

Motion on Notice

Liberal Democrat alternative budget proposals: an amending motion

The Council resolves to adopt the proposed alternative budget attached to the budget papers as set out below in items 1-7.

1. Council Tax

It is proposed that in order to protect the Council Tax base it is more progressive to give a Council Tax Rebate rather than a Council Tax cut. The proposal is for a flat rate rebate of £4.25 per household. This means the Council will be, in relative terms, helping to support the occupants of lower band properties more than the occupants of higher band properties and so would be seen to be acting more fairly.

The cost in the first year is the same as a 3% cut but is actually a lower cost option to the Council in the long term as the base is protected for any future increases that may be necessary to take account of central Government cuts.

2. Recycling

It is proposed to invest £60,000 per annum initially for three years in the promotion of increased recycling and the education of new and existing residents to avoid contamination occurring. The money will be allocated to:

- Two officers visiting households and neighbourhoods to explain the merits of more effective recycling and reduced contamination
- An officer at the transfer station to monitor contamination levels and to ensure the penalties claimed are accurate
- Better promotion of recycling across the district, such as through the introduction of 'Welcome Packs' and the consideration of local incentives.

This will be funded in year one from the 2015/16 forecast underspend.

3. Rangers

A sum of £45,000 per annum allocated to the Rangers service to recruit an additional operative to place a greater emphasis on rural areas. This sum is to include the purchase of equipment and supplies. It is also intended that the way the service operates would be renegotiated with Essex County Council.

This will be funded in year one from the 2015/16 forecast underspend.

4. Welcome Packs

It is proposed to develop welcome packs for both new residents and residents who move between Wards. We will work with Town and Parish Councils to include local information. The budget will be £5,000 per annum and will be funded from 2014/15 forecast underspend.

5. Photovoltaic Panels

It is proposed to allocate £400,000 for the installation of photovoltaic panels on council buildings. This will lead to a reduction in energy costs incurred by the council offset in part by the feed-in tariff. The cost of this project will be funded over 2 years from the re-working of existing Reserves.

6. Capital Initiatives Fund

It is proposed to allocate an initial £1,500,000 to a fund to pump prime infrastructure associated with growth in the district. Examples are car parking and pedestrian access, schemes to bring more jobs and public spaces. This fund will be established from the forecast budget underspend in 2015/16 and the reworking of the Strategic Initiatives Fund and other Reserves. Further allocations will be made to the fund from underspends and Reserves in succeeding years to support delivery of the new Local Plan.

7. Local Plan

The budget for Planning Policy will be revised at an early date to incorporate internal and external costs for the production of a new Local Plan. All external expenditure on consultants and studies will be subject to scope and costs being agreed by Members to ensure transparency.

Cllr Alan Dean
Leader of the Liberal Democrat Opposition