop a new partnership with business to support youth clubs across the borough;
- Commission an independent analysis to identify the social determinants of health inequalities that are specific to Merton;
- Consult with residents with a view to maintaining existing dementia day-care centre provision;

And a review of strategic objectives by:

- Ensuring that the financial strategy is explicit about how it supports strategic priorities vs balancing the council's budget to ensure that resources are in the right place to exploit the opportunities, and meet needs;
- Developing a clear narrative that describes strategic vision to create clarity for planning across the departments;
- Constantly reviewing risk appetite to ensure opportunities that can deliver a transformative council with a wider range of benefits are not missed."