

Green Group Budget Amendment

The Green Group proposes an anti-austerity, green budget amendment, which would mitigate the worst effects of cuts, tackle air pollution, take action on housing and also increase the council's accountability to local residents and improve working conditions for staff.

We propose making savings and generating additional income in three ways:

- Savings in allowances, policy and communications,
- Increasing the council's reserves by less than the council is planning
- Introducing a workplace parking levy to tackle air pollution

These savings and revenues would be used to:

- Keep Lambeth's Children's centres open, invest in them and mitigate the worst impact of cuts against vulnerable residents
- Provide unprecedented investment in cleaning up Lambeth's dirty air
- Provide more homes at Living Rent Levels for Lambeth residents
- Set up a new Housing Scrutiny Committee

In addition the Green Group proposes that the Council begin the process of moving staff to a Four Day Week and piloting a new policy on debt collection which would end the use of bailiffs in council tax cases.

Savings in additional members allowances

While Lambeth's most vulnerable residents experience the terrible impact of cuts to vital public services, Lambeth's politicians continue to claim their own large additional allowances (SRAs). The Green Group does not consider that so many additional paid allowances are necessary. The Green group would cut unnecessary posts and allowances.

In the coming financial year we would abolish some posts and immediately remove Special Responsibility Allowances from others as follows:

- Remove the allowance for the Deputy mayor
- Abolish one deputy leader post (leaving one)
- Abolish three deputy cabinet member posts
- Abolish two deputy chief whips
- Remove allowances for the two deputies of overview and scrutiny committee
- Remove allowances for two policy leads

Post	Basic	13.8% on costs (tax/NI)	Totals
Deputy Mayor	£5319	£734.02	£6053.02
Deputy leader	£28518	£3935.48	£32,453.48
3 deputy cabinet members	£32715	£4514.67	£37,229.67
2 Deputy Chief whips	£5000	£690	£5,690.00
Two vice chairs (OSC)	£12000	£1656	£13,656.00

Two policy leads	£5000	£690	£5,690.00
Total annual saving	£88,552	£12,220.17	£100,772.17

This would bring the total SRA budget for 2018/19 down from £553,464.64 (including on costs) to £432,692.64 and provide an overall annual saving of £100,772 a year.

The remaining additional allowances (“Special Responsibility Allowances”) would also be cut by 40% for everyone who receives them. This would save a further £173,077.06 in the first financial year. The total saving from SRAs would be £273,849.06 per year or £1,095,396.24 over four years.

In the medium term, we propose moving away from the Cabinet system to a committee system to enable more resident engagement, cross-party working, closer scrutiny and rigorous testing of ideas before decisions are taken. This would go some way to help the council meet the challenge raised in the last LGA Peer Review which identified a strong appetite among Lambeth residents to be engaged, to be involved and to be heard but which highlighted concerns about the Council's ability to deliver on objectives stating that the council had not brought residents along with it on many projects .

The Green Group would make further savings from Corporate Campaigns, Direct Mail, Marketing and Corporate Branding from within the communications budget, saving another £100,000 a year, or £400,000 over four years.

This would mean total savings of £373,849.06 per year or £1,495,296.24 over four years.

Savings from increasing the general fund reserves by less

The Labour Group budget proposes increasing the council’s reserves instead of investing in children’s centres. The Green Group proposes to also increase the council’s reserves, but by less than the Labour Group is proposing, in order to reverse the proposed cuts to children’s centres and mitigate the worst effects on Lambeth’s most vulnerable residents.

It appears that it is the Council’s reckless and dangerous speculation on the property market through lending to Homes for Lambeth (which the council is underwriting) which is driving the perceived need to increase the council’s reserves by so much. The Green Group would not pursue the reckless strategy of estate demolition and property speculation, and is also proposing that the council explores alternative options for housing refurbishment which are safer, would create far more truly affordable homes, and are supported by residents on estates.

