

**Climate, Community Safety and Environment Scrutiny Panel Meeting –
Budgetary Recommendations HELD on 14th November at Westbury Room,
George Meehan House, 294 High Road, London N22 8JZ, 7:00pm – 9:30pm.**

Attendees:

Councillors Lester Buxton (Chair), Gina Adamou, Luke Cawley – Harrison, George Dunstall, Liam Carroll, Ibrahim Ali.

Also attending:

- Cllr Seema Chandwani: Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality.
- Cllr Mike Hakata: Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Environment and Transport.
- Cllr Ajda Ovat: Cabinet Member for Communities.
- Cllr Dana Carlin: Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services.
- Mark Stevens: Assistant Director of Resident Experience.
- Barry Francis: Director of Environment and Resident Experience.
- John O’Keefe: Head of Finance Capital, Place and Economy.
- Eubert Malcolm: Assistant Director of Environment.
- Ayshe Simsek: Democratic Services Manager.
- Serena Shani: Interim Principal Panels Coordinator.

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred to the filming of meetings and this information was noted by all present.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair noted that Cllr Ibrahim Ali had sent apologies for lateness. The Non-Voting Co-optee Mr Ian Sygrave and Cllr Eldridge Culverwell sent apologies for absence.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

There were no deputations.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED

The Panel approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

5. SCRUTINY OF THE 2025/26 DRAFT BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) 2025/2030.

The Head of Finance introduced the report. A summary is as below.

The importance of oversight of the action of the Executive was highlighted to all present. The Head of Finance stated that the budget was not balanced. The Panel needed to question whether the needs of residents were being met against the priorities as set out in the budget. He asked the Panel to consider whether the estimates and the assumptions the budget was based on had been robust enough.

Appendix one – The Forecast of Budgetary Pressures.

The Head of Finance framed the forecasts within a national context. He stated that there would be a 3.2% increase in funding from central government – however this was still to be allocated. Cllr Carlin stated that she expected that her team would have the details of allocation by 19th December. She noted that central government would be changing their methodology of distribution. Extra funding from central government for special educational needs would go to schools directly. There would also be a three-year spending review in Spring 2025.

The Head of Finance continued that information listed was the Q1 results, and also the first update of the 5-year MTFS. It was stated that at first, it was thought that the budget gap would be £10m however it became clear that additional budget pressures would add an extra £39m to the total. These pressures were due to increases in Adult Social Care and Housing unit cost. In addition, inflation was not included in the budget. He stated that the cost increases for Adult Social Care was around 10% in addition to increases in National Insurance costs. These additional costs would be passed down the supply chain. With this included, the budget gap was closer to £50m.

It was clarified that the gap of anticipated costs and expenditure was for the Council overall. However, the three directorates of the Panel had reported that there were *no* budgetary pressures facing them for the coming years ahead.

The Chair invited questions from the Panel on Appendix 1 and the following was noted:

In response to questioning the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services stated that funding from central government would be almost neutral to the funding gap. The anticipated amount Haringey would receive would not close the budget

gap. This was primarily because of the situation of the escalating costs of temporary accommodation.

Recommendation1 : To better facilitate the scrutiny of the budget, that future reports on the budget pressures listed in the tables of the report also list pressures for the previous financial year.

In addition, clarity was sought as to why there was a projected drop off in 2027 of the cost pressures. The Head of Finance responded that these were best estimates. There was also substantial prevention work being done currently to ensure that demand to services be controlled. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services added that these pressures should only be seen this year and not in the coming years, hence the drop off in 2027.

A question was raised as to why overall (and in Children's Services notably), there had not been accurate prediction of the budgetary pressures over the years. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services responded that last year there had been a number of high-cost children's placements (in the region of £10k per week) that had come in the end of year budget and costs had been carried over this year. Overall, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services indicated despite this the Children Services budget was relatively stable, and her team had not seen an increase in the trends.

Appendix 2: Proposed Savings and Management Actions.

