

Merton Council Council

4 February 2015

Tabled Amendments

18	Tabled Labour Amendment to Item 7c	1 - 4
19	Tabled Labour Amendment to Item 10	5 - 10

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2015

ITEM 7C

AMENDMENT TO CONSERVATIVE MOTION ON THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Insert at the beginning of the second paragraph: “Within the reduced funding available from central government and the resulting £32m of savings required over the next four years,”.

After the second paragraph insert:

“Council is deeply concerned by the government’s cuts to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) which have resulted in Merton’s funding for adult skills being cut by £436,865 since 2009/10. Furthermore, in the 2013/14 academic year the funding formula has changed impacting on the council’s costs. We were also advised by the SFA in December that our grant will be reduced by another £35,000 in year - this will be on top of the above figure. Further funding changes are expected to be made in March 2015. We expect this to signal a further reduction in the grant. This is due to the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in which the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) sits being a non ring-fenced department and therefore being responsible for delivering a large amount of the reduction in Government spending announced in the 2014 budget and autumn statement.

In this context it makes sense for the council to plan how we will continue to deliver adult learning in the context of much reduced central government funding. As part of this council thanks the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel for their comprehensive engagement with this process, including their recent pre-decision scrutiny of the options for achieving an affordable service.

Council notes that the scrutiny panel particularly welcomed the proposed Commissioning Principles which Cabinet will consider on 16 February. Council commends these principles to cabinet, as follows:

- (i) That commissioning should look to continue the same breadth of courses currently provided. This does not mean that the courses must be the exact same year to year as needs change but that the breadth and variety should be maintained.
- (ii) That courses should continue to be delivered within the borough
- (iii) That the economic development and skills agendas of the council should be prevalent through the commissioning process
- (iv) That TUPE regulations will be followed and every effort made to retain the highly valued tutors.
- (v) That the environment and support of each provider should be assessed as part of the commissioning process
- (vi) That adults with disabilities and their carers should be involved in the commissioning process for courses specifically tailored for them
- (vii) That discussions about the provision of facilities for art and craft courses should involve user representatives from those courses
- (viii) That a focus on wellbeing and aging well and on helping learners to gain employment should be key elements of the commissioning process to go alongside any focus on qualifications and learning

- (ix) That hobbies, crafts and non-vocational skills courses should still be commissioned in line with SFA funding
- (x) That fees should be set by the council as part of the commissioning process and controlled accordingly
- (xi) That effort should be made to ensure provision is spread around the borough and not just located at one site, although quality and cost will remain key considerations.
- (xii) That, where possible, services should be commissioned with not-for profit organisations
- (xiii) That the outcomes for learners should be closely monitored to ensure that job prospects, well-being, support for vulnerable learners and safeguarding aspects are all considered as part of the commissioning cycle.

The council's core objectives are to do all it can to make the service financially viable for council tax payers so that we can continue to offer adult education services in the borough, despite government cuts."

In the final paragraph, first bullet point, delete "providing" and insert "continuing to offer"; before "funding available" insert "much reduced"; and at the end of this bullet point insert ", and in line with the commissioning principles proposed". In the second bullet point, first sub-bullet point, insert "as planned" at the beginning and "and all aspects of the adult education service, at its meeting on 16 February". In the second sub-bullet point insert at the beginning "as planned,"; delete "a report" and insert "that report"; and at the end of this bullet insert ", in particular in the light of the proposed commissioning principles".

Motion now to read:

That this Council notes the importance of its Strategic Partners in delivering both services to and enhanced life changing experiences for its residents in Merton. The Community Plan 2013 sets out a vision to meet the needs of the community and, in particular amongst its partners, enhancement is provided by:

- the Clinical Commissioning Group (NHS)
- the Merton Chamber of Commerce
- Merton Voluntary Service Council
- the Jobcentre Plus
- South Thames College
- The Community Engagement Network

Within the reduced funding available from central government and the resulting £32m of savings required over the next four years, the Council acknowledges its responsibility to equip residents - young and old - to:

- take advantage of access to and understand the advice of healthcare professionals
- enjoy enrichment by being able to participate fully in the life of the community
- enable engagement with higher education

- be eligible to find employment

Council is deeply concerned by the government's cuts to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) which have resulted in Merton's funding for adult skills being cut by £436,865 since 2009/10. Furthermore, in the 2013/14 academic year the funding formula has changed impacting on the council's costs. We were also advised by the SFA in December that our grant will be reduced by another £35,000 in year - this will be on top of the above figure. Further funding changes are expected to be made in March 2015. We expect this to signal a further reduction in the grant. This is due to the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in which the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) sits being a non ring-fenced department and therefore being responsible for delivering a large amount of the reduction in Government spending announced in the 2014 budget and autumn statement.

