

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (OSC) – 27 JANUARY 2021**

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET ON POLICY AND RESOURCES STRATEGY 2021-22**

1. Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) notes that there are a number of budget lines in which spending is required to increase, sometimes significantly. Some growth areas, but not all, reflect growing demand such as temporary accommodation, leisure and housing solutions. In the context of the pandemic, this is understandable, and cabinet is right to respond. However, OSC recommends that Cabinet puts in place a process for all of these growth areas, including consultation with service users, which will develop council policy to ensure spending in future budgets is sustainable, and guarantees the overall financial position of the council remains robust.

**Response**

We will continue to engage with service users and those affected by proposed cuts throughout the process. On Temporary Accommodation and Leisure we have separate new policy approaches being developed which will follow the normal process.

2. OSC notes that many other service areas, also experiencing unprecedented demand, are not seeing budget growth in the same way. OSC recommends that the good budget management in some service areas forms part of the review to help ensure budget spend best reflects the needs of residents rather than different standards of service performance and transformation.

**Response**

Cabinet notes this recommendation. Our performance management arrangements together with existing budget monitoring process will ensure that good practice is recognised and that best practice is shared and implemented in areas requiring improvement. The Budget Recovery Board has been an effective means of supporting services to improve standards and to put them on a sustainable financial footing in the face of significant demand pressures.

Budget proposals and the budget challenge process will continue to be driven by the fairer future budget principles, to manage budgets carefully, to prioritise the promises made in the council plan and to protect services for the most vulnerable.

3. OSC welcomes the reassurances given by cabinet that the provision of youth employment services and the reorganisation of employment support can be adequately funded via Section 106 in the year ahead, and is reassured that the cabinet recognises the importance of these in light of the impact of the pandemic on young residents of the borough. OSC notes that the Council is developing new technology to track planning fees, and Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy income. However OSC recognises that these incomes will be impacted by the Covid-19 recession and wants to receive regular updates on the

collection and use of this funding to ensure services that are dependent on it remain fully funded and will accommodate for a spike in demand as a result of the recession in the years ahead.

### **Response**

The new system being installed to track S106 and CIL income is being designed to have a public facing module (PFM). This PFM will show all the S106 (both financial and non-financial) and CIL negotiated, collected and allocated for the whole borough. It will also show all the neighbourhood CIL available in each ward and what local projects have been agreed. The first phase of the PFM roll-out is due next month and will cover the most recent financial year. Over the next few months, the historic data from previous financial years will also be made public.

4. OSC welcomes the decision to remove the saving to the Adventure Playgrounds budget but supports the work currently underway to investigate whether some of the playgrounds can provide open access whilst maintaining risky and adventurous play. OSC recommends that the current capital budget allocated to investment in Adventure Playgrounds is also looked at as part of this review so that the additional capital investment that will be needed is agreed at the same time.

### **Response**

This is the agreed process for taking forward proposals around adventure play.

5. OSC recommends that officers be asked to review the proposed increase in Pest Control Services (Residential Services) and if no evidence base that officers defer the proposed increase until after the pandemic or remove proposed increase altogether due to impact on low income families.

### **Response**

The current pest control pricing valuation model is based on an inherited baseline. Price increases to date have been made by inflating this annually based on annual inflators linked to either CPI or RPI. No additional evidence based modelling has previously been undertaken to support any further pricing assumptions, or to establish whether the resultant rates calculated are fully recovering direct and overhead costs linked to service delivery.

The proposed price list attempts to address this and has an underpinning assumptions built into it with respect to full cost recovery. The baseline price calculated before discounts, attempts to fully recover all direct and overhead costs and is not cross-subsidised by other council budgets (i.e. HRA).

On a like for like comparison basis, our current pricing is less than the pricing in place from the majority of our private sector competitors operating in our local area. This remains the case even if we were to introduce the proposed price increases.

