

Merton Council
Council
6 March 2024
Supplementary Agenda

10 Amendments

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Budget Amendments 6 March 2024 – Liberal Democrat Group

Amendment 1: Working to build a sustainable community

That after Recommendation 5, new Recommendations 6 and 7 be added:

6. Noting both the real terms cut in school spending power because of inflation as well as feedback from teachers and governors about increased pressures on schools' budgets, and as such requests Cabinet, at the first available opportunity, to consider ways in which schools can be further supported to manage these budget difficulties, especially in the short term. This could be funded on a one-off basis by up to £300k from the *For use in future years' budgets* reserve. Cabinet is also requested to consider other ways of supporting schools including use of the Capital Programme to make improvements that reduce energy use (and therefore also help to contribute to achieving net zero by 2030).

7. To request that the Cabinet better align its parking permit charging structure with their stated aims to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality, by considering:

i) moving from the permit pricing structure adopted in 2020 that results in much higher charges in Wimbledon and Raynes Park to a borough-wide standard permit charge.

This would enable the charge to be based on carbon emission and air quality considerations rather than purely geographical ones - which are divisive;

ii) evaluating the affordability and lawfulness of offering rebates for parking permits for those residents in receipt of Council Tax Support;

iii) the implementation of a low mileage/low use rebate for residents' parking permits, on the basis that it is not the ownership of a vehicle but the extent of its use that increases carbon emissions and threatens air quality. This would incentivise driving less, and would help to mitigate the impact of higher parking costs for those on low/fixed incomes who cannot afford to switch to newer and more environmentally friendly vehicles;

iv) whether other variables would also be appropriate when determining discounts to standard charges - such as vehicle weight and length. This could incentivise residents to use smaller vehicles that are safer in a dense urban environment; and

v) exempting ULEZ compliant diesel vehicles from the flat rate diesel levy.

Amendment 2: Action on cost of living emergency: two-child benefit cap

That after Recommendation 5, add new Recommendation 6

6. Noting particularly the Council's commitments to mitigate child poverty, requests that Cabinet consider bringing forward proposals to Full Council on providing discretionary payments to those residents affected by the two-child benefit cap from its cost of living fund. This is to be funded by up to £400k on a one-off basis from the "For use in future year's budget" reserve or another appropriate reserve, with a request to examine ways to fund this element in future years. This purpose could also be the first call on funding if there is an underspend in the General Fund at the financial end of 2024/25 subject to audit.

Amendment 3: Action on cost of living emergency: a compassionate Council

That after Recommendation 1, new Recommendations 1A-1B be added:

1A. As adjusted to reduce the pressure on the budgets for the Adult Social Care department, additional funding of £300k is proposed on a one-off basis from the For use in future years' budgets reserve, with attempts made to increase this budget across the Medium Term Financial Strategy including through a focus on the realignment of recurrent budget underspends and tighter budget control.

1B. As adjusted by deleting the previously agreed saving from CS02 Introducing Charges for Blue Badges (£15k) to abolish these charges; by extending library opening hours for those libraries currently closed midweek (£42k); and by opening the paddling pools at Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields, King Georges Playing Fields, Colliers Wood, Rowan Rec, Joseph Hood Rec and Morden Park from 17 June 2024 (ie a month earlier than current plans) (£43k). These to be funded by the deletion of growth proposal 2024-25 FDG1 (an additional director post).

Amendment 4: Merton as a custodian

That after Recommendation 5, new Recommendation 6 be added:

6. The Council encourages the Cabinet to consider reviewing the efficacy of the process of budget scrutiny of the schemes in the Capital Programme and the monitoring of their delivery by considering:

- i) whether an explanation of how the Capital Programme reflects the priorities of the Cabinet can be included in budget scrutiny information;
- ii) the extent to which the information available to councillors involved in the budget scrutiny process could be improved so that they can have a proper appreciation of the rationales for the schemes in the Capital Programme;
- iii) advising the Overview and Scrutiny Commission of any substantial delays (for example a year) to and/or material overspends (for example +10%) on the major schemes (for example of total value above £1m) within the Capital Programme.

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Budget Amendment 6 March 2024 – Conservative Group

Amend recommendation 5 by adding the following wording: “subject to the following amendment:

Use £1,001,000 from the “For use in future years’ budgets” on a one-off basis to:

Provide a 1% Council Tax rebate to all Band A-E Council Taxpayers in LB Merton.
After Recommendation 5 to add:

Recommendation 6:

To request Cabinet to prepare future budgets on the basis of the following principles:

- 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;
- 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 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;
- Formally reject the Labour and Liberal Democrat policy of expanding the Ultra Low Emission Zone to Merton;

- Oppose Mayor Khan's decision to close Wimbledon Police Station and campaign to keep all Police Stations in Merton open;
- Welcome the investment into St Helier Hospital and the wider government backed investment into healthcare for Merton residents;
- Develop a future Council Tax Support Scheme based around the premise that all who receive council services should contribute towards the cost;
- Commission an independent analysis to identify the social determinants of health inequalities that are specific to Merton;
- Continue to support dementia day-care centre provision, including the Eastway Centre, across the borough;
- Keep under review the conditions in Morden and Wimbledon that would allow the expansion of the Article 4 Direction to prevent the spread of HMOs should the evidence base change;
- Work towards a multi year funding settlement for the Faith in Action Drop-in for homelessness support in Merton;
- Scrap the planned increase in Parking Charges;
- Conduct a review of the potential impact on the borough's state schools if the damaging Labour Party policy of charging VAT on private school fees is enacted;

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."

Budget Amendment 6 March 2024 – Councillor Charles (Independent)

- 1) That funding is made available for a deep clean of the streets on Willow Lane Industrial Estate every quarter.
This would cost £10k per annum and be funded from the 'For use in future years' budget' reserve for a period of 5 years.
- 2) Raise the default figure of £10 a week, to £20 a week, for disability-related expenditure in financial assessments for adult social care charges as a pilot for 1 year at a cost of £405k. This would be funded from the 'For use in future years' budget' reserve

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