The Head of Finance gave a brief introduction to the report.

i- Cross Council Savings

The Chair invited questions from Panel members and a summary of discussions is as below.

A question was raised by the Panel about the cross-Council priority of achieving 5% efficiencies and how this would affect front line staff and revenue implications. The Director of Environment and Resident Experience stated that vacancies were being put on hold. He was also looking at reducing agency spend as a possible way to achieve staff savings. He stated that he was putting in place a two-tiered approach to cuts across the directorate focusing on more senior roles - and also reducing overtime.

In response to a question as to whether there may be job losses the Director of Environment and Resident Experience stated that this was a possibility. He stated these pressures would have an impact on job roles and staff levels. Front-line staff and those roles which generated income would be protected as much as possible. In response to a direct question around numbers of agency workers, the Director replied that there were 36 agency workers across the directorate. He added that there had been four voluntary redundancies so far which had added to the savings. Returning to the subject of agency workers, the Director added that last year agency

staff had been reduced by adding them to a fixed term contract and he would be considering the same this year in places of need.

The Chair then asked about the prioritisation of the income generating roles – he asked whether enforcement would be protected at the expense of services such as waste collection. The Director of Environment and Resident Experience responded that this would not be the case as front line service roles would be protected as much as possible.

In response to a question about contract management, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services replied that every contract was under review. She clarified that Council policy would not automatically roll over contracts, but lower prices and value for money should be looked for. The Director also clarified that the renegotiation of Veolia's contract would expect to bring in a saving.

(Councillor Ali entered the room – 7.26pm).

The Chair raised a question regarding whether the purchasing of waste vehicles before the renegotiation of the waste contracts would produce savings in this financial year on top of the savings achieved in the last financial year. The Director of Environment and Resident Experience responded that by replacing the fleet of vehicles outright there would be a change in contract, and it would give the Council the best possible commercial advantage. Savings would be brought by the lower cost of the contract itself in this financial year.

A question was raised about the types of waste vehicles that the Council would purchase. The Director responded that the type of vehicle, the methodology, as well as the frequency of collection would all affect the value of the contract. He also stated that there was a change in legislation that would also have to be accounted for. Population modelling was being used to predict rises in demand. He stated that a third-party specialist would be engaged to help with this.

The Director of Environment and Resident Experience responded to questions regarding the expertise of councils to maximise commercial interests and income generation opportunities. He stated that the Council had in-house expertise that made very good use of commercial opportunities – the Property Team especially had particularly good knowledge and expertise.

A question was raised as to whether there was a role for data analysts and those with a specific skill set to help with income generation and forecasting demand. The Director replied that it would be ideal to have staff with this skill set working in the directorate - however with the current financial situation this was not a current priority. He stated that the service had a wider engagement model to ensure that they had information to support with income generation and need for responding to broader or local changes. However, this more intelligent data may be something they considered in the future.

ii- Service-Specific Savings

It was commented that there was very little detail regarding this, and the Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality was asked to talk through the report. This was summarised below.

The Cabinet Member stated that the savings listed in the report could be achieved because:

- Parking fees and charges were compared with other boroughs on a regular basis.
- The team had been able to deploy civil enforcement officers (CEOs) more effectively as some parking was enforced by camera. ANPR cameras were used more where this was possible – especially for areas of high need.
- There were higher levels of enforcement where need was identifiable.
- Street lighting was converted to LEDs and her team were able to adjust the level of brightness to match lighting levels of previous light types, making savings.
- The move from paper based to digital visitors parking permits had created savings in printing and storage.

The Chair invited questions from The Panel and the following was discussed:

The Cabinet Member responded to a question raised about special dispensation for event day parking. She stated that special dispensation could be investigated for event days however she pointed out that it was highly likely that event goers were able to book online - as indeed event tickets themselves were often online only. However, there could not be a situation when the Council was offering an expensive paper-based version of permits to residents who could book online (and thus initiate savings)

The subject of street lighting was raised. It was asked whether brighter street lighting levels had been considered for certain areas where higher levels were needed. The Cabinet Member stated that as LEDs had been installed the lighting was now naturally brighter. The Street Lighting Team had simply returned the lighting levels back to how they originally had been pre-LED.