The savings proposed from the general fund balance would provide £4.8m over the next four years

Year	MTFS budgeted figures (General Fund Balance)	Alternative budget amendment figures (General Fund Balance)	Annual Saving
2018/19	£23,790,000	£23,790,000	N/A
2019/20	£25,229,000	£24,029,000	£1,200,000
2020/21	£26,668,000	£24,268,000	£1,200,000

2021/22	£28,107,000	£24,507,000	£1,200,000
2022/23	£29,546,000	£24,746,000	£1,200,000

A workplace parking levy

The Green group proposes introducing a Workplace Parking Levy.

Lambeth was ranked as the 9th highest borough in London for people commuting in from other places in London. 21,491 people drive a car or a van into Lambeth according to the 2011 census and another 1110 come in as passengers. This contributes to toxic air in Lambeth and the council is not tackling it.

Many of these commuters park in private bays off the street. Based on a 2005 survey, there were an estimated 8,900 (non-central) and 1300 (central) private non-residential employee parking spaces in Lambeth.

The Green Group commissioned a briefing note from officers on the cost and potential revenue of a workplace parking levy on these parking places, where there are more than ten spaces in one place (based on the scheme run by Nottingham Council) and with exemptions for those who need them - for example for disabled residents.

The Green Group proposes building on the briefing prepared by officers with a feasibility study in the 2019-2020 financial year, with a view to setting up and running the scheme from 2020-2021. It is anticipated by officers that this could generate £979,200 per year in revenue when it is up and running totalling £2,937,600 over three years. This would also discourage commuting into the borough by motor vehicle, helping to tackle Lambeth's air pollution crisis.

How the savings and additional revenue would be spent

The savings from allowances, policy and communications (£1.5m over four years) would be used in the following ways:

Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Housing is the number one priority in Lambeth but it is not getting the scrutiny it needs or deserves. The Green Group would set up a Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee, similar to the children's scrutiny sub committee.

The SRA for new Housing Scrutiny Committee chair would be £3,600 plus on costs of £496.80 totalling £4096.80 £19,500 a year would be provided for officer and administrative support in Democratic Services.

Homes (Compulsory Purchase and rogue landlord) unit

The Council currently has an arrangement through the Real Lettings scheme (a social investment property fund) to acquire properties using Public Works Loan Board and Right to Buy receipts which are then used for temporary accommodation.

The Green Group proposes building on this work, to compulsory purchase empty properties which would then be rented out at Living Rent levels.

There have been no compulsory purchases of private properties by the council in the past 5 years, despite the fact that the council has identified 679 privately owned properties that have been empty for more than six months, and 2,574 empty properties of all tenures. Lambeth council has however pursued a policy of selling off shortlife housing, held outside the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Green Group would aim in the medium term to establish a new council unit dedicated to bringing empty private homes back into use - using all the powers at its disposal to do so - as well as taking action against rogue landlords in the private sector as other boroughs do. In the case of empty homes this would include compulsory purchase, funded by loans from the Public Works Loan Board, which would be paid back through the proceeds from rental of those properties at London Living Rent levels. These properties would be held outside the HRA.

Children’s Centres and protecting the most vulnerable

£200,000 a year would also be used to reverse the cuts to Lambeth’s children centres and mitigate the worst effects of the cuts on vulnerable residents.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Housing scrutiny sub committee SRA	£4,096	£4096	£4,096	£4,096
Administration of housing scrutiny sub committee	£19,500	£19,500	£19,500	£19,500
Homes Unit	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000
Children’s centres	£200,000	£200,000	£200,000	£200,000
	£373,596	£373,596	£373,596	£373,096

The savings from reserves and a proportion of the money saved from allowances would be used to reverse the cuts to children’s centres and mitigate the worst effects of the council’s cuts on vulnerable residents

All of Lambeth’s children’s centres should remain open. In regards to the changes to the Dedicated Schools Grant there is no requirement from government to say cut children's centres nor a ring-fenced budget that has suddenly gone, so although the council may need to save £1.4m the closure of children’s centres is a political choice by the Labour Group. The Green Group proposes not implementing cuts to children’s centres and instead using the £1.2m annual savings identified in council reserves to keep them open, along with the £200,000 annual savings from allowances, policy and communications above, and mitigating the impact of cuts on Lambeth’s most vulnerable residents.

