

Amendment 1: Fresh start for Merton/Cost of Living Rebate

That after Recommendation 1F), new Recommendations 1G), 1H), 1L) be added:

1G) The Council encourages the Cabinet to make clean sweep of previous ways of operating by:

- Recognising that the Strategic Framework as agreed in Cabinet on 17 January 2022 (comprising an ambition for Merton, strategic priorities, guiding principles and delivery objectives) is only the starting point in the development of an ongoing vision and narrative, and should be regularly monitored and updated;
- Recognising that the key challenges faced by the borough's residents include: housing supply, housing standards, building the local economy, increased cost of living and the current and future impacts of the climate emergency;
- Ensuring that practical steps are taken in budget planning to monitor the impact of decisions on the Strategic vision and key challenges; and
- Ensuring that the financial strategy is explicit about how it supports the Strategic Framework and key challenges.

1H) The Council asks Cabinet to:

- Offset the General Increase in Council Tax by a 'cost of living rebate' of £8 to be given to all 62,000 households in Council Tax band A to D, some 72% of households, and funded by the use of £0.5m from the Outstanding Council Programme Board reserve in 2022/23 (this would involve minimal additional administrative costs as it would be paid alongside the energy cost rebate already due to be implemented).
- Revise the 2022/23 Council Tax Support Scheme (the CTSS) to disregard any payment made under the cost of living rebate in determining entitlement to a reduction under the CTSS.
- Ensure that those residents in Council Tax band E to H properties, but on low incomes, are duly considered for the discretionary funding which is being made available by Government for those in need of support.

1L) Council asks Cabinet to fully implement the recommendations of the Sustainable Communities Panel on 18 January 2022 and the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 19 January 2022 that saving ENV2022-23 03, regarding Deen City Farm, should be removed on the basis that it is a saving to be made from 2023/24 onwards and "in anticipation of finding an alternative saving".

Amendment 2: Taking practical action to make stations more accessible

That after Recommendation 1F), new Recommendation 1G) be added:

1G) Rail companies have been asked to put forward an initial list of stations to be considered for the next round of the DfT's *Access for All* funding (ie to improve accessibility at stations).

Councillors have been told by both rail companies and Network Rail that having existing/standing plans for accessibility improvements at stations is an important way to improve the likelihood of securing funding (both within and outside of the *Access for All* framework).

We call on Cabinet to develop criteria to assess prioritisation of local improvements (eg passenger numbers, estimated cost, stakeholder opinions etc), with options for match funding to be ready for the next *Access for All* bidding round, or earlier in the event of other funding opportunities. We also call on Cabinet to consider commissioning relevant plans for improvement works from existing budgets, to ensure that proposals are “shovel ready” when funding opportunities arise.

Amendment 3: Schools energy bill support fund

That after Recommendation 1F), new Recommendation 1G) be added:

1G) Teachers and governors tell us that increased gas and electricity bills are placing huge pressures on budgets, with some bills more than doubled.

We’re told this is impacted by the need for extra heating and lighting caused by some Covid mitigations (eg air purifiers, additional heating because of open windows), as well as higher gas and electricity prices.

As such, Council calls on Cabinet to establish a “Schools energy bill support fund” in the event there’s an underspend in the General Fund if monies come through as part of the Safety Valve funding, to help schools manage these budget difficulties, especially in the short term, and to consider other funding opportunities.