

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2022

AMENDMENTS

ITEM 2.1: POLICY AND RESOURCES STRATEGY 2022-23 - REVENUE BUDGET (see pages 1-217 of supplemental agenda no.1)

AMENDMENT A

Moved: Councillor Peter Babudu

Seconded: Councillor Leanne Werner

To insert after paragraph 5 of the Policy and Resources Strategy, and renumber all subsequent points accordingly:

Anti-social Behaviour Taskforce

6. The Council will launch a new taskforce to provide a highly visible presence to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour hotspots, including more community safety wardens. The taskforce will work collaboratively with other agencies such as the Police and the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), as well as the community, to identify and tackle hotspots. The taskforce will aim to:
 - Improve the lives of those living in areas where anti-social behaviour persists.
 - Free up capacity of the current wardens, so they do not spend a disproportionate amount of time on a few areas or estates.
 - Further strengthen the Council's partnerships with other agencies and the community.
7. The Council will commit £529,000 per year over the course of the next four years, totalling £2,116,000. The funding for the new taskforce will be found from additional money allocated from central government through the local government financial settlement.

Council assembly notes:

8. The council is committed to ensuring that Southwark is a safe place for all residents
9. The council's wardens have done an excellent job throughout the pandemic, performing knife sweeps, fly-tipping reinforcement and tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB). Over the course of the past two years, the wardens have worked in very challenging circumstances to enforce COVID-19 rules.

10. There are particular locations in the borough which have higher levels of crime and ASB, which take up a disproportionate amount resource
11. The Council has faced £146m of budget cuts since 2010. Despite these significant cuts, the Council has been able to retain a warden service. Additional resource, focused in hotspots to free up existing wardens to work across the borough, would improve the service across Southwark.

Council assembly further notes that:

12. Tackling crime and disorder is, primarily the role of the police. The number of police officers in London has fallen from 4.1 per thousand Londoners in 2010 to 3.3 per thousand in 2018. The amount spent on policing per person fell 20 per cent in London between 2013 and 2017, compared to an average drop of 6 per cent across the country.
13. That the Joint Enforcement Model, where Community Wardens and Local Policing teams perform joint controls and tasking, has helped but has not made up for the implications of both council and policing cuts.

Council therefore resolves to:

14. Commit £529,000 per year, over the course of the next four years, towards a Community Warden Taskforce to tackle anti-social behaviour hotspots.
15. Commit to partnership working, including with our communities to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Cost of living

16. The Council will commit £471,000 to support residents hit by the Cost of Living Crisis. This money will come from additional money allocated from central government through the local government financial settlement.

Council notes that:

17. Southwark Council is committed to supporting its residents in financial hardship, as demonstrated by the extraordinary effort helping residents through the pandemic delivered in partnership with the local voluntary and community sector. This includes tripping our emergency support fund for residents facing a crisis who need help.
18. The rising cost of living is hitting Southwark residents hard. Energy prices are rapidly increasing by £700, the Bank of England expects inflation to reach 7% and a 1.25% rise in national insurance will come into effect in April. The number of residents claiming Universal Credit has more than doubled during the pandemic and the government's decision to cut Universal Credit (UC) by £20 per week has been another blow to residents claiming UC.

19. The challenges listed above will hit those on lowest incomes the most. In particular, energy prices for those on a meter (most likely to be those who do not own their own home) are likely to see prices rise by more than £700.
20. The government has announced a loan of £200 in the form of a bill credit on all energy bills, and a cash payment of £150 for those living within a Band A-D property. However, the gap between the cost of living increases and support provided by the government remains unobtainable for many low earners in Southwark.

Council therefore resolves to:

21. Set up a £471,000 fund to support residents through the Cost of Living Crisis, including increasing emergency support for people who may be tipped into crisis through no fault of their own, providing support to minimise inflation hikes, and launching an energy saving service so people on low incomes can access the best advice to keep your gas and electricity bills down. Ensuring the whole fund is distributed to those who need help the most.
22. Work in partnership with the local voluntary and community sector to ensure we reach the residents who need this support the most.

