

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b> <b>28<sup>th</sup> February 2024</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>COUNCIL BUDGET - AMENDMENT FROM</b> <b>THE LABOUR GROUP</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Jane West, Section 151 and Corporate Director of Resources</b>
<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>All</b>

**SUMMARY OF REPORT:**

This is a supplementary paper to agenda item 8, the Council Budget Report.

The paper contains details of a proposed amendment that has been submitted by the Labour Group.

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 This paper is a supplement to agenda item 8, the Council Budget. It details a proposed amendment received from the Labour Group.
- 1.2 As per the Budget & Policy Framework, proposed amendments by Opposition Members / Opposition Groups, can only be voted upon at a second budget meeting, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 (scheduled for if the budget is not agreed on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024).
- 1.3 Any amendments are published however for reference and to inform the Council Budget debate.

**2. PROPOSED AMENDMENT**

- 2.1 The proposed budget amendment is set out as Appendix A.

## APPENDIX A

### LABOUR GROUP BUDGET AMENDMENT

Proposed by: Councillor Stuart King  
Seconded by: Councillor Callton Young

This Council notes that last year the Mayor raised Council Tax by 14.99% and that a further maximum permitted increase is proposed for 2024/25, taking Council Tax in Croydon to a new highest ever level. Meanwhile, a further £23m in cuts are to be made and resident satisfaction with key services continues to be poor.

This Council notes that since the election of the Executive Mayor the cost of the political and senior staff leadership of the Council has risen and is set to rise further. These costs include the Improvement & Assurance Panel, which has expanded in size. Its role, including its cost, is acknowledged and accepted.

The Council further notes that in his Scheme of Delegations the Executive Mayor has not delegated any executive functions to his Cabinet, thereby considerably reducing its value for money.

In this context this Council believes there is a reduced justification for the Mayor to maintain the same level of spend on his political appointees whilst he is not delegating decisions to his Cabinet. In contrast the immediate previous administration delegated decision making and reduced its SRAs and associated costs significantly.

In light of the above, this Council resolves to generate a revenue saving by reducing the cost of a number of political appointments that are not responsible for executive decision making or the scrutiny of those decisions. These are to:

1. Reduce the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the seven Cabinet Members by 50% to £14,307.16 [saving **£110k**]
2. Delete the SRA for the five Deputy Cabinet Members [saving **£30k**]
3. Reduce the SRA for the Majority Group Secretary to the same level provided to the Opposition Group Secretary [saving **£3k**]
4. Reduce the SRA for the Majority Group Whip to the same level provided to the Opposition Group Whip [saving **£7k**]

In addition, Council proposes to reduce the budget for the community engagement function in the Executive Mayor's Office [saving **£70k**]

These amendments to the General Fund budget combined would generate General Fund savings in 2024/25 of **£220k**.

These savings could be used to provide one or more of the following, which include priorities residents set out in their responses to the budget engagement exercise as set out in Appendix J to the Budget papers (Appendix G):

- a) **PROTECTING VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE** Reinstates the Grade 9 post of Housing Safeguarding Officer to bridge the gap between housing and children's services to provide liaison and resolution of urgent housing needs as recommended in the Child Safeguarding Review of Serious Youth Violence, December 2023. [£55k]
- b) **KEEPING YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE** Commission a specific programme of targeted school support covering the transition from year 6 and 7, where young people are vulnerable to being exploited and drawn into criminal behaviour. Currently there is no provision offered like this in the borough, although it has been demonstrated to have positive effects across London (such as the Growing against Violence program)

Undertake targeted year-long outreach and engagement for teenagers at risk in our highest risk areas, which would include increasing the areas targeted so that we could address the five most vulnerable locations (Town Centre, Thornton Heath, New Addington, Shrublands Estate, Purley). This would include linking with local schools to help protect young people being robbed leaving school at the critical afternoon timeslot where our young people are most likely to be robbed.

Work with DWP, probation, adult education services, and local third sector groups with experience in working with older young people, to develop a support programme for those most at risk between 18 and 25 focussing on work readiness and employability, advocacy, and social skills support to enable them to leave criminality and reduce their risk of re-offending. [£200k]

- c) **TACKLING DOMESTIC ABUSE & VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS** Fund two additional Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs), to provide additional support for victims of domestic abuse and violence. Croydon is currently running the largest high-risk case load in London, and providing additional IDVAs would increase the quality and amount of support provided to the most vulnerable victims of domestic violence and abuse.

Fund a preventative course on healthy relationships targeted at young males. This would be linked to the existing Mental Health Support Team in schools provision delivered through the Education team and help prevent domestic abuse and violence against girls at a younger age. [£200k]

- d) **IMPROVING DELIVERY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING** Reinststate the post of Senior Affordable Housing Enabling Officer in the Spatial Planning Team which is proposed for deletion as part of Budget saving 2024-28 SAV SCRER 003 [£65k]
- e) **CLEANER STREETS** Recruit an additional Client Monitoring Officer into the Environment Services team to ensure Veolia delivers street cleanliness to the standard required by the Council's contract with them [£55k]
- f) **NEW APPROACHES TO TACKLING FLYTIPPING** Establish a 12 month trial "pop up Mobile household recycling initiative" similar to that organised in Merton, as a way of bringing waste disposal and recycling closer to residents who do not live near a council tip or don't have access to a car [£5k per event]
- g) **BETTER DELIVERY OF SAVINGS** Strengthen the Policy, Programme & Performance by a Grade 14 post to improve oversight and delivery of Council savings commitments [£70k]
- h) **REDUCING THE COUNCIL'S DEBTS** Make additional debt repayments over and above what is proposed in the Mayor's 2024/25 budget proposals [£200k]

Budget delivery is the responsibility of the Executive Mayor. This Council leaves the decision about which one or combination of (a) to (h) above is to be funded in 2024/25 to the Executive Mayor.