

2024/25 Revenue Estimates and Council Tax

TABLED PAPER: Green Group Budget Amendment

In response to the pressing financial challenges facing Hackney Council, the Green Group's budget amendment provides a way for Hackney's Labour council to avoid carrying out some of the most impactful Conservative austerity cuts in this budget. The Green Group is presenting a **practical and considered amendment** aimed at safeguarding vital services and promoting equity within the community **to invest in a brighter future for Hackney residents**, especially in services that support Hackney's children and young people.

Acknowledging the gravity of the ongoing austerity measures and their detrimental effects on local authority finances, we recognise the need for prudent fiscal management. Our commitment to scrutinising the council's financial situation, evidenced by our active participation in the Audit Committee since 2022, underscores our **dedication to ensuring the responsible allocation of resources**.

We are encouraged by the administration's acknowledgement of our earlier proposals, including the council tax reduction scheme being delivered sooner and further action to address the council's contribution to the climate crisis. We're pleased that, despite rejecting our amendments last year, the administration has subsequently seen their worth and has increased filming fees as well as removing a Mayoral Advisor role and reviewing and enhancing the utilisation of community halls.

However, we remain **deeply concerned about the erosion of public trust in the council**, exacerbated by recent instances of instability. The financial and reputational costs of such turbulence underscore the imperative for the council to do everything it can to restore that trust and ensure stability.

Our proposed budget amendment is rooted in our core Green values¹ and community priorities. **We advocate for measures to tackle inequality and invest in preventative provision**. In addition to this budget **we work hard year-round** encouraging the council to prioritise the **ethical use of funds**, advocating for **divestment from fossil fuels, arms and companies implicated in human rights abuses** and for improved procurement practices that leverage the council's power to **influence positive change** outside of the areas where it directly delivers services.

While cognisant of the challenges posed by statutory service commitments, we present innovative ideas aimed at protecting essential services. We **adamantly oppose cuts to children's centres and youth services**, viewing them as crucial investments in the safety, wellbeing and development of the borough's young people.

¹ <https://policy.greenparty.org.uk/our-core-values/>

We've heard at the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission that a report by UK Youth and Frontier Economics in 2022² demonstrated that the annual investment in youth work nationally saves the taxpayer as much £3.2bn, delivering high value for money thanks to improved societal health, increased employment and education, and reduced crime. The analysis estimated that the **return on investment (ROI) for youth work is between 3.2x and 6.4x** – that is for every pound the government invests in the youth sector it generates between £3.20 and £6.40 in benefits to the taxpayer. Using the government's own benchmarks for value for money, this estimate for the ROI of youth work can be considered 'high' to 'very high'. A similar calculation for Young Hackney suggests that the **current investment benefits taxpayers by between £24m and £46m**. A coalition of organisations, led by Liberty, has highlighted the need to protect youth spaces and services to give young people the best chance in life³.

Hackney Labour's proposed cuts to children's centres make very little sense against the Conservative government's proposed increases to the subsidy for free childcare entitlement, which will almost certainly increase demand and result in savings exceeding those the Labour Party is proposing without the need for cuts to provision. Our budget amendment explains how children's centres can be protected until these new arrangements have started.

Furthermore, we propose:

- Investing further in our young people with a **£100,000 creative arts grant** program.
- The appointment of an **empty homes officer** to help address the housing supply crisis
- And the establishment of a **locality fund** to empower grass-roots community-driven projects.

As stewards of public trust and resources, we must act decisively to navigate these challenging times, prioritising investments that **foster resilience, equity, and sustainability** within our community, protecting and **enhancing vital services for all residents of Hackney**.

²

<https://www.ukyouth.org/2022/11/ground-breaking-uk-youth-report-aims-to-realise-untapped-potential-of-youth-work/>

³

<https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/fundamental/holding-our-own-a-guide-to-non-policing-solutions-to-serious-youth-violence/>

This Council therefore amends as set out below the 2024/25 budget proposals.

	£'000s
Proposed reductions in expenditure/increase in income	
<p>Reduce RCCO by reviewing the capital programme and re-phasing some of the larger schemes to later years.</p> <p><i>It is the advice of the S151 officer that the planned reduction in RCCOs reduces the Council's flexibility for addressing cost pressures which may emerge during the financial year 2024/25. It also increases borrowing in subsequent years as the proposal is to delay investment rather than reduce permanently.</i></p>	(1,583)
<p>Review of discounts on visitor parking vouchers for the over 60s and blue badge holders.</p> <p>(increase discount for blue badge holders to 70%, reduce discount for over 60s who are not blue badge holders to 30%)</p>	(75)
<p>Review and reduction in Cabinet including reducing two Mayoral Advisor roles and a deputy mayor.</p>	(100)
<p>Increase film charges to be more in line with neighbouring borough, Based on increasing the filming charges by 43% on the rates proposed for 2024/25 and adjusting for reduced demand and taking into account the demand on lower charges for smaller crews.</p> <p>A 43% increase in the hourly rate for the the large crew film location would result in a charge of £500 per hour, from £350 proposed. Our neighbouring borough charges up to £7,500 per day.</p> <p><i>It is the advice of the S151 officer that further detailed modelling is recommended to be undertaken before implementation. The current proposed pricing structure for 2024/25 follows the review of a neighbouring borough's charges and the service believe the charges proposed are sustainable. Increasing the charges significantly may reduce demand and therefore income may be lower overall.</i></p>	(100)
Sub-total of proposed reductions in expenditure/increase in income	(1,858)
Proposed increases in expenditure:	
<p>Delay Children's Centre savings proposals by one year</p> <p><i>It is the advice of the S151 officer that these savings will be required to be made to balance the budget over the medium term period given the scale of the financial challenge faced by the Council.</i></p>	1,100
<p>Delay Youth Services savings proposals by one year</p> <p><i>It is the advice of the S151 officer that these savings will be required to be made to balance the budget over the medium term period given the scale of</i></p>	500

<i>the financial challenge faced by the Council.</i>	
Use proposed increase in film income for the implementation of a creative arts grant programme for young people. (Approximately £8k of the expenditure would be on administration of the programme)	100
Appointment of an empty homes officer	53
We would like to propose a locality fund, about £5k per ward per year (£105k or £3684 for a 2 cllr ward and £5526 for a 3 cllr ward) to be used as seed funding for community projects etc, Councillors would help allocate where this would benefit	105
Sub-total of proposed increases in expenditure	1,858
TOTAL CHANGE IN BUDGET REQUIREMENT	0

As the reductions in spend equate to the additional investment there is no impact on the Council Tax of these proposed amendments.

A Green Administration would also undertake reviews in a range of budget areas including the following:

- Review council tax on empty properties, looking to increase this and ensure that all properties are charged from the earliest point.
- Parking charges so they align with CPRE recommendations.⁴
- Retrofit and other measures to address the climate emergency and cost of living crisis.

Proposer: Cllr Zoë Garbett

Seconder: Cllr Alastair Binnie-Lubbock

⁴ <https://www.cprelondon.org.uk/news/london-boroughs-must-take-more-action-on-parking/>