

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

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 Green 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 Green 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, 6th March 2024 (scheduled for if the budget is not agreed on the 28th 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

GREEN GROUP BUDGET AMENDMENT

Proposed by: Councillor Ria Patel
Seconded by: Councillor Esther Sutton

Cuts

Fairer Salaries

Croydon Council is delivering less services for residents, with frontline officers being cut; however, senior officers' pay has increased. The Greens believe that compared to the average salary in Croydon, senior officers are already paid too much, and pay rises should be minimised going forward.

The Green Party recognises that the latest pay policy demonstrates a pay ratio of 1:7 for staff on payroll, however we would like to see this also reflected including those contracted by the organisation.

We recommend HR conduct a review on how to make officers' salaries fairer over the next 6 months. This review should also consider whether it would be possible to reduce the number of people on senior salaries.

This would lead to savings that could be invested in frontline staff and services.

Parking

We are aware that the parking policy is going through a review. Greens would like to emphasise the need for the parking review to be fair between different parts of the borough, and also fair in terms of the carbon impact, i.e. the most polluting and largest vehicles paying more.

Members' Allowances

The people of Croydon voted for a mayoral system, against Green Party policy for a committee system. However, the current members' allowances seem to reflect the old cabinet system with Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) for the cabinet and shadow cabinet. We feel that it is now the role of all councillors to scrutinise the Executive Mayor. We believe the Constitution Working Group needs to consider this and members' allowances as agreed by Full Council should be reflective of the new responsibilities.

For the next financial year Greens propose to cut Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA's) for the administration and shadow cabinet by 50% and use the money to support frontline services, as set out below.

The total current cost for the SRA's for cabinet members, deputy cabinet members, shadow cabinet members, group secretaries and chief whips is £322k, and if cut by 50%, this would create a saving of £161k.

Growth

Improving Community Safety and Environmental Enforcement

Key concerns for local Croydon residents are violence and fly-tipping; however, Croydon Council has cut the relevant officers, meaning enforcement is low and repeat fly-tipping and vehicle idling goes unchallenged.

Greens would like to create 1 x Neighbourhood Safety Officer post (£51k cost).

Greens would like the Council to commission services for violence prevention from a public health perspective (£40k cost).

Greens would like a one year trial of creating 1 x Environmental Enforcement Officer post (£65k), which would be self-funded via fines from enforcement.

Bus Shelters

Greens campaigned for Croydon's bus shelters to be restored during our local election campaign in 2022. Two years later Croydon is still awaiting bus shelters. We should be encouraging more people to use public and active transport. But the lack of bus shelters is putting people off waiting for buses.

So Greens would like to ensure Croydon's bus shelters are of high-quality, with green roofs, live bus times, wayfinding and positive, ethical advertising as part of the ongoing procurement.

There are examples across the UK and Europe of high-quality bus shelters, which are not only functional but also have features which Croydon residents would be proud of. These bus shelters, of which at least 10 would include green roofs, would have the ongoing maintenance funded from the ethical advertising revenue. The extra setup costs of the green roofs would be funded by section 106 contributions if the ethical advertising revenue wasn't sufficient to fund the setup costs.

Community Food Growing Projects

Greens would encourage the building of more community food growing projects.

We would want £30k from Section 106 as seed funding, to help with promotion and for community groups around Croydon to start food growing projects, as well as to support them in sourcing funding from outside of the council to further expand their projects.

Bike Lockers and Infrastructure

Greens are aware that Croydon Council is not applying for funding which is already available to them, for example, from the Mayor of London and external sources. We encourage Croydon Council to submit new bids going forward, for example for better cycle provision, bus priority lanes, bike lockers and other active travel infrastructure.

Carbon Literacy

We spend a lot of time looking at the financial budget for Croydon Council, but there's no information for the carbon budget for Croydon Council or the carbon impact of all the spending discussed in the budget.

There are various training courses available, like carbon literacy training, much of which is free, so we would request more officers are allowed and encouraged to access this training so that in future the Council budget includes the carbon impact of the Council's activities not just the financial implications.

Care Leavers

We would like a review, supported by up to £30k, to conduct research and a needs assessment for care leavers. This is to identify whether Croydon Council's current provisions are sufficient and what the funding thresholds are to enable care leavers to take their next steps in life, from accommodation and transport, to apprenticeships and higher education.

Libraries

The rest of our savings (£40k) would be used to support and promote library services and offers, which would also support improving the financial sustainability of our library offer through events and venue hire.