

Liberal Democrat Group Amendment to the General Fund Budget

This amendment:

- Refocuses on the true findings from this year's public consultation on the budget and commits to reviewing the consultation process for future years;
- Doubles the City Services' Community Action Days to help reduce fly tipping;
- Restores and expands the Environmental Enforcement Team by two officers;
- Prohibits mopeds, motorcycles and unlicensed e-scooters from council open spaces;
- Funds two acoustic monitoring cameras to deter late night street racers;
- Enables a feasibility study for the replacement/upgrading of the Jesus Green toilets;
- Calls for acceleration of the transformation programme; reviews of market stall holder recruitment and of future steps with the crematorium; and evaluation of income generation from service provision to external organisations in other areas.

The council is channelling a lot of effort into strategy and envisaging big projects, as it should. But in doing so it seems to have stopped listening to the everyday needs of residents - and even stopped asking. It should be capable of doing both things.

The tightness of overall resources, the drive to re-design services and the challenges of the city's growth should not prevent flexing of resources to support improvements in outcomes, capitalising on what already works.

Incredibly the council's public consultation on the budget failed even to ask for feedback on what is actually in the budget. No helpful questions were asked about what could be done - more or less of. It only consisted of a series of abstract propositions. Even the responses to them are misread or misrepresented in the Budget Setting Report.

In describing the outcome of the consultation, the report (p252) completely ignores that the priority considered most important for the city was "essential public services", and instead falsely declares that others were, which actually drew much less support (p297). It also inaccurately states (p265) that responses indicated that people supported "reducing the specification of some services", when precisely the reverse was the actual response, in which they opposed it by a large margin (p306). Apparently Labour councillors were intent on reading the results as what best suited their own thinking, irrespective of what people actually said in the consultation.

The airbrushing of "basic services" from priorities speaks volumes and the erosion of service standards are part of a trend. In the Housing Scrutiny Committee we have already challenged the underperformance of housing maintenance for existing tenants and offered practical measures to start to correct this, only for them to be swept aside, despite little coherent argument against them.

In this General Fund budget we are proposing a series of measures to improve the council's approach to anti-social behaviour – speaking directly to what people are actually telling us is their priority of basic public services and the council's top three most valued services. There is no shortage of evidence of how public nuisance touches people's lives – whether it's fly-tipping, littering, waste management, private property used as a urinal, alarming late-night

noise from street racers, unsafe or illegal use of motorised two-wheelers. These are live concerns across the whole city and they are legitimate ones.

This is not the first time we have raised these issues. But that didn't stop last year's Labour budget cutting back on Environmental Enforcement Officers. And it didn't stop proposals to deter noisy street racers or to take action on e-scooters both being faintly blessed before just disappearing into the long grass. Meantime the council forges on without making a dent in the 2000 reported cases of fly-tipping each year, while at the same time preventing any further public monitoring of trends and performance by scrapping area committees which carried that out. So our amendment this year gives the opportunity to respond positively to try and make more of a difference with a series of practical funded measures. These in no way change the calculus for future financial strategy.

The measures build on community effort, clearer information and education, improving choices for the avoidance of nuisance, as well as making patrolling more intensive across the city.

Anti-social behaviour impacts people right across the social spectrum. But the wellbeing of the frail and the vulnerable is especially affected. It also makes it harder to grow and maintain community pride and cohesion, which we need to build in Cambridge.

On our wider critique of financial strategy, we welcome that plans are finally underway for the refurbishment of the Guildhall which could save ongoing costs and increase ongoing income from our still enormous reserves, potentially helping us avoid cutbacks in services and meet other policy objectives, such as carbon reduction. But our amendment addresses our other unanswered goals: an acceleration of the transformation process which since last year has instead been spread out even longer; a review of those services which are suffering from declining income; and examination of the scope for income generation from service provision to other organisations.

Cllr Karen Young – Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Finance & Resources

Cllr Tim Bick – Liberal Democrat Group Leader

The amendment to the budget recommendations:

A. On page 238, after “(a) Approve” insert:

“Subject to the following modifications:”

(i) II5222 – City Services increased income

Further increase additional income from City Services, through both variation of fees to organisers of commercial events on council open spaces and of the number of such events so long as within existing policy, without impacting community-led initiatives.

(£30k) recurring

(ii) RI5223 – Reduced income – City Services

Reduce the City Services reductions in income provided for from the market and crematorium. Actions have been referred to in order to turn round these two services from

the succession of annual income reductions, but no organised plan has been shared. The cancellation of a part of the reduced budget for income is designed to intensify and accelerate the actions.

(£30k) recurring

(ii) **S5205 – Central provision review**

Further reduce Central budget provision.

(£30k) recurring

(iii) **NEW – Expansion of Community Action Days**

Doubling the current year City Services programme of 16 Community Action Days, which prompt voluntary neighbourhood clear-ups through the deposit of unwanted materials that are unsuitable for weekly collections - further expanding an acceptable alternative to fly-tipping. The additional budget provision provides for a part-time Band 4 officer in the community engagement team to support planning, co-ordination and staffing of events, enabling full use of the existing unspent budget, as well as meeting costs of the additional events. The expanded programme to explore a mix of increased frequency and new locations across the city and opportunities to increase re-use and recycling.