In this context it makes sense for the council to plan how we will continue to deliver adult learning in the context of much reduced central government funding. As part of this council thanks the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel for their comprehensive engagement with this process, including their recent pre-decision scrutiny of the options for achieving an affordable service.

Council notes that the scrutiny panel particularly welcomed the proposed Commissioning Principles which Cabinet will consider on 16 February. Council commends these principles to cabinet, as follows:

- (i) That commissioning should look to continue the same breadth of courses currently provided. This does not mean that the courses must be the exact same year to year as needs change but that the breadth and variety should be maintained.
- (ii) That courses should continue to be delivered within the borough
- (iii) That the economic development and skills agendas of the council should be prevalent through the commissioning process
- (iv) That TUPE regulations will be followed and every effort made to retain the highly valued tutors.
- (v) That the environment and support of each provider should be assessed as part of the commissioning process
- (vi) That adults with disabilities and their carers should be involved in the commissioning process for courses specifically tailored for them
- (vii) That discussions about the provision of facilities for art and craft courses should involve user representatives from those courses
- (viii) That a focus on wellbeing and aging well and on helping learners to gain employment should be key elements of the commissioning process to go alongside any focus on qualifications and learning
- (ix) That hobbies, crafts and non-vocational skills courses should still be commissioned in line with SFA funding
- (x) That fees should be set by the council as part of the commissioning process and controlled accordingly
- (xi) That effort should be made to ensure provision is spread around the borough and not just located at one site, although quality and cost will remain key considerations.
- (xii) That, where possible, services should be commissioned with not-for profit organisations

- (xiii) That the outcomes for learners should be closely monitored to ensure that job prospects, well-being, support for vulnerable learners and safeguarding aspects are all considered as part of the commissioning cycle.

The council's core objectives are to do all it can to make the service financially viable for council tax payers so that we can continue to offer adult education services in the borough, despite government cuts.

In order to achieve these objectives the Council resolves:

- not only to meet its statutory obligations to provide education for the young, but also to provide education to adults of every age, by continuing to offer an Adult Education Service which takes full account of the much reduced funding available to it from central government, and in line with the commissioning principles proposed.
- to require the Cabinet to:
 - as planned, review again the economics of maintaining the Adult Education Centre at Whatley Avenue and all aspects of the adult education service, at its meeting on 16 February
 - as planned, spell out in that report how it intends to meet the delivery of Adult Education in Merton in the period 2015-18 and meet its partnership obligations, in particular in light of the proposed commissioning principles.

COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2015

ITEM 10

Amendment to Conservative Motion

In the first paragraph after “This council notes that”, insert initial bullet points as follows:

- “National government has reduced funding to local councils by 40% since 2010;
- The Chancellor George Osborne announced further cuts in the autumn statement before Christmas, with the government’s cuts to local government funding now totalling 60%. The Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR), which is a government department, confirms that this would cut public services to their lowest level since the 1930’s;
- The council needs to find a further £32m of savings a year by 2019;”

In the existing first bullet point delete “administration’s so called” and insert “council’s”; after “July Principles” insert “, agreed by the Labour, Merton Park Independent Residents and Liberal Democrat Groups in July 2011,”; after “commitment to” insert “continue to provide everything that is mandatory and to”; after “services” insert “within limits”; and at the end of this bullet point insert “, which unfortunately the Conservative group did not support.”

After the existing first bullet point add a new bullet point as follows: “As a result, the Cabinet has agreed that adult social care and children’s services should take proportionately less of a share of the cuts than other services. However, the scale of the government’s cuts means all services must find savings, and with adult social care the largest area of the council’s controllable spend it is inevitable that there will need to be cuts to these services. The Cabinet has focused on using the remaining money we have on those who are in the most need and on ensuring the services that people are legally entitled to continue to be delivered in a safe way;”.

