

Worthing Borough Council Labour Group

Proposed Budget Amendments 21/22

1. Key Staffing Requirements - Creation of two new Officer Posts

- i) Community Engagement Officer (to include specific asset mapping skills) (cost per annum: £45k)
- ii) Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer (cost per annum: £45K)

Budget to be re-allocated from Service Reinvestment Proposals:

- i) Digital Apprentices
- ii) Data Lead (TBC – acknowledge that some aspects of this post very useful. Explore incorporating into Community Engagement and Asset Mapping Portfolio, or getting part time position for 21/22)

Rationale: As a Borough, we need to take stock of where we will be post-COVID-19 and to re-evaluate the priorities and needs of the Community. The Labour Group have raised the issue of a lack of effective consultation (and analysis of consultation) with our Communities in major project developments such as Brooklands Park, Teville Gate, and investment in the Town Centre. Community engagement, alongside community asset mapping, is an opportunity for the Council to engage with our communities in a way that results in effective partnership working and a renewed social contract.

Ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion is an essential part of how we want to interact with our communities. This is also true of our internal Council culture, and the proposal is that this post will consider both internal and external facing Council approaches to the work that we undertake.

2. Housing – Begin process of establishing Council as an RSL (Registered Social Landlord)

Cost/benefit and feasibility assessment (21/22 cost: £20K)

Budget to be reallocated from Major Projects Team

Rationale: The relationship with Worthing Homes has not yielded the fruitful partnership that the Borough needs to address the chronic shortage of social and truly affordable housing. We propose a thorough review of this partnership, alongside a feasibility assessment in 21/22 of establishing the Council as an RSL

3. Environment - Retrofitting Homes Grant Fund

To compliment the Green Homes National Government Fund

Budget to be re-allocated from proposed Car Park cladding costs (£700K)

Rationale: The Council's Carbon Neutral target is laudable, but there are serious equality gaps in people's ability to afford retrofitting for their homes to reduce their carbon footprint. This budget reallocation signals our commitment to prioritise the climate emergency above other issues that are of lesser importance (we have left the requisite amount in budget to ensure that car parks are safe and usable).

As part of this budget amendment, we also propose a full review of our Borough's ability to access the Green Homes National Government Fund, to ensure that we are enabling residents to make best use of this fund and that we are maximizing our contribution to addressing the climate emergency in this area.

4. Environment – Sharing investment equitably across Parks and Green Spaces in the Borough

Budget to be reviewed and reallocated from Brooklands Park (21/22 £2 million allocated)

Rationale: This budget amendment has been identified as a result of the public consultation for Brooklands, identifying improvements that do not now reflect the development plan for this site. We therefore propose revisiting this public consultation, reviewing and revising the plans and the budget, and using the expected underspend from the 21/22 £2 million allocation to invest more equitably across the numerous green spaces in Worthing (particularly those green spaces that have not been identified as "jewels in Worthing's crown" but are nevertheless essential to community health and wellbeing)

5. Environment – Food Waste

Investment for feasibility study as per Adur's budget amendment below (£12K from capacity issues reserve)

Budget for a spend of £20k (£8k for Adur, Worthing £12k) to commission a feasibility study into a residential food waste collection.

The study should be based on a scheme initially using the currently available infrastructure that would provide for the transfer of our food waste to one of the existing companies for digestion and energy generation out of our area. The study should include an outline assessment of the longer-term feasibility of a local digestion and electricity generation facility that might have the potential to produce a revenue stream for the council.

Whilst, at present, this council has no statutory duty to provide a food waste collection, the benefits of such a scheme in reducing the contamination of recyclable waste, reducing landfill, and contributing to generating electricity will make a substantial contribution towards meeting the council's target of carbon neutrality by 2030.

