

COUNCIL – 26 FEBRUARY 2020

2020/21 Budget and Council Tax

TABLED PAPER: Conservative Group Budget Amendment

This Council therefore amends as set out below the 2020/21 budget proposals, by proposing a reduction in the Hackney element of the Council Tax of £52.16 per Band D equivalent.

	£'000s
Proposed changes in capital expenditure	
Reduce investment in planned highways maintenance <i>Note: the Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and the Director of Public Realm would strongly advise that this reduction is only maintained for one year and will need to be reversed as part of the development of the 2021/22 Budget</i>	(2,000)
Rephasing of the maintenance and development of the Council's ICT infrastructure and systems	(1,500)
Removal of expenditure on the introduction of traffic calming measures	(50)
Rephasing of the programme of LED light bulb replacements in street lamps, introducing a pilot project to assess level of energy savings achievable	(330)
Sub-total of proposed changes in capital expenditure	(3,880)
TOTAL CHANGE IN BUDGET REQUIREMENT <i>n.b. the proposed change in capital expenditure will take the form of a one-off reduction in Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay to fund the reduction in Council tax as set out above.</i>	(3,880)

Council therefore amends as follows the 2020/21 budget proposals, including a reduction in the Hackney element of the Council Tax of £52.16 per Band D equivalent. The Group Director of Finance & Corporate Resources advises that he can give the reassurances required by Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 with regard to the adequacy of the reserves and the robustness of the estimates on the basis of the notes included with the proposed amendments. It is also important to note that where resources identified above are only one off resources they can only be used to fund expenditure for one year.

The proposed amendments set out above will generate a Council Tax Requirement of £83.866m, which equates to a Council Tax of £1,127.44 (£6.91 reduction when compared to 2019/20) at the Band D level for Hackney purposes. When added to the proposals of the preceptor, the Greater London Authority, this would produce a total at band D level of £1,459.51 for residents, which equates to an overall £4.65 increase from 2019/20.

It should be noted that the Conservative Group do not agree with any increase in the GLA precept and indeed we believe that if we had a Conservative Mayor of London, there would be no increase in the GLA precept and we would therefore be able to pass on the full reduction of £6.91 as set out above to residents.

The GLA should end inefficient and wasteful expenditure on schemes and projects that ignore the outcome of consultations. The GLA needs to account fully for the increase of £10 per Band D property in 2020/21 in respect of the "Police precept" and explain how

numbers of officers on the streets have or will have changed as a result of this additional tax.

A Conservative administration would undertake a root and branch review of the budget and would introduce an emergency budget to realign the Council's expenditure in line with a Conservative Mayor's priorities.

In addition to the proposed amendments set out above for 2020/21, the Conservative group proposes that the following reviews take place during 2020/21 in order to identify further efficiencies, to include:

- A review of the potential policy change in respect of moving to two weekly bin collection and to maintain current weekly service across all of the borough. We believe that the proposals reward those on estates where recycling rates are lowest whilst penalising those in other types of accommodation who already recycle waste
- End publication of the quarterly Hackney Today and Hackney Live which is produced eight times a year, replacing the previous fortnightly production and to explore more efficient means of publishing service information.
- Ending the implementation of public realm schemes relating to road closures and other traffic calming measures, which are ineffective, thereby reducing air pollution particularly around schools. Many such schemes have had an adverse impact on the safety of local residents and other road users. We also believe that some of these schemes have had an adverse impact on local businesses and residents. Typical examples of wasted money are the super cycle highway at West Bank, works at Clapton Common and other road closures in the Stoke Newington area.
- A review of the way in which officers support members, ensuring efficiency and reduced cost of the support provided via direct contact with relevant officers across the Council as required
- Review of street crossing patrols with a view to increasing the number across the borough to ensure the safety of children using our roads.
- A commitment to ensure that there are no reductions in the support of children in our schools with special education needs.
- A thorough research project to determine the feasibility of raising revenue income from advertisements on the council's recycling and refuse vehicle fleet.
- No further expenditure to be incurred on Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ), including those not yet implemented. Further to this we would undertake a thorough analysis of income from CPZ's and how this is used in support of the Council's budget, ensuring it is used fully in accordance with the related statutory regulations.
- A review of the consultation process, particularly regarding CPZs, to ensure that the final decisions take full account of the views expressed by residents and business.
- Explore the possibility of removing estate parking charges to encourage residents of the estates to park on those estates with a view to freeing up parking capacity on surrounding roads in the borough for other users.
- A review of the application of s106 funds to ensure that those with some flexibility regarding their use are used most efficiently in pursuit of the Council's overall aims and objectives. In addition a review of the application of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds
 - to ensure a fairer distribution across schools in the borough.
- Review of schemes agreed with TfL as part of the Local Implementation Plan (LIP) with a view to agreeing a re-prioritisation of funding in order to reduce call on the Council's discretionary capital programme for general repairs. This review and any subsequent proposed changes to the approved LIP will need to be agreed by TfL. Further to this, we would encourage TfL to supply seating at all bus stops, available for those residents and users that have disabilities or unable to stand for prolonged