£18k pa recurring

(iv) **NEW – Additional Public Realm Enforcement Officers**

The creation of two new Public Realm Enforcement Officer positions to increase the capacity of the existing team, which was reduced in last year's budget. The new officers to integrate into all aspects of the patrolling and investigative work of the team, addressing the range of nuisance behaviours including littering and fly tipping and enabling consideration of the council acquiring wider enforcement powers over prohibited vehicles on public open spaces.

£102k pa recurring

(v) **NEW – Prohibition of unauthorised vehicles on council public open spaces**

The City Council to explicitly communicate prohibition of mopeds and motorbikes (however powered) on its public open spaces as well as those e-scooters which are not authorised for use off private land. The bid provides for signage for all the relevant open spaces across the city. (Funded from the General Fund reserve).

£6k one-off

(vi) **NEW Acoustic monitoring cameras**

Funding of two acoustic monitoring cameras to enable joint working with the Police, Highways Authority and the Vision Zero partnership to deter and penalise those breaching the peace on Cambridge roads with anti-social driving and noisy vehicles. This takes forward the motion passed by the city council in November 2021 to take further action with partners on the nuisance which is widely experienced in the city. It is anticipated that the equipment would be operated by the Highways Authority and that penalty income would cover the cost of data management and penalty administration. (Funded from the General Fund reserve.)

£50k one-off

(vii) **NEW – Feasibility study for project to replace public toilets on Jesus Green**

Upgrading or replacement of the Rouse Ball Pavilion has been an agreed need for some years, as the antiquated facilities lack capacity and accessibility to match demand on Jesus Green. They continue to act as a magnet and a driver for anti-social behaviour. This is underlined by the closure of nearest neighbouring public toilets on Chesterton Road and Park Street and restricted opening of those on Midsummer Common. Funding to provide for work with stakeholders to develop actionable designs for inclusion in the council's capital programme or any other identified and available funding source. (Funded from the General Fund reserve.)

£25k one-off

(viii) **NEW – Annual allocation from Fixed Penalty Notice income**

Contribution from fixed penalty income to costs of proposed additional enforcement clear-up activity, which are legally authorised uses. The council has increased fixed penalties following an increase in the permitted ceiling by national government. Income flows to an earmarked reserve.

(£30k) recurring

B: On page 243, after (o) insert:

“(p) Transformation Programme

Increase efforts to accelerate the council's transformation programme to ensure its targets are met, and to avoid poorly evidenced erosion of valued services and short-term use of reserves to support ongoing services.

(q) Future Plans for Major Council Assets

Conduct a critical appraisal of future steps with the crematorium and of plans and options for recruitment of stall holders in the market square – both facilities showing a trend of reduced income – and report for member scrutiny with options before mid-year.

(r) Income generation from council services through provision to third parties

Investigate the model by which some councils provide a number of their services for other organisations on a commercial basis, generating income to contribute to the funding of their own services, and evaluate its potential application to Cambridge, bringing options to a meeting of the Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Committee before mid-year.

(s) Budget Consultation

Revisit the annual public consultation process on the budget, noting in particular the recommendation in the recent independent review of the council's budget process: s4.15 - https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s59728/FINAL_Cambridge_City_Budget_Setting_Process49215.pdf

Summary of budget amendments

£'000	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Bids and savings						
II5222 - City Services increased income		(30)	(30)	(30)	(30)	(30)
RI5223 - City Services reduced income		(30)	(30)	(30)	(30)	(30)
S5205 - Central provision review		(30)	(30)	(30)	(30)	(30)
NEW - Expansion of Community Action Days		18	18	18	18	18
NEW - Additional Public Realm Enforcement Officers		102	102	102	102	102
Total bids and savings		30	30	30	30	30
Allocation from earmarked reserve						
NEW - Annual allocation from Fixed Penalty Notice income		(30)	(30)	(30)	(30)	(30)
Total use of earmarked reserves		(30)	(30)	(30)	(30)	(30)
Use of GF reserve						
NEW - Prohibition of unauthorised vehicles on council public spaces		6				
NEW - Feasibility study for project to replace public toilets on Jesus Green		25				
NEW - Acoustic monitoring cameras (capital)		50				
Total use of GF reserve		81				
Impact on GF reserve		81	0	0	0	0

Impact of Liberal Democrat Group budget amendment on general fund reserves after final settlement adjustments

