

Council (Council Tax)

Thursday 27 February 2020

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PROCEDURAL MOTION

Announcement on Covid 19

It is proposed that Councillor Adam Swersky be permitted to speak for 1 minute prior to item 6 to make an announcement on Covid 19.

Borough Plan 2020-2030 including the Corporate Plan

It is proposed that Councillor Antonio Weiss and Councillor Richard Almond be allowed to speak for up to 5 minutes on this item.

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CABINET

13 FEBRUARY 2020

Record of decisions taken at the meeting held on Thursday 13 February 2020.

Present:

Chair: * Councillor Graham Henson

Councillors: * Sue Anderson * Varsha Parmar
* Simon Brown * Christine Robson
* Keith Ferry * Krishna Suresh
† Phillip O'Dell * Adam Swersky

**Non-Executive
Cabinet Member:** * Antonio Weiss

**Non-Executive
Voluntary Sector
Representative:** * John Higgins

In attendance: Richard Almond Minute 287
Marilyn Ashton
Paul Osborn
Anjana Patel

* Denotes Member present

† Denotes apologies received

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

294. Draft Borough Plan 2020-2030 including the Draft Corporate Plan

Resolved to **RECOMMEND:** (to Council)

That

- (1) the draft Borough Plan 2020-2030 be approved for consultation;
- (2) the draft priorities for the Council for the 2020/21 year be adopted and that all service planning activity be driven by the new set of Corporate Priorities;
- (3) ~~responsibility be delegated back to Cabinet for approving~~ The Corporate Plan Delivery Plan will be reported to by Cabinet in June 2020, ~~which~~this would set out the Council's shorter term contribution and performance measures for delivery of the Corporate Plan (Borough Plan). The Plan would then go to July Full Council for approval.

[Call-in does not apply as the decision is reserved to full Council.]

RESOLVED: That

- (4) the Director of Strategy and Partnerships, following consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to make any minor amendments to the Plan as necessary prior to the matter going to Council;
- (5) following consultation, the final Borough Plan 2020-2030 be submitted to Council for approval in February 2021; and
- (6) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to comment on the Draft Borough Plan and consider how they want Scrutiny to be involved in the further development of the Borough Plan.

Reason for Recommendation: To update the Council's Policy Framework and set out the Council's longer term direction of travel for the borough, establishing a vision which is owned by partners and jointly delivered, following a year of consultation.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: As set out in the report.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation Granted: None.

[Proposed by Cllr Paul Osborn](#)

[Seconded by Cllr Marilyn Ashton](#)

By amending this budget we are not accepting that the rest of Labour's financial blueprint for Harrow is acceptable or that we accept a number of the assumptions and decisions built into their budget. However we present this to show how better choices can be made to deliver for the residents of Harrow.

Labour has been running Harrow Council now for nearly a decade, their record as an administration can be summed up simply as 'decline'. The only thing that has not declined under this Labour administration is the Council Tax increases, which have been steep. Harrow Council charges one of the highest levels of Council Tax in London, despite this Harrow residents seem to be getting less than before. We've seen the Council failing to hit recycling targets, despite declaring a climate emergency. Harrow Council's Labour leadership has covertly spent thousands of pounds on community Facebook groups in order to have publicity of their failings covered up. And rather than delivering improved resident services, instead in this year's budget we see an attempt to splurge on the Council's bureaucracy, further bloating the back offices rather than funding the frontline.

The Harrow Conservative Group proposes this amendment to the budget (as set out in table one, appendix one) so that we have a budget that delivers on what matters to Harrow's residents.

- Harrow Labour has taxed residents to the brink. We understand the ever increasing demand on Council finances, combined with the Labour administrations mismanagement of the Council, means that sadly there must be an increase in Council Tax in this year's budget. But not be to the level proposed by Labour; we believe that local people know how to spend their money best. **That's why we are proposing to reduce the proposed increase by 0.5%.**
- By removing unnecessary enlargement of communications, HR and health & safety back office staff, **we have freed up funds to invest in a 'Street Cleaning Task Force', helping to fight the blight of fly-tipping which is affecting Harrow.**
- By eliminating Labour's petty political projects from the budget, **we can propose an increase in free parking from 20 minutes to 30 minutes.** This will allow residents to park and pop into local shops, the bank or the Post Office for longer, which will support small businesses and Harrow's economy.
- At the January Cabinet, the Chair of the Harrow Association of Disabled people (HAD) put forward a request for £35,000 of funding. Given the fact that the Council and Citizen's Advice Bureau continue to refer disabled people to HAD despite the Labour administration's cut of all funding to the group in 2017, this request seems reasonable to us. **As such, we will provide funding of £35,000 for welfare advice services, such as this.**
- Lastly, **reinstating the locking of Harrow's public parks at night is now possible through our rebalancing of the budget.** This will prevent anti-social behaviour, discourage crime and protect our precious community parks.

