

Conservative Amendment A (Budget)

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).

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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