periods of time. In addition, to ensure that no further cuts are made to the buses that run through Hackney, either in terms of their numbers or routes.

- A review of the roads maintenance programme ensuring that repairs are not required to be repeated on the same roads and pathways within short timeframes and ensuring that works by the Council are fully coordinated with those of the utility companies. Recent examples of this include Manor Road and Amhurst Park.
- A review of the Springfield Park Capital scheme, ensuring that key elements are developed in line with the responses from public consultation, e.g. the reinstatement of toilet blocks on the top level in order to ensure disabled users needs are met.
- Explore options to combine the Planning and Enforcement services with other suitable boroughs to achieve efficiencies and better understanding of the approach to large families, alongside a full review of grants available to planning authorities in order to ensure these are fully exploited.
- Explore more fully the potential of providing some of our services to other Council's, thus maximising efficiencies further and generating income for the Council, e.g. provision of Registrar's service to Waltham Forest.
- A review of assistance to small business to ensure that optimum level of support is provided, focusing on areas such as increasing take up of small business rate relief.
- Ensure that social care is delivered in a way that ensures the needs of all communities are respected and accommodated.
- A review of the promotion of youth services specifically aimed at increasing further knowledge of what is available in order to increase the use of the services provided.
- A review to ensure that the needs of rough sleepers and those included in the homeless band are adequately accommodated within the housing lettings policy, ensuring available properties are fairly and transparently allocated.
- A review of the use of the corporate estate, ensuring that public areas are used to their full capacity and this increasing revenue to the Council. This review will include specifically:
 - Review of the use of Stoke Newington Town Hall Assembly Rooms and the potential to provide parking for attendees at events such as large weddings. We believe that the lack of parking provision has led to potential users finding alternative accommodation, thereby reducing potential revenue income;
 - Review of the use of estate community halls with a view to increasing the use by residents of the borough;
 - Encourage schools to use suitable space for out of hours activities for residents in order to raise additional revenue income for further investment in the schools.
- End ward forums with immediate effect and use the monies thereby saved for social care.
- Review of the application of funds available to the Council for the implementation of Neighbourhood Forums, eg. In the Stamford Hill area, alongside a review of the Planning Service to ensure that consideration of applications for local neighbourhood forums are fair. It is currently very difficult to get local neighbourhood forums agreed by the London Borough of Hackney.
- A review of senior officer's salaries across the Council, particularly in respect of the senior management team.
- A review of members allowances with a view to reducing costs of the cabinet and a recommendation to cap Mayor's allowance at £50k per annum. We would bring to an end the current position whereby there are two deputy Mayors, thereby helping to reduce costs by £6.6k and increasing accountability.
- Discontinue the Standards Committee with immediate effect given this is no longer a legal requirement, whilst ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Localism Act and other statutory guidance. In any event, whilst the Committee exists, ensure that it does comply with those regulations.

- Further review of the Scrutiny arrangements with a view to revert to the previous system which was in place.
- Bearing in mind the increase to the GLA element of the Council Tax, to make representations to the Mayor of London regarding future scrutiny of expenditure on schemes within the Borough of Hackney, e.g the number of police officers on the streets.

Proposer: Cllr Simche Steinberger

Seconder: Cllr Harvey Odze