In addition, we propose to combine the separate reserves Labour has built up and add them to the General Reserve. We also propose to delete the one off cost of £30,000 for the Borough Plan and add that money to the Reserves (this is set out in table two, appendix one).

Conservative Amendment A (Budget)

These are only a few of the changes that Harrow's Conservative Councillors would implement if we were in control of the Council. Unfortunately the vast majority of this year's budget cannot be changed due to the Labour administration's mismanagement of the finances. But we believe this demonstrates that, even with the limited changes listed above, Harrow's Conservative Councillors will put residents' interests first.

Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) comments:

My advice on the Final Budget for 2020/21 (as presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2020) was that the budget was sufficiently robust but there are significant budget gaps for 2021/22 and 2022/23 which require robust and sustainable proposals to address. The budget amendments proposed by the Conservative Group do not change my advice on the budget and Medium Financial Strategy.

Proposed by Councillor Paul Osborn

Seconded by Councillor Marilyn Ashton

Appendix One**Table One****Budget Reductions**

Department	2020/21	2021/22
Communications	£300,000	0
HR	£140,000	0
H & S	£200,000	-£100,000
Sticking to the Depot business case	£118,000	£355,000
Facilities Management	£200,000	0
Ward Priorities	£21,000	0
District Centre projects	£100,000	0

Total Budget savings	£1,079,000	£255,000
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Budget Redistributions

Scheme	2020/21	2021/22
Reduction in Council Tax increase	£650,000	0
Street Cleaning Task Force	£250,000	£200,000
Welfare Advice Services	£35,000	0
Increase free car parking from 20 mins to 30 mins	£100,000	0
Re-introduce park locking	£44,000	£50,000

	2020/21	2021/22
Total Budget Redistributions	£1,079,000	£250,000

	2020/21	2021/22
Surplus/Deficit	£0	£5,000

Table two

Current Reserve Structure		
Reserve Name	Balance as at 01/04/19	Balance as at 01/04/20 (after budget application)
Contingency for unforeseen items	£1.248m	1.248m
Budget Planning	£2.629m	£0m. All applied to 20/21 budget
Business Risk Reserve	£7.526m	£0m (allowing £1m per annum for member investment for 3 years and £4.526 into MTFS in 2020/21 and 2021/22)
MTFS implementation	£2m	£1.829m
Capacity Building	£4.261m	£0m. (At P10, the estimated carry forward into 2020/21 is £1.5m which is committed.)
Commercialisation Reserve	£1.265m	£0m (committed to support Community directorate over a 2 year period)
General Fund Reserves	£10m	£10m
Total	£28.929m	£14.577m

Amended Reserve Structure	
Reserve Name	Balance as at 01/04/20 (after budget application)
General Fund	£14.607m*
Total	£14.607m

*= All reserves consolidated into one fund, the General Reserve. Also, £30,000 one off payment from the Borough Plan is added to the reserve.

Conservative Amendment A summary (Budget) – Appendix Two

Budget Reductions

Communications – Removal of growth £300K – RES G4

HR – Reduction in growth from £426K to £286K, saving £140K – RES G1

H & S – Removal of growth £200k – COM G5

Sticking to the Depot business case – Adding commercial Income from renting the top two floors £118K (year 1), £355K (year 2) – COM_19.20 SO5

Facilities Management – Reduction of growth from £500K to £300K, saving £200K – COM G10

Ward Priorities & District Centre Projects – Removal of growth of £21K for Ward Priorities and £100K for District Centre Projects

Our better choices

Reduction in Council Tax increase – cost £650K

Street Cleaning Task Force – investment of £250K (year one), £200K (year two).

Welfare Advice Services – investment of £35K

Increase free car parking from 20 mins to 30mins – cost £100K

Re-introduce park locking – cost £44K (year one) and £50K (year two)

Reserves

We are proposing combining all the pots of reserves that Labour have built up and adding them to the General Reserve.

We are also deleting the one off expenditure of £30,000 on consultation for the new Borough Plan and adding this to reserves, in case the building of the new depot offices are delayed or the cost of the car parking changes is greater than expected.

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