Civil enforcement officers (CEOs) and the rate of enforcement was then discussed. The Cabinet Member responded that CEOs had a responsibility to inspect parking permits and controlled parking zones (CPZ) - however a significant part of their role was also spent dealing with traffic flow issues, ensuring that disabled bays were kept clear for Blue Badge owners - and ensuring that traffic could flow smoothly across the borough. She stated that CEOs will deal with traffic flow obstructions primarily. She pointed out that in some cases it was more advantageous to income, to send CEOs to CPZs at the end of a controlled period - as per Green Lanes.

Storage space savings for parking was then discussed and it was clarified that this saving related to staffing, printing costs, storage and security. More clarity was requested as to how such a large amount of savings could be achieved. The Cabinet Member responded that it would be investigated further.

Information Request Possibly Leading to a Recommendation: A further detailed breakdown of visitor voucher savings that would provide £300k in savings listed at page 58 under Further Management Actions.

A question was then raised about whether the income from vouchers had decreased due to the move online and the fact that customers would be less likely to buy in bulk as they had done for paper vouchers. The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality pointed out that there was a balance between the need for Council income and legitimacy and that it was imperative that commerciality needs did not undermine the controlled parking process. The current digital model allowed customers to activate only two vouchers at one time, so there had been a drop off.

Another question as to whether this drop off had been factored into the potential savings was raised. The Cabinet Member indicated that this was the first phase of a digital shift. There were a further 20% of customers that could be encouraged to use the online system. Work was already underway to support this move. The Assistant Director of Resident Experience added that the Taranto system (the online system for visitor vouchers) had allowed savings and less reliance on the Customer Services team. The Director of Environment and Resident Experience also explained that there were advantages to customers not being able to buy in bulk, as his team would more accurately be able to predict and forecast.

(Cllr Adamou left the meeting at 8.08pm)

Another question was raised around parking prediction and drop off rates and whether the reasons for this could be ascertained from data compared with COVID pandemic data. The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality responded that it was hard to predict this from factors that were movable. For example, more CPZs had been activated by the Council and more people were now commuting to the office than there were previously. She stated that there were quite a few variables - however they had not seen a major drop in income. The Director interjected and stated that lawfully parking could not be used to drive profit. The set fees should cover costs, but any income made from parking would finance a whole range of transport services – such as the Freedom Pass for senior citizens thus making these schemes self-financed.

Discussion turned to the Community Safety Strategy and its cross-cutting nature. The Chair asked whether there had been an assessment of any budget savings including the pots of funding from other departments and its impact on the delivery on the Community Safety Strategy. The Cabinet Member for Communities responded that funding for the Community Safety Strategy came from outside

sources namely the Home Office and local crime prevention funds. She stated that she was confident that they would be renewed.

It was then asked about anticipated growth in demand - especially with regards to the growth of ASB in certain areas - and adjusting the need for resources accordingly. The Assistant Director of Environment replied that there was work underway to map outcomes and overall objectives in relation to funding streams. The Assistant Director of Environment also stated his team would be working with partners to improve outcomes through public space protection orders and prevention projects.

Appendix 3: Changes to the Capital Programme

The Head of Finance introduced the report. Main points summarised below.

- This was a revised approach to the Capital programme and the third set of revisions.
- It was outlined that the Council was obliged to invest in infrastructure assets and fulfil statutory requirements and policy imperatives.
- The Head of Finance stated there had been a change in how the Capital Programme had been constructed by the team. This now included new categories of 'in delivery' and 'planned delivery' schemes.
- The Head of Finance pointed the Panel's attention to page 63 where the Panel's remit lay.