Chief Finance Officer assurance on robustness of budget estimates

23. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance, as the statutory section 151 officer, has confirmed that these proposals are lawful and implementable and overall do not impact on the total budget requirement for 2022/23. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance has confirmed that, subject to the agreement to this amendment by Council Assembly, plans will need to be put in place to implement the proposals as early as practicable in 2022-23.

AMENDMENT B – Demand Better: A Greener, Cleaner and More Responsive Council

Moved: Councillor Dan Whitehead

Seconded: Councillor Victor Chamberlain

1. Council Assembly recognises that:
 - a) Residents are frustrated at Southwark Council's inability to deliver basic services and its failure to tackle key priorities.
 - b) Complaints include poor street cleaning provisions, declining standards in customer service and Southwark Labour's sluggish approach to the climate emergency.

2. Council Assembly notes that:
 - a) Next month will mark three years since we declared a climate emergency, yet Southwark Labour continues to dither and delay. The council has failed to utilise £25m of climate change funding in the capital programme budget and is not delivering the projects that our residents demand, such as electric vehicle charging points (having installed around 260 in spite of more than 2,000 requests).
 - b) The council clearly needs more staff to accelerate and enlarge such climate emergency projects.
 - c) The Labour London Mayor rightly called air pollution an issue of social justice, but is still building the £2bn Silvertown Tunnel under the Thames between Newham and Greenwich. This four-lane tunnel will damage the environment in two boroughs that have high deprivation levels.
 - d) We must take air pollution more seriously and do what we can to reduce it.
 - e) Southwark Labour has stretched its street cleaning and customer services teams by underfinancing them. The result is dirtier streets and residents exasperated at unanswered calls or emails.
 - f) The street cleaning budget for 2022-23 is a drop of 26% since 2010, when adjusted for inflation.
 - g) Southwark Council had the 11th highest number of fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 people nationally, but was 198th for enforcement actions.
 - h) Southwark missed 213.77 bin collections for every 100,000 in the 2020-21 financial year and 100 bins for every 100,000 collections in 2019-20.

- i) Between 2014 and 2021, the council spend on customer services fell by 41%.
- j) The repair contact centre missed its target to answer 70% of calls within two minutes in four of the last five years. All other council contact centres failed to hit the same goal in every one of the past five years.
- k) The council needs to reverse this drop in council services standards through extra funding.

3. Council Assembly resolves to:

- a) Make the council's budget greener by spending nearly five times the amount invested this year specifically into acting on the climate emergency.
- b) Create a Climate Action Team to implement green policies across all departments where they can have the most impact. These new officers would dedicate their time to accelerating and enlarging ongoing projects related to climate change. They would also work directly with residents and businesses to help them become greener faster.
- c) Instil climate change awareness across the council by providing mandatory training to all staff members on the topic.
- d) Act on pollution now by installing a pilot network of CityTree purifying systems to clean Southwark's air.
- e) Expand the street cleaning team by employing extra street cleaners to tackle Southwark's dirty streets.
- f) Create a new fly-tipping team by employing six dedicated officers to issue fines for rubbish left on Southwark's streets.
- g) Hire more call centre staff to reduce wait times and redirect the department toward more effective methods of dealing with residents' enquiries especially for repairs.

4. Council Assembly will fund this amendment by:

- a) Using £1.563m of unallocated money from the low traffic neighbourhood 2021-22 earmarked reserve to pay for the Climate Action Team and council-wide training. Allocating a portion of the £1.317m unused climate emergency reserve money to pay for the CityTree air purifying systems. These spends will be paid from this budget in the first year. However, from year two onward the capital programme budget will pay for these expenditures.

- b) Making administrative and back office savings. This will include reducing the catering and refreshments budget in a time of increased flexible working. It would also involve decreasing costs in the council by reducing reliance on paper and postage through a council-wide campaign to print less.
- c) Spending £495,000 of the £1m additional government funding currently earmarked as a contribution to balances.

