

Conservative Amendment (Budget)

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

In the last year, Harrow has been recovering from the devastating effect of Covid-19 on our communities and our families. The Council has received £1.4 billion in funding from central government to support the local authority before and during the pandemic. Despite the generous level of government funding, we accept that finances are tight for the Council. We have been able to identify funds which should be spent elsewhere as well as utilising our reserves. What has been clear from the original budget is that Labour has no plan for Harrow, and no clue about how to deliver meaningful change for local people.

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

- By using funds already raised from prosecuting illegal developments and planning breaches as well as removing previous increased spending from HR, **we will create a Planning Enforcement Taskforce, which will specifically target illegal HMOs and beds-in-sheds** in the borough.
- By utilising funds intended for the flawed Accommodation Strategy, **we will invest in a 'Street Cleaning Taskforce', helping to fight the blight of fly-tipping which is affecting Harrow.**
- In order to help local businesses to get back on their feet as we recover from the Covid epidemic, **we are proposing an increase in free on-street parking from 20 minutes to 60 minutes throughout the borough.** This will allow residents to park and shop, go to the bank, or the Post Office for longer, helping support small businesses.
- Furthermore, **we intend to introduce 60 minutes free parking in all car parks** owned by the Council. This will further support businesses and give something back to residents.
- **We propose introducing a free bulk waste collection scheme**, which would remove the charge for collecting items like mattresses and sofas. This will encourage residents to do the right thing and have the Council pick up these items from where they live. We believe this will help reduce fly-tipping throughout the borough. **It is not right that Harrow residents pay one of the highest Council Tax in London** only to be charged again to have their waste collected.
- **Harrow Council has increased Council Tax by 31.1% since 2011, which is the biggest increase in London.** We do not believe it is right that Councillors get a pay rise when the Council is putting Council tax up by the maximum amount again and not dealing with the problems facing Harrow residents. **Having regard to the report of the Independent Panel titled 'The Remuneration of Councils in London 2022', the members allowances increase should not be introduced.**

The Conservatives do not control the Council. These amendments are proposed alterations to the Labour budget from the perspective of an opposition group. In the event the Conservatives take control in May we would introduce significant and far-reaching changes which would improve the quality of life for all. We believe this demonstrates that, even with

Conservative Amendment (Budget)

the limited changes listed above, Harrow's Conservative Councillors will put residents' interests first.

Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) comments:

"I have reviewed the proposed amendment to the 2022/23 Budget put forward by the Conservative Group and I make the following points:

-The investment proposals are based on prudent and realistic assumptions and include an estimated sum for relevant implementation costs where known

-In 2022/23, the Bulky Waste Collection Pilot is assumed to start on 1 June with the remainder of the proposals starting on 1 August. This is to ensure that all the actions required to implement the proposals can be fully completed and these timescales are viewed as reasonable.

-It is considered realistic that a proportion of the Accommodation Strategy Reserve is applied on the understanding that the use of ancillary sites, as reported to Cabinet, are not taken forward.

-A permanent structure has not yet been implemented for the Regeneration Team therefore is it considered feasible to reduce the budget envelope at this stage

-Whilst the budget amendment neither reduces nor increases the reported MTFs budget gap of £16.6m, the amendment proposes to re-instate 50% of the Transformation Savings target (£1m) in 2023/24. Appendix 10 of the Final Budget Report (Report of the Chief Finance Officer) detailed my concerns and actions required to address the budget gap and I repeat these concerns in light of £1m Transformation savings being re-instated into the budget and the challenge of achieving this alongside those required to manage the £16.6m gap and this must be reported when stating my opinion on the budget amendment."

D Calvert – Director of Finance and Assurance (S151 Officer) 23 February 2022

Proposed by Councillor Paul Osborn

Seconded by Councillor Pritesh Patel