The new revenue from a Workplace Parking Levy would be used in the following ways

The proceeds of the levy must be allocated to transport improvements and investment.

Setting up and running the Workplace Parking Levy

While the scheme would recoup significant revenue, there would be running costs. Annual costs to run the scheme would be £150,000 according to the scoping paper produced by officers. A feasibility study would be commissioned during 2019-20 costing £100,000. This would be drawn down from reserves, and paid back in the following year from the revenue brought in by the scheme.

An engine Idling Scheme

Engine idling is a major source of air pollution in Lambeth. Parking Enforcement Officers would administer an Engine Idling Scheme, whereby drivers were warned, and then fined if they did not comply. The direct costs for setting up an engine idling scheme 2019-2020 would be £53,000. This would be drawn down from reserves, and the money paid back from the revenue in the first year. The indirect costs incurred to run the scheme would be £292,000 a year. This would be an unprecedented investment in the health of the borough.

Action to tackle air pollution from transport and other action on transport

Air pollution in Lambeth is at epidemic levels, but the Cabinet is simply not giving it the priority it deserves. Nor is it willing to set up a task and finish group that would help to bring forward a strategy to make Lambeth carbon neutral by 2030. The Green Group would do these things.

The actual revenue generated by a WPL could be more or less than officers project, but would be made clearer by the feasibility study. There would therefore need to be flexibility built into the plans. The remaining money would be spent on transport projects which tackle air pollution and climate change, providing flexibility in the budget depending upon the revenue generated.

An additional investment of £384,000 and then £537,000 a year (Over £1.4m over three years) would make Lambeth a country leader in resourcing action to tackle air pollution and climate change, enabling the council to bring forward a strategy and a range of measures including abolishing road closure charges currently paid for by residents and incentivising car free days, more provision for cyclists, through to effective pollution monitoring, and boosting walking and cycling.

Item	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
WPL feasibility study	£100,000			
WPL Annual running costs		£150,000	£150,000	£150,000
Engine idling scheme set up	£53,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Engine Idling Indirect costs		£292,000	£292,000	£292,000
Repayment to reserves		£153,000		
Action to tackle air pollution		£384,200	£537,200	£537,200
Total	(£153,000)	£979,200	£979,200	£979,200

Additional Measures

In addition to the above the Green Group proposes the following:

Moving to a Four Day Week

Greens on Lambeth Council have led the way in bringing about improvements to pay and conditions of those who work for Lambeth Council. It was Green councillor Becca Thackray who tabled the motion in 2008 to make Lambeth a Living Wage employer, and the Green Group continues to press for this to be extended to all contractors, which is still not the case.

The morale of council employees as well as conditions need to be improved. A four day week would also bring improvement in productivity and equality, particularly for those with caring responsibilities. It would also help the council achieve its aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. The Green Group proposes in the medium term, to move council employees to a four day week beginning during the next four years, with pay kept at existing rates so employees would be paid for five.

Piloting and implementing a new policy on bailiffs

13,395 cases were referred to bailiffs by Lambeth Council (both council tax support and non council tax support cases) in 2017-2018 causing stress and misery. Councils like Hammersmith and Fulham have resolved to no longer use bailiffs to collect council tax. The Green Group proposes piloting a new policy which seeks to end the use of bailiffs by Lambeth Council for council tax arrears against vulnerable residents.

Creating a new fund for solar panels on schools and public buildings

The Green group proposes establishing a fund, funded by borrowing from the Public Works Loan board, which would enable Lambeth schools and projects involved with the council to install solar panels on their buildings. Schools and projects would be able to borrow from this fund, and repay the loans over 25 years, funded through the savings from their energy bills.