It should be noted that treatments for the most common pest types found in Southwark remain free of charge at the point of service for all council tenants and any leaseholder whose property is included in our pest control block

treatment programme. Also, to lessen the financial impact on low income families or individuals who are required to pay for our service, a 50% price reduction remains in place for residents who are in receipt of a 'passported' benefit and/or state pension.

6. Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the sizable budget savings relating to agency staff (items 105 and 133) and to decisions yet to be taken by the NHS (items 106 and 304), and we recognise the potential delivery challenges that these entail. We therefore recommend robust monitoring arrangements for these and other significant savings. We request that the progress on this work is reported back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the municipal year.

### **Response**

This will be covered off during Performance meetings going forward. Separate emails will follow regarding performance later this week, but we are keen to discuss both council plan commitments and also how budget savings are going so we can identify any issues early. We also recently agreed a process for reporting back to OSC on outcomes of performance challenge, so will include within that an update on any areas of concern of non-delivery of budget commitments

7. OSC notes the line items relating to reviews on talking therapies, bringing exercise to outdoor spaces and mental health support focussed on young people. OSC notes that the Council will seek additional government funding for increased demand due to Covid and recognises evolving health needs post the crisis. OSC recommends that Cabinet review and potentially offer mental and physical health support towards the latter stages of the Covid crisis for Southwark Citizens. Examples include a wider campaign followed by offerings for physical classes in parks, subsidised talking therapies or group CBT. Additional resource may need to be considered from a public health perspective to reducing health inequalities e.g. finding additional long term funding for health ambassadors.

### **Response**

Cabinet notes this helpful recommendation and recognises the very real impact the pandemic is having on residents mental and physical health. Summarised in Annex1 is an outline of areas of mental and physical health support the council is already providing together with signposting to support provided by partners in Southwark.

The council has been allocated £11m in 2021-22 to fund the additional costs of the pandemic. This additional one-off funding is not in the base budget however it is expected that demand will exceed the available resources. Accordingly we will be seeking to prioritise this COVID funding for our priorities, including mental health.

## Mental Health

### The Nest

The Nest provides free mental health and wellbeing support for young people aged 13–25. This supports young people and their families with the opportunities, experiences and tools to enable them to develop their emotional and social skills through one-to-one and group work.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, the service offers remote support including e-resources, an online chat service, and one-to-one advice over the phone or video calls. Once lockdown restrictions are lifted these services will continue alongside face-to-face support from the base in Peckham.

### Public Health

#### Improving our communications for the Public:

- Developed and published a new "taking care your mind" section on the website, which includes advice and information on mental health and wellbeing, as well as links to available services:  
<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/coronavirus/health-advice-during-covid-19/taking-care-of-your-mind>
- Supported a SEL CCG Mental health communications campaign aimed predominantly at young people
- Developed a series of evidence-based tweets around mental health and wellbeing. These are currently with Comms
- Liaised with Comms to include Mental health advice and information in Council's newsletters and Southwark Life magazine
- Developed a leaflet and shared it with Housing and Income Officer Teams, so that they could print it out themselves distribute it to their tenants who are not online/use it to provide information. The leaflet covered not only mental health, but also other needs/issues such as loneliness, money problems, domestic violence, access to food and physical activity
- Provided advice to the Community Hub Team Leaders, and offered them training on Suicide Prevention (STORM)

#### Understanding the impact of Covid

- Liaised with local service providers (IAPT, Wellbeing Hub, Community Hub), reviewed the evidence and produced a Mental Health Rapid Impact Assessment. We presented the Impact Assessment at various forums, including: Health and Wellbeing Board, Southwark Stands Together Leads Group, Art and Health forums, Mental Health and Wellbeing Joint Strategy Steering Board and other professionals and services operating in the Borough.

