

## **Labour Group – Budget Amendment**

**Proposed by:** Councillor Marc Francis

**Seconded by:** Councillor Sirajul Islam

### **1. General Fund**

This Council resolves to reduce the proposed General Fund expenditure by £3 million:

- Deleting the £1.4 million Growth proposed to be allocated to the expansion of the Mayor’s Office by 27 new members of staff to the current team of 11.2 FTE (GRO / CEO 002 / 23-24) as this is an extravagant and self-indulgent waste of taxpayers’ money;
- Deleting the £114,000 Growth proposal for personalised diary support for Chairs of committees (GRO / CEO 001 / 23-24) as councillors who need diary support for a committee that meets every two months are not competent to chair a committee in the first place;
- Amending the £6.5 million Growth proposals (GRO / CHI 007 / 23-24 and GRO / CHI 004 / 22-23) for the recruitment of 200 new staff in Youth Services to £5 million in 2023/24, so there is phased implementation that ensures value for money and no return to the problems revealed in 2015.

To apply for the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan’s new funding for Free School Meals for Primary age children in 2023/24 instead of utilising LBTH’s Reserves (GRO / CHI 003 / 23-24) (£1.3 million), subject to any conditions on receiving the funding.

To increase proposed General Fund expenditure by an additional one-year Cost of Living crisis package of £1.3 million, consisting of the following specific items:

- Adding £250,000 for an increase in the Standard Utilities Allowance used in the determination of Homecare charges from £5 a week to £15 a week;
- To allocate a sum of £250,000 to top-up the Discretionary Housing Payment funding pot to the same level as 2021/22 to support more tenants facing shortfalls;
- To allocate a £250,000 Council Tax “Hardship Fund” for residents struggling with these bills, including self-employed residents affected by the Minimum Income Floor;
- Set aside a total sum of £150,000 to award one-off grants to the voluntary food-banks operating in Tower Hamlets in 2022/23;
- Add a further £250,000 to LBTH’s own Residents Support Scheme pot to help those who are unable to afford essential white goods or utility bills;
- Allocate an additional sum of £150,000 to the School Uniform Grant funding to enable an increase in the £110 allowance per child agreed in 2019/20 and a second payment;

To ensure probity, good governance, scrutiny of the authority's performance and even-handedness in the support provided to all those elected by residents by the following measures (£350,000)

- Allocating a sum of £50,000 to increase the number of meetings of the Housing Scrutiny Committee to oversee the performance of the "in-house" housing management service;
- Allocating a sum of £50,000 to create a new Public Realm & Community Safety Scrutiny Committee to oversee the performance of these services;
- Allocating a sum of £50,000 to re-establish the Grants Scrutiny Committee required by the independent Commissioners in 2015 to ensure probity in the allocation of grant funding by the Executive;
- Allocating a sum of £200,000 to expand the team processing Members Enquiries by four new members of staff to support all elected councillors equally.

Invest an additional £1 million in order to improve customer access to all residents in Tower Hamlets, rather than just those who choose to approach the Executive Mayor by:

- Reopening the former One Stop Shops at Chrisp Street market & Roman Road market three days a week (estimated cost £700,000)
- Recruiting six additional full-time Customer Service Advisors for the Contact Centre (estimated cost £300,000).

And finally, to utilise the funding released by the phased approach to youth services, by allocating a sum of £1.65 million in 2023-24 to the following to support young people directly:

- Doubling the value of the Tower Hamlets Education Maintenance Allowance (TH EMA) for young people in further education to £800 a year and making it available to 16-18 year-olds in families earning up to £30,000 a year (estimated cost £1 million)
- A bespoke programme of personalised tuition/support to boost educational attainment at Key Stage 3 (estimated cost of £500,000);
- Expansion of Young Workpath to help more young people with the careers advice and support they need to find fulfilling employment (estimated cost £150,000)

## 2. Capital Programme

To reinstate the following projects that have been dropped from the programme as part of the overall reduction in investment from **£107 million to £58.5 million**.

- The **£50 million** set aside for George Green School
- The **£7 million** for the expansion of Oaklands Secondary School
- The **£3.9 million** for Saint Saviours School
- The **£6.6 million** for the Bancroft Local History Library

### **3. Housing Revenue Account**

In recognition of the extra costs tenants are experiencing and the urgent need to invest in LBTH's homes and estates, to make the following changes to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA):

- All council rents will rise by 5 per cent next year instead of the 7 or 13 per cent proposed – saving tenants between £150 and £500 a year in rent;
- The £15 million that has been removed from the HRA Capital Programme for major works and the Decent Neighbourhoods projects will be reinstated and utilised to fund new security doors, front entrance doors, double-glazing and action to tackle damp and mould.
  - a. 1,000 new secure, fire-proof and weatherproof Front Entrance Doors (£2 million)
  - b. 100 new Door Entry Systems (£2.5 million)
  - c. 1,000 extra homes get double-glazing (£7.5 million)
  - d. Home insulation works (£500,000)
  - e. £2.5 million for Decent Neighbourhood (“Great Places”) estate improvements