

**BUDGET COUNCIL**

**25 FEBRUARY 2021**

**LATE MATERIAL**

**Proposed amendment to Council Budget from Councillor  
Falchikov-Sumner**

## **Budget Council meeting - 25 February 2021**

### **Amendment to budget report from Cllr Sharron Sumner – Green Party**

#### **For Item Medium Term Financial Plan 2021-22 to 2022-23 and Detailed Budget and Council Tax 2021/22**

##### Council notes

The pandemic has been difficult for everyone - many local people have lost jobs, been furloughed or faced financial uncertainty. Children have similarly faced a year of disrupted education, anxiety and isolation from friends and wider family.

The evidence which shows it is the poorest in our community that have been hit hardest. The BMJ (<https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n376>) wrote (21 February 2021):

*Containment and lockdown measures have disproportionately affected low income families with young children. Recent research identified the extra costs involved in having children at home for longer without access to vital free services, requiring increased spending on food, heating, and occupying children indoors. Over a third of low income families with children increased their spending during 2020, while 40% of high income families without children reduced theirs.*

That councillors and senior officers have been more insulated from these financial concerns with guaranteed incomes and no threat of losing their livelihoods unlike the poorest families in our borough.

##### Council recognises

The amazing way our borough (and the communities that make it up) has pulled together during this pandemic and we thank every person, family, community group and business for their compassion, grit and reliance during the last 12 months.

By each of the community leaders here tonight making a small sacrifice (by way of our above inflation pay increases) we can pool this money together and help some of the boroughs children recover from the anxiety and isolation of lockdown.

##### Council believes

We have a duty to protect the poorest and most vulnerable in our borough.

As we look forward to the end of the pandemic we need targeted action to deal with its longer term effects on the poorest children in our borough - particularly on their educational achievement and mental health. Children living in families

without the financial strength to have proper home learning through lack of IT or broadband are also likely to be the ones living in accommodation with the least access to open space and will have disproportionately lost out on learning and have suffered the greatest mental health impacts as a result.

Therefore Council calls for:

1. A freeze on councillor allowances in 2021/22.
2. A freeze on senior officer pay for 2021/2022– defined as officers holding the rank of assistant director and above.
3. The £41,500 raised by the above measures to be allocated equally between between the four Neighbourhood Committee (£10,375 each) to create a fund for use in supporting school aged children who have experienced mental health problems or educational disadvantage during the pandemic.
4. Each neighbourhood to proactively invite applications from affected families, community organisations and individuals, local charities and self help groups for small grants to provide equipment, events or help services for school aged children to help them reintegrate back into their educational settings.

## **COMMENTS OF THE S151 OFFICER**

### **Uplift in Members allowances is not applied**

The Members Allowances Scheme automatically ties the uplift to the staff award that is proposed to be 2% for 2021/22. This would result in an annual uplift of £15,000.

The Members Allowance scheme cannot be changed without the Council considering the report and recommendations of the London Councils Independent Remuneration Panel. The time to process such an amendment and implement it would be six months. Therefore, this proposal will generate a part year saving of £7,500. Reductions and changes to the members allowances scheme may impact the ability to attract community representatives whatever their financial position.

### **Freeze on Senior Staff Pay (Assistant Director and above)**

The proposed budget for staff pay awards is based on a 2% pay increase. The Council is part of the national pay bargaining and Chief Officer and Chief Executive pay is determined nationally by the Joint National Committee (JNC). To leave this arrangement would require time, human resources and legal support and the appropriate negotiations with trade unions. The Council has estimated a six month time implementation period, therefore the part year savings would be £34,000.

Implementation of this proposal would result in the Council changing the existing terms and conditions of a cohort of employees. The Council would implement a 2% pay award which would subsequently be removed mid-year. This may lead to employment law risks which if they materialise could outweigh the financial savings

generated. There may also be recruitment and retention implications which could adversely affect service outcomes and result in additional financial costs.

In terms of existing support for children and young people impacted by the pandemic and school closures the Borough and Council has received the following funding and support from Central Government for 2020/22.

<b>GRANT</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
Catch Up Funding and National Tutoring Programme	£ 1,961,440	Funding to support children and young people to catch up lost time after school closure including support children’s development and wellbeing. This is especially important for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds. There is also a subsidised national tutoring programme that schools can access.
Wellbeing for education return	£ 22,850	DFE advise local authorities spend this Grant to support the Wellbeing for Education Return project which seeks to better equip education settings to support pupils and students’ wellbeing and psychosocial recovery as they return to full-time education this autumn.
Mental Health Schools Team Programme	£ 460,000	MHSTs are intended to provide early intervention on some mental health and emotional wellbeing issues, such as mild to moderate anxiety, as well as helping staff within a school or college setting to provide a ‘whole school approach’ to mental health and wellbeing. The teams will act as a link with local children and young people’s mental health services and be supervised by NHS staff,
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 2,444,290</b>	

The statement in paragraph 24 to 32 (page 7 and 8) of budget papers are not adversely impacted by the proposed budget amendments stated above .