Insert after paragraph 3, modify the general budget fund figure in paragraph 3 and renumber all subsequent paragraphs accordingly:

5. [That council assembly:] Agrees to amend the budget as follows:

Insert the following budget line into Appendix 1B (Efficiencies and Improved Use of Resources):	Amend the contribution to balances as set out in Table 1 of the council assembly report:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration and back office savings - £426,000 (this includes a 25% reduction in the catering and refreshments budget, alongside a 25% reduction in the stationery budget). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending £495,000 of the £1m additional government funding currently earmarked as a contribution to balances.
Insert the following budget line into Appendix 1C (Income Generation):	Insert the following budget line into Appendix 1E (Commitments):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using unallocated money from the low traffic neighbourhood 2021-22 earmarked reserve - £1,563,000 • Using unallocated money from the climate change reserve - £430,000. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the street cleaning and fly-tipping teams - £666,000 • Hire more senior staff in the contact centre - £245,000 • Create a Climate Action Team and deliver council-wide training - £1,563,000 • Installing 10 CityTree air purifying systems as a pilot - £430,000

Insert after paragraph 23:

Chief Finance Officer assurance on robustness of budget estimates

The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance, as the statutory section 151 officer, has confirmed that these proposals are lawful and implementable and overall do not impact on the total budget requirement for 2022/23.

The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance has confirmed that, subject to the agreement to this amendment by Council Assembly, plans will need to

be put in place to achieve the savings required to fund the proposed amendments. Given the timing of the amendments, there is a possibility that a full year effect would not be possible for all savings proposed, and in this eventuality contingency already included within the base budget would need to be drawn upon.

AMENDMENT C – Safeguarding the vulnerable

Moved: Councillor Humaira Ali

Seconded: Councillor Nick Johnson

1. Council Assembly notes that:
 - a) Southwark Labour is cutting the 2022-2023 budget for special educational needs (SEND) and early years services.
2. Council Assembly observes that:
 - a) Labour is unnecessarily risking these vital services for vulnerable people by cutting the budget in the hope of securing alternative funding that may never materialise.
 - b) The authority's own equality impact assessment states that most of these savings are likely to have negative impacts on residents unless it finds alternative funding.
 - c) The council has stressed in public meetings that these services are still important.
 - d) There is no need for Southwark Labour to risk these vital services by waiting for potential funding. It should safeguard them now as a political priority using its own finances. If alternative funding is secured in the future, this will add to the council's contingencies.
3. Council Assembly resolves to:
 - a) Reverse the 2022-23 budget savings to the early years autism support, special educational need inclusion practitioner, home education for 0-2 years olds (Portage) and early years improvement team services for a total of £505,000.
4. Council Assembly will fund this amendment by:
 - a) Spending £505,000 of the £1m additional government funding currently earmarked as a contribution to balances.

Insert after paragraph 3, modify the general budget fund figure in paragraph 3 and renumber all subsequent paragraphs accordingly:

5. [That council assembly:] Agrees to amend the budget as follows:

Remove the following budget lines in Appendix 1D (Savings Impacting on Service):	Insert the following budget line into Appendix 1E (Commitments):
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early years autism service (309) - £200,000	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special educational need inclusion practitioner service (310) - £135,000 • Home education service for 0-2 years olds (Portage) service (311) - £100,000 • Early years improvement team (312) - £70,000 	
Amend the contribution to balances as set out in Table 1 of the council assembly report:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending £505,000 of the £1m additional government funding currently earmarked as a contribution to balances. 	

Insert after paragraph 23:

Chief Finance Officer assurance on robustness of budget estimates

The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance, as the statutory section 151 officer, has confirmed that these proposals are lawful and implementable and overall do not impact on the total budget requirement for 2022/23.

The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance has confirmed that, subject to the agreement to this amendment by Council Assembly, plans will need to be put in place to achieve the savings required to fund the proposed amendments. Given the timing of the amendments, there is a possibility that a full year effect would not be possible for all savings proposed, and in this eventuality contingency already included within the base budget would need to be drawn upon.