6. Environment – HMO Refuse Collection Consultation

Consultation costs as per Adur's budget amendment below (£12k from Capacity Issues Reserve)

There is substantial evidence that the move to fortnightly refuse collections for homes of multiple occupancy (HMO) isn't working and has since become a public health issue with overflowing bins, strewn rubbish and stench.

The survey which received over 1800 responses revealed general dissatisfaction with the new arrangements. In addition, many residents have made direct contact with councillors and on social media channels to indicate their concerns.

We wish to use £20k (£8k for Adur, £12k for Worthing) for an audit of the general refuse arrangements for the HMOs. We would also wish to see an equality impact assessment carried out.

Once this has been carried out, we wish to see an action plan to identify the HMOs with continuing problems and to deliver more capacity either through;

- 1) the provision of larger bins,
- 2) increased bin storage areas,
- 3) or a return to weekly collections.

7. Public Realm - Increase Local High Street Development Fund (currently £50k 21/22)

Budget increase to be re-allocated from proposed Car Park cladding costs (£100K)

Rationale: Local high streets have proven to be invaluable during the Pandemic and can continue to be a source of a thriving local economy and a community hub moving forwards. We propose that the Council should show its support for these essential areas across the Borough by increasing the £50K fund for 21/22 to £150K

8. Public Realm – Regeneration of the Lido

Feasibility work to bring the Lido back to a swimming pool and create outstanding seafront attraction (£20K)

Budget to be re-allocated from Major Projects Team

Rationale: In 2019, the local Labour Party ran a petition asking the Community to back a proposal to regenerate the Lido, returning it to a swimming facility and refurbished surrounding buildings. The petition got over 2000 signatures and generated a great deal of positive interest in the possibility of bringing this amazing building back to a swimming facility for the Community and a beautiful seafront attraction.

There is work currently ongoing to scope what is needed to secure the underpinnings of the Lido, which will need to be addressed in 21/22. In order to find the money for the proposed regeneration, it is anticipated that the Council will need to consider applying to the National Heritage Lottery Fund. 21/22 will therefore be a scoping exercise to ascertain what exactly we are able to do with this outstanding seafront building, how much funding will be required and where we will get the funding from.

9. Public Realm – Upgrading toilet facilities on seafront (including one changing place and gender neutral facilities)

Allocate public conveniences improvement budget for this specific use in 21/22 (£300K)

Rationale: Toilet facilities on the seafront are well used by both local community members and tourists. They are in need of an upgrade, with a particular need for the inclusion of a changing place and gender neutral facilities. This proposal is to earmark the public conveniences improvement budget for these upgrades

10. Remove £5 Council Tax Minimum cap

To go out for consultation in 21/22 with the intention of scoping options for offsetting the cost and amending for 22/23

Rationale: As per Cllr Howard's amendment in December 2020 Full Council:

This restriction is effectively an additional charge as it reduces the amount of Council Tax Support that would have been allowed if we kept to the National scheme. This restriction has the greatest impact on the poorest members of the Borough who cannot afford an extra £261 per annum.

11. Review: WSCC/WBC Public Realm Town Centre Funding

To review allocation of WSCC Public Realm Town Centre funding (including allocation to Portland Road and plans for remaining funds)

Rationale: It has been difficult to ascertain exact costs for Portland Road, and at time of writing it is still unclear what the final sum will be. To this end, the proposal is for a thorough and transparent review of the planning around investment of this public realm funding. We understand that decision rights have been delegated from WSCC to WBC (but again, need to revisit this MoU) and if this is the case, will ask the Council to undertake a thorough analysis of town centre public realm requirements in the wake of the Pandemic, on top of the issues that the high street was already facing. In previous work, we have highlighted the glaring omission of seating and greenery in many parts of the town centre, leaving them to run the risk of becoming grey, concrete wastelands which will attract no footfall. We have concerns that the current Portland Road plans show a similar lack of imagination, and whilst we have no objection to pedestrianizing the road, we would query granite benches as a choice of street furniture and the lack of ambition in design.