

2023/24 Revenue Estimates and Council Tax

TABLED PAPER: Conservative Group Budget Amendment

This Council therefore amends as set out below the 2023/24 budget proposals, by proposing a reduction in the proposed Hackney element of the Council Tax of £64.84 per Band D equivalent.

	£'000s
Proposed changes in capital expenditure	
<p>Reduce investment in planned highways maintenance</p> <p><i>Note: the Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and the Strategic Director of Sustainability and 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 2024/25 Budget.</i></p> <p><i>There is a £4.75m capital budget for highways maintenance. This budget has been increased to reflect the increasing cost of maintenance to ensure the buying power is maintained. The Highways Maintenance capital budget is fully spent each year. The spend is essential to maintain safe highways and prevent slips, trips and falls; reducing spend on highways maintenance can lead to insurance from road users, drivers, cyclists and pedestrians which could lead to increased costs.</i></p>	(1,560)
<p>Rephasing of investment in Kings Hall over a longer time frame</p> <p><i>The deferring of this expenditure for much longer would be contrary to a structural engineers report that states the remedial works should be completed within 1 to 2 years.</i></p>	(400)
<p>Stop any further spending on the further roll out of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in 2023/24.</p>	(500)
<p>Do not invest further in School Streets</p>	(390)
<p>Reduce investment on CCTV enforcement cameras</p>	(350)
<p>Reduce investment in cycle hangers</p>	(300)
<p>Sub-total of proposed in capital expenditure</p>	(3,500)
<p>Review of members allowances with a view to reducing costs of the Cabinet by, for example, reducing the number of Cabinet members.</p>	(100)
<p>Reviewing and reducing the highways maintenance revenue budget</p> <p><i>Nb There is a risk that this investment may need to be replaced in the following year. The highways maintenance revenue budget is £635K - reducing spend in this area increases the risk of insurance claims so may cost the Council more in the long run. In addition the increase in the cost of materials in highways maintenance has reduced the buying power of the budget - further reductions will impact the quality of the highway and may lead to increased cost through insurance claims.</i></p>	(300)
<p>Do not invest in expanding the Zero Emissions Network and in establishing Hackney, Light & Power as a publicly-owned municipal energy company.</p>	(107)
<p>Reducing revenue expenditure on tree maintenance and overall investment in this area.</p> <p><i>Nb There is a risk that this investment may need to be replaced in the following year. The revenue budget for tree maintenance, on the streets and in parks, is £565K. There is also an insurance risk if trees are not maintained - there will be a heightened risk of health</i></p>	(260)

<i>and safety issues with falling trees or branches which could cause injury or damage to property. May cost the Council more in the long run</i>	
Do not invest in developing enhanced and expanded Supplementary Planning Guidance on green infrastructure, including vertical forests, green thoroughfares and gardens.	(133)
Do not invest in the additional officers in the Private Sector Housing division in relation to enforcement around damp and mould.	(400)
Review the Council's expenditure on External & Internal Communications.	(200)
TOTAL CHANGE IN BUDGET REQUIREMENT <i>n.b. the proposed change in capital expenditure (i.e. the £3,500k) 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>	(5,000)

Council therefore amends as set out the 2023/24 budget proposals, including a reduction in the proposed Hackney element of the proposed Council Tax of £64.84 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 £98.260m in 2023/24, which equates to a Council Tax of £1,274.31 (£1.19 decrease when compared to 2022/23) 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 £1,708.45 for residents, which equates to an overall £37.36 increase from 2022/23. This is shown in the table below

Comparison of 2022/23 to 2023/24 Council Tax Levels, with the Conservative Amendment to the Hackney Rate

	2023-24* £	2022-23 £	Change £	Change %
Hackney	£1,274.31	£1,275.50	−£1.19	−0.09%
GLA	£434.14	£395.59	£38.55	9.74%
Total	£1,708.45	£1,671.09	£37.36	2.24%

Note: *Hackney Tax Rate after Conservative Amendment

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.

The GLA should end inefficient and wasteful expenditure on schemes and projects that ignore the outcome of consultations. In addition, all schools should benefit from the Mayor of London's free school meals announcement, not just state schools.

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 2023/24, the Conservative group proposes that the following reviews take place during 2023/24 in order to identify further efficiencies, to include:

- Revoking the policy change in respect of moving to two weekly bin collection and to reinstate weekly service across all of the borough. We believe that the two weekly bin collections reward those on estates where recycling rates are lowest whilst penalising those in other types of accommodation who already recycle waste. We would also reduce unnecessary expenditure on replacement bins.
- End publication of Love Hackney, which is produced ten times a year, and 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.
- 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.
- 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. Ensure schemes are adapted for all communities and special dispensation for Churches, Synagogues and Mosques and Public Holidays.
- A review of the consultation process, particularly regarding CPZs, to ensure that every local resident and local business have a say unlike the new consultation process which limits responses per household and 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.
- Recognising that the funding available to Hackney from TfL as part of the Local Implementation Plan (LIP) has reduced drastically, we would still review the programme with a view to agreeing a re-prioritisation of funding in order to reduce calls on the Council's discretionary capital programme for general highways maintenance. 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. Additionally, a Conservative administration would lobby the GLA for the focus of the LIP programme to shift to general maintenance of the highway rather than schemes that restrict traffic flow.

- 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.
- 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, to speed up the delivery of planning applications including provision of more efficient transport management input.
- 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. In addition, undertake a review and improve communication to ensure local businesses are aware of any grants including those who do not have on-line access to ensure maximum uptake, including all Covid-related grants.
- Ensure that social care is delivered in a way that ensures the needs of all communities are respected and accommodated and ensure that all new funding streams are fully explored and utilised.
- Review existing Children's Centre provision and identify options to maintain provision at all existing sites.
- A review of the use of the corporate estate, ensuring that public areas are used to their full capacity and thus 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, e.g. In the Stamford Hill area, alongside a review of the Planning Service to ensure that consideration of applications for local neighbourhood forums is fair. It is currently very difficult to get local neighbourhood forums agreed by the London Borough of Hackney.
- A review of members' allowances with a view to reducing costs of the cabinet and a recommendation to cap the Mayor's allowance at £50k per annum.
- Implement independent scrutiny before planning enforcement actions are taken to ensure that cases with low risk of success and where there is not a robust public interest argument are not taken forward.
- 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. All schools should benefit from the Free School Meals announcement.the number of police officers on the streets and the number of buses he is proposing to reduce.
- Review of legal expenditure in relation to defending new policy decisions.
- Look at current proposals for Clapton Common recognising the need for long-term investment.
- Undertake an efficiency review of the process for allocating Blue Badges and allocation of disabled bays.

Overall, this budget is put forward within a limited context and were a Conservative administration to be elected we would undertake a zero-base budget review of all areas of spend.

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