The Chair invited questions from the Panel

The Chair asked why the festive lighting category had been reduced in 25/26 and not before. Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services clarified that once a saving had been made in the budget it could not be put back in. The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality raised that this fell under the remit of the Cabinet Member for Placemaking and the Local Economy and was not the remit of this Panel.

A question was raised by the Panel about whether the schedule of works for flood water management had been costed. The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality responded that some costs were one-offs such as rainwater garden installations, however others such as the cleaning of gullies were regular costs. She stated that the majority of money for SuDs were from external sources, and the money requested from the Capital fund was to pay for the initial outlay of design work, testing and modelling, to put into the bid. She stated that she would be going to Cabinet with the Flood Water Management Investment Plan, and this would detail and agree the schedule of works for the year ahead.

The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality then responded to a question on the responsibility for the maintenance of rainwater gardens. She stated that rainwater garden maintenance was the remit of a few departments. She would also be considering this as part of the contract to be renegotiated with Veolia. Eventually maintenance would be adopted under the Highways and then Waste Services.

A question was then raised about the Decentralised Energy Networks (DEN)s and the impact that shelving this project would have on the Council's climate aspirations. The Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Environment and Transport explained that the framework business case had been approved by Cabinet in 2021 for two Decentralised Energy Networks, and funding had been successfully bid for, largely in the form of borrowing. However, a feasibility study had identified a number of issues with the project. It was proposed that the Council would create more risk and cost if it was run as a wholly owned company. However, he emphasised that central government had highlighted that DENs were a major part of their decarbonisation programmes, so a way forward had to be found. The Director added that there was a strong commitment to decarbonisation, however it was not possible to carry out the plan without borrowing further. Given the current financial situation, this was deemed unfeasible. A third-party organisation could be enlisted to help the directorate with a possible solution but this was still subject to ongoing review and subject to Cabinet approval. The Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Environment and Transport also added that the situation would be reviewed on an annual basis. There was an interest cost to the capital budget in keeping this funding allocation from the government and this issue would be considered as part of the wider strategic review of how the Council deal with capital funding.

Another question was raised about the amount of £1.25m for the reduction in planned maintenance of borough roads and whether there was a risk that although this was a low amount – that costs would increase on reactive maintenance. It was agreed that this was a risk as the funds received from the Capital fund in previous years only came up to 40% of what the team needed to upkeep the infrastructure.

The Assistant Director of Resident Experience added that, for every £1m that was not spent on capital maintenance, £32k would be spent on reactive maintenance. So, a £1.25m capital reduction would result in a £40k reactive maintenance increase. However, he clarified that, for last and this financial year, the Council had benefitted by £176k from the former Government's Network North Funding Stream. If the £500m extra funding being invested by the new Labour Government is allocated in the same way, Haringey would benefit by around £580k, thereby almost halving the current planned net overall reduction in spend.

A question was then raised about overall why there were no revenue savings on the Capital Programme. The Head of Finance clarified that revenue savings had been made; however, they had not been listed in the report.

It was then asked as to whether there were revenue implications to the proposal to change to a private partnership model of the DEN, and whether this had been accounted for in the budget. The Head of Finance stated that the DEN was cost neutral in the budget - however the project wouldn't make a profit for 25 years under the current ESCO business model. However, it was re- stated that his model was being reviewed.

Another question was asked as to whether parking reviews and the policy of frequent consultations had a revenue implication. The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality stated that currently a review happened every 5 years and she felt that it was right that residents be given an opportunity to input into the plans. She stated that the £250K figure listed was not just for CPZs but also included loading bays and double yellow lines. Also, in terms of capital funding, the Cabinet Member clarified that this was money that the Council was asking to borrow in public loans, and funding from the VFT and other government sources. She added that certain funding had conditions attached to it. For example, 'Safer Streets' funding could only be used for cyclist and pedestrian safety. It was confirmed that money from the VFT was ringfenced and mandated for a Section 151 Officer. In addition, she stated that TfL funding for maintenance of its highways had not been successful.

Appendix 4: The Savings Tracker.