At the beginning of the existing second bullet point insert: “The cuts from central government have put huge pressure on council budgets and in adult social care it is very difficult to deliver savings without putting residents at risk.” In the existing first sentence delete “it can’t deliver”; after “2015-16” insert “can no longer be safely delivered,”; and at the end of this bullet point insert “, instead of closing day centres like the Conservatives Group tried to do when they proposed closing All Saints Day Centre in 2007/08. The proposal seeks keep all our day centres open, rather than closing day centres as some councils plan to do, by saving money and changing the way in which we deliver our services with reduced budgets, whilst ensuring our ability to deliver our statutory responsibilities.”

In the existing third bullet delete “plans to cut” and insert “proposals to address the cuts in our funding from central government by cutting”; delete “£9.1m” and insert “£5.4m”; and after “2018-2019” insert “due to the severity of these government cuts which come”.

After the existing third bullet point add a new bullet point as follows: “Additionally, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Government have decided to close the Independent Living Fund (ILF) and to remove the ringfence when the funding is

devolved to councils, which will mean Cabinet will need to consider further difficult decisions in order to ensure help continues to be provided for those who are in the greatest assessed need;”

In the final bullet point delete from “choosing” to “following” and insert “undertaking a modest pilot, mostly paid for by a small government grant, to test whether or not wheeled bins would help keep Merton cleaner while at the same time saving money for council tax payers, following on from”; after “task group” insert “in 2011 which concluded that the most cost effective method should be used for the collection of household waste, as long as this does not adversely impact on the objectives of waste minimisation and maximisation of recycling”; delete “also tend to” and insert “may” and at the end of this bullet insert “but the council will continue to offer an assisted collection as part of the small pilot being undertaken.”

In the second paragraph delete “these” and insert “the government’s”.

In the third paragraph delete “is further concerned by” and insert “notes”; and delete the rest of the paragraph after “Survey” and insert “, which, alongside record levels of residents saying the Council is efficient and well run and offers value for money, finds that 72% of disabled residents say Merton Council is doing a good job, an increase on last year. The percentage who think the council is efficient and well run has increased significantly on last year and the proportion who agree that the council listens to concerns of local residents has also increased. In addition, the percentage of disabled people who feel the council involves residents in making decisions is higher than the pan-London score. Nonetheless, disabled people are less satisfied with council, public transport and health services than non disabled people in Merton and the pan-London results. This is something the Council, along with its partners in health and public transport, need to address, notwithstanding the difficulties resulting from our much reduced funding from central government.”

In the final paragraph insert new action point a) as follows: “Write to the Chancellor and to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government outlining the impact the government’s cuts to local government funding are having on vulnerable local residents;”. In existing action point a) delete “reject the” and insert “Do all it can within the significantly reduced funding it has available to keep our day centres open and examine in detail the proposed”; after “bring forward” insert “as an alternative to closing the centre as previously proposed by the Conservative group, and which scrutiny has been looking at since November,”; after “officers to” insert “continue to try to”; after “identify” insert “whether there are any”; and after “frontline services” insert “, bearing in mind however that we still have to find a further £15m of savings due to reductions in our funding from central government and that as yet the Scrutiny panel has not been able to identify any alternative savings”. Add a new bullet point c) after existing bullet point a) as follows: “Consider the impact of the government’s closure of the ILF and how Merton uses the devolved funding to best cater for those residents who have the greatest assessed needs, with a commitment that this funding will be ring fenced to the adult social care budget based on the principle of those most in need getting their fair share; and”. At the beginning of existing bullet point b) insert “As in previous years”; delete “additional” and insert “continued”; delete “£9 million” and insert “£5.4million”; and delete “were recently under

consultation” and insert “have been brought forward in the usual manner in accordance with the budget timetable”

Motion now to read:

This Council notes that:

- National government has reduced funding to local councils by 40% since 2010;
- The Chancellor George Osborne announced further cuts in the autumn statement before Christmas, with the government’s cuts to local government funding now totalling 60%. The Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR), which is a government department, confirms that this would cut public services to their lowest level since the 1930’s;
- The council needs to find a further £32m of savings a year by 2019;
- The council’s ‘July principles’, agreed by the Labour, Merton Park Independent Residents and Liberal Democrat Groups in July 2011, included a commitment to continue to provide everything that is mandatory and to maintain services, within limits, to the vulnerable and elderly, which unfortunately the Conservative group did not support;
- As a result, the Cabinet has agreed that adult social care and children’s services should take proportionately less of a share of the cuts than other services. However, the scale of the government’s cuts means all services must find savings, and with adult social care the largest area of the council’s controllable spend it is inevitable that there will need to be cuts to these services. The Cabinet has focused on using the remaining money we have on those who are in the most need and on ensuring the services that people are legally entitled to continue to be delivered in a safe way;
- The cuts from central government have put huge pressure on council budgets and in adult social care it is very difficult to deliver savings without putting residents at risk. Among the replacement Adult Social Care savings that the Cabinet has been forced to bring forward this year because £400,000 of savings previously agreed for 2015-16 can no longer be safely delivered, are proposals to reduce by £200,000 the funding of day care services provided at the High Path and All Saints day centres for disabled adults and their carers, instead of closing day centres like the Conservatives Group tried to do when they proposed closing All Saints Day Centre in 2007/08. The proposal seeks keep all our day centres open, rather than closing day centres as some councils plan to do, by saving money and changing the way in which we deliver our services with reduced budgets, whilst ensuring our ability to deliver our statutory responsibilities.
- Consultation has just closed on the Council’s proposals to address the cuts in our funding from central government by cutting spending on Adult Social Care by a further £5.4 million between 2015-2016 and 2018-2019 due to the severity of these government cuts which come despite an estimated 9% increase in the older population of Merton between 2015 and 2020 and a projected increase of around 5% in the number of residents with learning disabilities over that period; and

- Additionally, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Government have decided to close the Independent Living Fund (ILF) and to remove the ringfence when the funding is devolved to councils, which will mean Cabinet will need to consider further difficult decisions in order to ensure help continues to be provided for those who are in the greatest assessed need;
- At the same time, the current administration is undertaking a modest pilot, mostly paid for by a small government grant, to test whether or not wheeled bins would help keep Merton cleaner while at the same time saving money for council tax payers, following on from a detailed and in depth review by a cross-party Scrutiny task group in 2011 which concluded that the most cost effective method should be used for the collection of household waste, as long as this does not adversely impact on the objectives of waste minimisation and maximisation of recycling. Wheeled bins may be more problematic for older and disabled residents to use but the council will continue to offer an assisted collection as part of the small pilot being undertaken.

This Council is concerned about the impact of the government's spending cuts on the most vulnerable residents in our community, since they face losing highly valued support services which promote independence and provide vital respite for their carers.

This Council notes the results of the latest Annual Residents' Survey, which, alongside record levels of residents saying the Council is efficient and well run and offers value for money, finds that 72% of disabled residents say Merton Council is doing a good job, an increase on last year. The percentage who think the council is efficient and well run has increased significantly on last year and the proportion who agree that the council listens to concerns of local residents has also increased. In addition, the percentage of disabled people who feel the council involves residents in making decisions is higher than the pan-London score. Nonetheless, disabled people are less satisfied with council, public transport and health services than non disabled people in Merton and the pan-London results. This is something the Council, along with its partners in health and public transport, need to address, notwithstanding the difficulties resulting from our much reduced funding from central government

This Council therefore resolves to urge Cabinet to:

- a) Write to the Chancellor and to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government outlining the impact the government's cuts to local government funding are having on vulnerable local residents;
- b) Do all it can within the significantly reduced funding it has available to keep our day centres open and examine in detail the proposed £200,000 cut to day care support for disabled adults provided at the High Path and All Saints day centres, which the administration has chosen to bring forward as an alternative to closing the centre as previously proposed by the Conservative group, and which scrutiny has been looking at since November, and ask officers to continue to try to identify whether there are any alternative efficiency savings for 2015-16 that do not impact on front line services, bearing in mind however that we still have to find a further £15m of savings

- due to reductions in our funding from central government and that as yet the Scrutiny panel has not been able to identify any alternative savings; and
- c) Consider the impact of the government's closure of the ILF and how Merton uses the devolved funding to best cater for those residents who have the greatest assessed needs, with a commitment that this funding will be ring fenced to the adult social care budget based on the principle of those most in need getting their fair share; and
 - d) As in previous years, ensure there is continued scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission or the relevant panel of the £5.4 million of new savings proposals in Adult Social Care which have been brought forward in the usual manner in accordance with the budget timetable.

This page is intentionally left blank