

Camden Conservatives

**Budget amendment
2019/20**

**Towards a cleaner,
greener, safer Camden**



Conservative Budget Amendment 2019/20

Once again, we're pleased to see several Conservative proposals make it into this year's Labour's budget and financial strategy.

It increases £400 fines for fly-tipping...

...a policy that the administration has dismissed time and time again, including at December's Cabinet.

It stops spending £220,000 a year on pointless orange waste bags...

...which we warned in 2016 would be completely useless if the Council intended to stop rubbish piling up.

It reduces the Camden's Town Hall *Pravda* from 10 issues a year to 4...

...but still inexplicably doesn't scrap it altogether.

It pledges to finally rent out unused office space at the Crowndale Centre...

...but leaves prime office space under-utilised at 5 Pancras Square.

This shows the importance of strong opposition from Conservative councillors. But we can and must aspire to more and better as a borough. The Conservatives' plan finds a number of further savings to make Camden a cleaner, greener, safer borough and one that delivers better services at lower costs for all of its residents.

Investing in front-line priorities

There is no doubting that Camden faces significant challenges. Many of these have not been addressed in the administration's proposals, but Camden Conservatives' alternative budget addresses them head-on:

- Keeping our streets safe by hiring 22 new police officers, including one in each of Camden's 18 wards and four new officers at a police base at Swiss Cottage, by installing 100 CCTV cameras at crime hotspots, and by encouraging people to become Special Constables by reducing their Council Tax.
- Making the air we breathe cleaner by installing 500 electric vehicle charging points across the borough in the next year, and continuing in future years to make sure Camden leads, rather than lags, in the race to electric vehicles.
- Cleaning up our streets by restoring weekly bin collections, ending the Garden Tax, and taking tougher action on fly-tipping and littering.
- Halting Camden's schools slide down the league tables by increasing Camden Learning's funding by 20%, and investing in our libraries, too.
- Supporting our high streets by making 20 minutes of parking free and reducing Business Rates for Asset of Community Values, like many of our community pubs.
- Improving communication with residents, by sending people an information pack informing them of local services tailored to their location when they move in, and restoring letters telling people when a planning application has been made nearby.

Saving money by sharing services

In the last few months, Camden's shared digital programme with Haringey and Islington councils has collapsed: costing Camden the opportunity to save millions that it had expected to save.

This is a significant threat to the council's finances and can only be addressed by sharing services with other boroughs that have a long-established track record of reducing costs by sharing services.

The nation's most established and successful sharing of back office services is right next door and has reduced costs by £43m between Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea. We propose sharing digital services with them – as they already share themselves – which would realise £1.5m of savings and benefit from innovation through collaboration.

The same is true of HR and legal services: areas with high overheads that benefit from economies of scale offered by service sharing. These areas, and the reduced reliance on agency staffing that shared back offices would allow, would deliver a further £634,000 of savings in year one.

That is enough to put a police officer on the street of every single ward in our borough. That is a choice – and Camden Conservatives put safer streets ahead of greater waste.

Reducing Council Tax

Due to the rising ageing population, there are significant pressures on adult social care that nobody can ignore or dismiss as an easy problem to solve. We welcome the £3.5m additional funding from central government for social care, and further support increasing the Council Tax precept for adult social care as part of our budget proposals, alongside the need for long-term reform.

Camden's Council Tax has increased far too quickly. Camden has the highest core Council Tax of any borough in Inner London. Tax in Camden is three times as high as in Conservative-run Westminster or Wandsworth, and £200 a year more than Tower Hamlets: the most deprived borough in London.

Just as the savings from collaboration with other boroughs will increase as years go on, so will the advantages to residents of carefully reducing Council Tax year on year – as Westminster and Wandsworth residents will attest.

This year should be the first step away from Camden raising Council Tax by the legal maximum year after year. And this alternative budget does this while restoring money to reserves while making long-term savings possible and thus ensuring our borough is financially secure.

A clear alternative

The Conservative alternative budget identifies clear areas where Camden can deliver sustained savings to reinvest into services.

Sharing digital services allows Camden to restore weekly bin collections and double our community police presence. Reducing spending on PR allows Camden to invest heavily in improving our schools and make Camden's streets ready for electric cars. Letting out under-utilised office space allows Camden to reduce Camden's overwhelming tax burden.

By embracing these alternatives, the Council can address its problems, improve its services, lower its taxes, and take the first steps towards a cleaner, greener, safer Camden.

Policy proposals

Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

The Executive Director Corporate Services confirms that, should the amendments be agreed, the assurances required by Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 with regard the adequacy of the reserves and the robustness of the estimates have been met and, therefore, that this still constitutes a balanced budget for 2019/20. The Executive Director Corporate Services or other officers have not been able to give these proposals the depth of consideration and due diligence to be able to recommend this as a course of action. It has not been possible to make a full and comprehensive assessment of the impact of these proposals (such as those linked to the future use of our buildings or the impact on the existing workforce) and the associated implementation issues and risks.

Making Camden cleaner

Proposal	£000
Restore weekly bin collections as a minimum for all residents	869
Make garden waste collection free of charge for all residents	240
Open Regis Road reuse and recycling centre for one evening a week	12
Increase fines for fly-tipping to the legal maximum (£400) and early payment to three-quarters of the maximum (£300)	(20)
Increase fines for littering to the legal maximum (£150) and early payment to two-thirds of the maximum (£100)	(80)
Introduce fines for littering from a motor vehicle	0*

* Costs and receipts net to zero

Making Camden greener

Proposal	£000
Install 500 electric car charging points	162
Engine idling fines increased to £80	(1)
Double spending on enforcement of engine idling prohibitions	0*

* Costs and receipts net to zero

Making Camden safer

Proposal	£000
Hire 18 new police officers under Met Patrol Plus Scheme	615
Open police contact point with four officers at Swiss Cottage Library	160
Install and maintain 100 CCTV cameras in crime hotspots	95
Give Council Tax Reduction to special constables	43

Supporting Camden's future

Proposal	£000
20% increased funding for school improvement services via Camden Learning	340
Make Camden's swimming pools free for children during holidays	36
Extend Swiss Cottage Library opening hours and open on Sundays	57
Make annual grants of £50,000 in Camden's community libraries	50

Supporting Camden's communities and businesses

Proposal	£000
Send information packs to residents when they move properties	80
Resume postal notifications of planning applications	30
Give 30% discretionary business rates relief to all ACVs	101
Make first 20 minutes of parking free on smaller high streets	205

Maximising revenue and reducing fraud

Proposal	£000
Renting out top two floors of 5PS	(500)
Investment in fraud detection	0*
Income from film service to double	(105)

* Net savings realised in year 2020/21

Making Camden more collaborative

Proposal	£000
Shared digital with Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea	(1,453)
Shared HR services with Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea	(190)
Shared Strategy & Change services with Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea	(305)
Shared procurement services with Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea	(120)
Shared legal services with Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea	(244)
Additional reduction in agency and consultancy spend	(200)

Making Camden more efficient

Proposal	£000
Reduce spending on Camden's external communication department by 50%	(650)
Cut number of Cabinet members from 10 to 7	(50)
End funding for trade union facility time	(146)
Scrap Camden magazine	(138)
End grant to Love Camden	(15)

Cutting Council Tax and balancing the budget

Proposal	£000
Sum of budget adjustments	(1,122)
Reduce Council Tax by 1% compared to current proposal*	1,112
Transfer to reserves	10
Budget deficit	0

* Increase of 2.99% including adult social care precept, compared to 3.99%

Proposed by: Cllr Andrew Parkinson

Seconded by: Cllr Oliver Cooper