The Director of Environment and Resident Experience introduced the report. Main points summarised below.

- A discussion was been held regarding the corporate management of fleet. The Panel was assured that savings were being considered for maintenance.
- The team was in negotiation with Spurs FC and other organisations regarding the additional clean-up costs of major events.
- The Director emphasised that new CPZs or changes to the timing of existing CPZs had to be agreed by residents, including changing from two-hour restrictions to all day. The Panel was asked to note that reviews were largely received positively by residents.
- Making pay-to-park on-street a one-hour minimum period had been shelved as feedback from the public consultation strongly suggested it would be detrimental to the local economy.
- Enforceable restrictions would be utilised.
- The Director emphasised that there were good mitigation plans in place.

- The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality also highlighted that savings proposals were fluid and would be subject to consultation.

The Chair then further invited questions from the Panel on this information and the following was noted:

A question was raised about the mitigation of services. It was clarified by the Director that mitigation occurred when a project could not be treated as a saving because it could not be progressed.

Another question was raised around the criteria for RAG ratings, as it was pointed out that those rated green had more budget gaps than those rated red.

Information Request Possibly Leading to a Recommendation: More information was requested by the Panel on how services were mitigated and the criteria of RAG.

Discussion turned to consultations. A question was asked about 'push back' on parking consultations, as it was asserted that often businesses over inflated their perceptions of how restrictions affected their business. It was asserted that the data would be in conflict with the perceptions of impact. It was asked whether the sales of one-hour permits would be reconsidered, and figures were asked for what proportion of people were using pay and display for under one hour.

The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality replied that they had already considered how many were using pay and display for under one hour. She also asserted that the organisation had to listen to residents and businesses. Throughout COVID, businesses had struggled. She emphasised that one of the key priorities of the Council was that it had to listen to residents. The Director added that visitor permits had not reduced, and parking income was in a positive position.

Information Request Possibly Leading to a Recommendation: More information was requested by the Panel on the sales of parking permits of under one hour.

Recommendation: It was proposed that the question about co-production and whether this was an over representative process would be raised to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, as this was under its remit.

Another question was asked as to whether the directorate would consider the policy of a free period of parking as an incentive and whether parking enforcement could target areas of high footfall for HGV and box junctions to maximise income. The Director pointed out that legislation dictated that parking could not be used as a revenue raiser. He also added that targeting areas with a large number of box junctions or HGV restrictions could not be enforced everywhere as businesses would struggle. He added that behaviour change should be considered. More targeting also meant changes in drivers' behaviour. This would affect income. The Director also asserted that Haringey had a very high enforcement rate being the 2nd highest issuer in London.

A question was raised about the drop off in the trend in night-time enforcement figures. The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality asserted that behaviour change was again a major factor here. She stated that although locations were expanding, an increase in income would not be sustained as compliance would occur.

Document B - Savings Tracker 2024-25

Discussion then turned to LTNs and whether additional cameras were offset in new traffic schemes. The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality stated that this was less so for LTNs - but more so for Streets for Schools. The Assistant Director clarified that there was no current programme to push forward any more LTNs but there may be other traffic restrictions that would require more cameras.

Information Request Possibly Leading to a Recommendation: More information and clarification was requested by the Panel on how RAG ratings in the tracker are arrived at and what the rationale is - in particular for past savings that have been rolled over and potentially may not need to be kept on the tracker if they have not been met and mitigated with other savings made as a result of income. It will also be important to flag to the Panel if the RAG rating will change as a result of data compiled for the imminent Q2 budget update.

Discussion then turned to commercial waste violations income. It was raised that the customer base had increased however there were fluctuations in income from enforcement. The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality replied that there had been many businesses that had closed over the pandemic period, and this would have had an effect on the commercial waste violation income. Her team would also be looking at outsourcing this when the contract was up for renewal.

A discussion about the work programme commenced and it was agreed that the draft work programme would be sent round for consideration. **ACTION.**

The meeting concluded at 9:30pm.