GF reserve £'000	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Balance at 1 April (b/fwd)	(28,061)	(22,987)	668	1,718	1,768	1,818
Contingency funding for adults with multiple disadvantages programme - BSR 2023/23	60	60				
WREN solar project - approved MTFS 2022 and BSR 2023/24	1,470	130				
Budgeted contribution to reserves per approved 2023/24 budget	(932)					
2022/23 Carry forwards	1,568					
2023/24 Funding approved at outturn – Greater Cambridge Impact (£200k)/Place Group Programme Delivery (£218k)/Climate Change Reserve (£80k)	498					
Funding approved at MTFS for 2023/24 pay award above 3% assumption in 2023/24 BSR	651					
Funding approved at MTFS to complete Our Cambridge transformation programme	700					
Restructuring arising from Phase 1 of City Services Review	548					
Application of previously approved funding in service budgets for capital projects	511					
Transfer to Civic Quarter Development Reserve		20,000				
Transfer to Climate Change Fund		750				
Contribution to balance 2024/25 budget		1,634				
Liberal Democrat Group amendment		81	0	0	0	0
<i>Indicative funding for further restructuring arising from future phases of Our Cambridge</i>		1,000	1,000			
<i>Indicative funding for the Climate Change Fund (CCF)</i>			50	50	50	50
Balance at 31 March before business rates growth (c/fwd)	(22,987)	668	1,718	1,768	1,818	1,868
Business rates growth – indicative growth element (at risk)	(7,400)	(5,313)	(5,414)	(3,762)	(4,389)	(5,053)
Use of business rates growth to fund services	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Balance at 31 March including business rates growth	(28,887)	(9,045)	(11,909)	(14,121)	(16,960)	(20,463)

Climate change, equality and anti-poverty implications of the Liberal Democrat Group Amendment to the General Fund Budget

Expansion of community action days

Climate Change impacts – Medium positive impact – because it is likely that doubling the number of Community Action days would lead to an increase in recycling of waste and an associated reduction in carbon emissions.

Equality impacts – Helping to reduce fly-tipping may have a positive benefit in reducing hazards within neighbourhoods. This could have a positive impact around disability in improving access to spaces and reducing likelihood of injury caused by obstructions.

Poverty impacts – Low positive impact – because the increased number of Community Action days would provide increased opportunities for low-income residents to dispose of bulky waste free of charge.

Additional public realm enforcement officers

Climate Change impacts – Nil – because there would be no impact on carbon emissions

Equality impacts – Increasing the number of Public Realm Enforcement Officers to prevent littering and fly-tipping could have a positive benefit around disability by removing hazards, improving access to spaces and reducing likelihood of injury caused by obstructions. A greater presence of Enforcement Officers in open spaces could also help reduce anti-social behaviour, including hate crime. Greater enforcement over prohibited vehicles on public open spaces might reduce the risk of injury to members of the public, which could lead to disability.

Poverty impacts – No impact because does not impact on people's income.

Prohibition of unauthorised vehicles on council public open spaces

Climate Change impacts – Nil – because there would be no impact on carbon emissions

Equality Impacts – Raising awareness that mopeds and e-scooters are not allowed on council public spaces might have a positive impact for improving safety of pedestrians and cyclists on public open spaces, preventing injury that might cause disability.

Poverty impacts – No impact because does not impact on people's income.

Acoustic monitoring cameras

Climate Change impacts – Nil – because there would be no impact on carbon emissions

Equality Impacts - If the acoustic monitoring cameras deter anti-social driving, this could increase public safety and reduce risks of injury that might lead to disability.

Poverty impacts – No impact because does not impact on people’s income.

Feasibility study for project to replace public toilets on Jesus Green

Climate Change impacts – Nil – because there would be no impact on carbon emissions

Equality impacts – The feasibility study itself will not directly have any equality impacts but if recommendations are implemented there will be equality impacts that would need to be subject to an equality impact assessment.

Poverty impacts – No impact because does not impact on people’s income.

Increase in additional income target from city services

Climate Change impacts – Nil – because there would be no impact on carbon emissions

Equality impacts – No impacts have been identified specific to this amendment.

Poverty impacts – No impact because does not impact on people’s income.

Reduced decrease in income target from city services

Climate Change impacts – Nil – because there would be no impact on carbon emissions

Equality impacts – No impacts have been identified specific to this amendment.

Poverty impacts – No impact because does not impact on people’s income.

Further reduction in central budget provision

Climate Change impacts – Nil – because there would be no impact on carbon emissions

Equality impacts – No impacts have been identified specific to this amendment.

Poverty impacts – No impact because does not impact on people’s income

Annual allocation from fixed penalty notice income

Climate Change impacts – Nil – because there would be no impact on carbon emissions

Equality impacts – No impacts have been identified specific to this amendment.

Poverty impacts – No impact because does not impact on people’s income.

Section 25 report

These budget amendments would not require any substantive changes to the existing Section 8 – Section 25 Report. **[Page 285 refers]**

There are two types of amendment:

- General Fund (GF) recurring revenue amendments – increases in spending are balanced by improvements in income and annual allocations from an earmarked reserve. As a result, there are no changes to savings requirements as a result of these amendments. However, there is a risk that the use of £30k p.a. from the Fixed Penalty Notice reserve exceeds the surpluses credited to the reserve, and that income improvements may not be achievable or sustainable.
- One-off revenue and capital amendments - funded by the use of £81k from the general reserve. However, estimates show that the GF reserve remains above the prudent minimum level as assessed in MTFS 2023.

I therefore consider, in relation to the budget resulting from the application of these amendments, the estimates for the financial year 2024/25 to be sufficiently robust and the financial reserves up to 31 March 2025 to be adequate.

Caroline Ryba

Chief Finance Officer