#### Strengthening our strategies and building resilience in the community

- Southwark's Loneliness Strategy was approved by Cabinet in April 2020, however, it needs to be reviewed in light of COVID-19 pandemic. We are currently consulting with residents to have an updated indication on the

- level of need in the borough, understand new barriers and gather views and ideas on what should we do to help.
- Mental Health First Aid Training: we are in the process of commissioning new Mental Health First Training for an additional 100 council staff members - the budget for this has been taken from other public health areas. The training will be reserved to staff who work directly with members of the public, and will be adapted to be as relevant as possible to specific teams (i.e. Libraries, Pest Control etc).
- Suicide prevention: Continued to deliver STORM suicide prevention training in partnership with Lambeth. Sessions have been taking place online. Southwark CCG area is also due to receive some funding for Suicide prevention activities, to be shared across the SEL CCG. We liaised with the Programme Lead and included some of our Suicide Prevention priorities within the plan.
- Digital Public Health: mental wellbeing will be part of the digital public health offer under the "Take Care Southwark" branded digital tool for residents (currently under development)
- Joint Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy - working with the CCG and social care to shape the refreshed strategy in light of the impact of coronavirus

#### Protecting our workforce

- Public Health sits on the Council's Employee Wellbeing Board, and provided advice and signposting information on staff's mental health and wellbeing, as well as webinars and one workshop

### **Physical Activity**

#### Public Health:

- Exercise on Referral (including Kick Start & Health Walks)
- Alive N Kicking (Tier 2 Children's Weight Management)
- Healthy Lifestyle Hub
- Move More web pages
- Currently developing a digital offer of support to move more

#### CCG:

- Walking Away from Diabetes
- Tier 2 Adults' Weight Management
- Tier 3 Adults' Weight Management
- Falls Prevention

#### Sports and Leisure:

- Free Swim and Gym (& swimming lessons)
- Oomph projects
- Dementia Walks
- Healthy Movers
- Daily Mile
- Sports club development
- London Youth Games
- Junior Park Run

Here are a few of our Common P groups that offer support in these areas and the nature of the support:

**Southwark Pensioners Centre** offer exercise classes including online chair-based Exercise Disco; Zoom Chi Kung exercise sessions. Face to face activities such as Line Dancing and “Strength and Balance” classes are on hold due to the pandemic

<http://www.southwarkpensioners.org.uk>

**Mental Fight Club** – support for people with and without mental health issues, integrating into the community with rich variety of wellbeing activities at the Dragon Café which is currently virtual <https://dragoncafe.co.uk/>

**Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers** – mental health support for refugees and asylum seekers including group therapy; also therapeutic activities including gardening project [www.sdca.org.uk](http://www.sdca.org.uk)

**AAINA** women’s group <https://aainawomen.wordpress.com/> weekly organised walks; cycling lessons; currently doing online yoga and last summer did outdoor yoga

**Bankside Open Spaces Trust** [www.bost.org.uk](http://www.bost.org.uk)

**London Wildlife Trust** <https://www.wildlondon.org.uk/nature-reserves/centre-wildlife-gardening>

**Surrey Docks Farm** <https://www.surreydocksfarm.org.uk/>

- All gardening / food growing for physical and mental health

**Walworth Golden Oldies** – not started yet but will be looking at access to health and medical advice and support via digital methods <https://www.southwark-golden-oldies.com/>

**Blackfriars Settlement** <https://www.blackfriars-settlement.org.uk/mental-health> mental health and wellbeing project currently via zoom

**Time and Talents** <https://www.timeandtalents.org.uk/health-wellbeing> health and wellbeing activities, currently only

**The Bike Project** <https://thebikeproject.co.uk/> free bikes for refugees & online cyber cyclists programme.

**Latin American Disabled People’s Project** <http://www.ladpp.org.uk/community-mental-health--wellbeing-project.html> community mental health & wellbeing project

Southwark’s Local Offer offer website provides details of various wellbeing services within Southwark including those related to supporting mental and emotional health <https://localoffer.southwark.gov.uk/wellbeing>