

Budget & Council Tax Setting 2019/20
Amendment from the Opposition Conservative Group

Proposer: Cllr Matt Hartley. Seconder: Cllr Nigel Fletcher.

Insert the following additional decisions relating to ongoing spending in 2019/20

- 1.16. Agree the savings package summarised in Table A, generating additional savings of £0.900 million a year with no impact on front-line services.

Table A: Package of savings

Item	Saving (£)
Introducing cheaper, more targeted and effective means of communicating with residents, by ending Greenwich Information and substantially reducing non-statutory publicity budgets (not including the budget for HRA-funded Choice Based Lettings notices)	(451,000)
Ending taxpayer subsidies for Trade Union activity	(246,000)
Ending PR/reputation management service subscriptions and spending on professional photography	(34,000)
Ending the Local Government Information Unit subscription	(20,000)
Reducing the Corporate Communications budget by an equivalent amount to the amount spent on the 2018 Tall Ships event	(20,000)
Introducing a package of efficiency savings in the Mayor's Office including securing a more cost-effective car lease and reducing catering spend	(18,000)
Securing external sponsorship for 10% of the budget for civic events	(17,000)
Securing external sponsorship for the staff awards and other internal events	(20,000)
Reversing the increases to member allowances payable to the Chief Whip and two Project Assistants introduced in July 2018	(15,000)
Reducing the budget for members' mobile phones, to reflect a move to a policy of Bring Your Own Device	(15,000)
Reducing the total number of Cabinet Members from 8 to 6 to bring Greenwich into line with other boroughs with smaller Cabinets	(44,000)
Total savings	(900,000)

- 1.17. Agree to allocate the £0.900 million savings summarised in Table A towards a total of £1.300 million to be allocated to new proposals to be requested from Cabinet to improve the Council Tax Support Scheme, including proposals for introducing up-to-100% support for qualifying working-age residents.

- 1.18. Note that the proposals to improve the the Council Tax Support Scheme requested from Cabinet at 1.17 must be subject to consultation and that the earliest date any changes could take effect is now April 2020.

1.19. Note that the decisions at 1.16, 1.17 and 1.26 have the combined effect of maintaining a balanced ongoing budget position (see Table D), while creating a new one-off £0.900 million Budget Efficiency Premium for 2019/20.

Insert the following decisions relating to one-off spending in 2019/20

1.20. Agree to reduce the planned one-off spend on the Boundary Review 2019-21 from £0.100 million to £0.060 million and use this saving for one-off spending capacity in 2019/20 – noting that this decision and the Budget Efficiency Premium noted at at 1.19 results in a total of £0.940 million in additional one-off spending capacity for 2019/20 (see Table B)

Table B: New additional one-off spending capacity created in 2019/20

Item	Capacity (£)
Budget Efficiency Premium in 2019/20 arising from savings in ongoing expenditure summarised in Table A	(900,000)
Reducing the planned one-off expenditure on the Boundary Review 2019-21	(40,000)
Total additional one-off spending capacity in 2019/20	(940,000)

1.21. Agree to use the new £0.940 million additional one-off spending capacity in 2019/20 as outlined in Table B, to fund the one-off spending for 2019/20 outlined in Table C.

Table C: New additional one-off spending in 2019/20

Decision	Cost (£)
Increasing the proposed funding for the Universal Credit Support Team for 2019/20, with an emphasis on ensuring joined up working with central government-funded Citizens Advice Universal Support	200,000
Continuing additional funding to the Metropolitan Police for tackling Domestic Violence in the borough at current levels for 2019/20	200,000
Introducing a one-off Parks Investment Fund for 2019/20, with spending to be subject to public consultation	240,000
Introducing a Council Tax Collection Service Enhancement Fund to improve the Council's below-average Council Tax Collection Rate	300,000
Total new additional one-off spending in 2019/20	940,000

1.22. Note that the decision at 1.21 allocates one-off funding of £300,000 for a new Council Tax Collection Service Enhancement Fund, in recognition of the fact that the Council's current Collection Rate of 94.6% remains below the inner London average of 95.9%.

1.23. Agree that the new Council Tax Collection Service Enhancement Fund's objective will be to support the development of new (internal) processes to increase the Collection Rate from 94.6% to 95.1% in 2020/21, including but not limited to a dedicated project to significantly increase the proportion of people paying by Direct Debit from the current 53% (generating an additional £0.4 million/year from 2020/21).

Insert the following decisions relating to ongoing spending beyond 2019/20

1.24. Note that the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme requested from Cabinet at 1.17, if implemented following consultation, would mean no longer needing to collect Council Tax from those who can least afford it – and that this would free up additional collections resource from 2020/21, over and above the impact of the new Enhancement Fund, in support of the objective outlined at 1.23.

1.25. Note that while the current Council Tax Collection Rate is 94.6%, budget-setting is currently predicated on a Collection Rate of 94.0% which leaves, at present, a 0.6% buffer in the Collection Fund – and further note that as the Council Tax Collection Rate increases as a result of the Enhancement Fund agreed at 1.23, this buffer will remain in operation, providing risk mitigation.

1.26. Agree to allocate £0.4 million of additional Council Tax collected as a result of the Council Tax Collection Service Enhancement Fund from 2020/21 onwards towards funding the Council Tax Support proposals requested from Cabinet at 1.17.

1.27. Note that the decisions at 1.17 and 1.26 have the combined effect of enabling £1.300 million of ongoing funding from 2020/21 onwards for the Council Tax Support proposals requested from Cabinet at 1.17, should they be implemented following consultation.

1.28. Note that the combined effect of decisions 1.16 to 1.26 is to maintain a balanced budget position (see Table D)

Table D: Combined effect of decisions 1.16 to 1.26 on base ongoing budget position

Decision	2019/20 (£)	2020/21 (£)
Implementing package of savings at 1.16	(900,000)	(900,000)
Improving Collection Rate through the Council Tax Collection Service Enhancement Fund at 1.23	-	(400,000)
Council Tax Support proposals at 1.17	-	1,300,000
Total	(900,000)	-

Insert the following decisions relating to capital spending and S106/CIL

ITEM NO: I2 (Conservative Amendment)

- 1.29. Request that Cabinet formally consider opening negotiations with the Metropolitan Police Service – as other London Boroughs have done – for an investment in the social benefit of reversing the Mayor of London’s closure of Eltham Police Station. This should include consideration of an offer to purchase the site as part of the Council’s new Corporate Capital Strategy with a payback period to be negotiated, on the condition that it continues to be operated as a Police Station.
- 1.30. Request that Cabinet conducts a formal review of the use of Section 106/CIL, including launching a public consultation to ensure that spending levels accurately reflect local residents’ priorities.

Insert the following decision relating to future budget-setting cycles

- 1.31. Request that Cabinet conducts a full review of the Council’s use of staff overtime, including non-contractual staff overtime, to inform future budget-setting.
- 1.32. Request that Cabinet adds an additional and explicit objective of lowering procurement costs, alongside directing spending to the local economy where legally possible, to the Council’s corporate review of procurement processes.