

Independent Group Budget Amendments

Proposer: Councillor Ajaz Rehman

Secunder: Councillor Shaista Aziz

Aims and objective of the amendments are to give residents a choice. It is correct in terms of the parameters set by officers in terms of responsibility and safeguarding the city's finances.

Council approves that council tax rise be at a rate of 1.99% instead of 2.99%. whilst acknowledging the consultation indicated support for the increase 52% in favour to 33% against. It does not however provide information where the additional funds would be utilised. The proposed savings with a more efficient parks cleaning programme and subject to cabinet approval the closing of less used public toilets may well yield a different set of results.

Council approves a reduction to cabinet SRA budget and suggest the numbers are reduced from the current 10 to 8 to allow for this. At a time when services are being reduced and residents asked to assist and accept changes it is vital to show support and solidarity with residents by applying the measures to within council.

Council also approves a further reduction in the budget to a sum which is equivalent to the non-statutory leader SRA, which it proposes cabinet should not appoint to in order to achieve the reduction in spend.

Fly tipping has seen an increase of 75% since the bulky item charge has been introduced. ODS figure show this therefore we believe a removal of this stealth tax would actually save money and reduce costs

	2021	2022	2023
April	379	236	373
May	259	270	406
June	299	260	441
July	274	181	415
August	347	208	200
September	149	199	593
October	264	209	436
November	214	199	380
December	204	289	289
January	291	420	
February	251	387	
March	266	378	
	3197	3236	3533

Some public toilets are not well used by the public and can often be unfriendly and intimidating places. Many are often close facilities which are of a higher standard and more amenable to use. This also provides clarity as many toilets are routinely out of use. It is therefore proposed to make a saving of £83,000 from the budget for public toilets which it would recommend cabinet achieve by reviewing and closing the most under utilised public toilets.

Narrative

The aim of the independent group is to listen to and serve the people of Oxford.

We believe our amendments within the scope of what the budget allows is what residents would want most.

The aims and objectives of the amendments are to give residents a choice.

We are aware through the surgeries we hold; the case work we do as councillors and through our interactions with residents in our wards of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on people and families. By proposing these amendments, we are trying to give some flexibility and choice to the people of Oxford and let decisions be made by them for them.

We have proposed to abolish the Bulky Waste collection charge, this is a stealth tax.

There has been a reported 75% increase in fly tipping since it has been introduced. This is a dramatic rise compared to previous years. The additional cost of removing this is substantial and possibly greater than the revenue generated. The impact on residents is significant and people are unhappy with the additional charges being imposed on them.

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At present Council feels it cannot draw a direct correlation between the increased fly tipping and the charge. We have asked officers to monitor this over the coming financial year.

We propose to keep the minimum council tax increase of 1.99% over the MTFP this will give residents of Oxford over £600,000 in their pocket to use as they wish. whilst we acknowledge the consultation indicated 52% support of the rise compared to 33% opposing what the consultation did not indicate where the income would be spent.

We've reduced park cleaning from 12 to 9 per year as this included fly tipping within the parks. A better targeted programme instead of a unilateral blanket approach is a more efficient way to keep our parks clean and free of fly tipping.

We request officers engage with ODS to develop a more efficient and targeted approach to park cleaning.

Infrequently used public toilets are not by definition used often, they are often intimidating and generally a facility residents would want to avoid. There are often facilities close to these locations which are of a higher standard and more amenable to use. We believe residents would prefer the above changes and the additional money to meet their own needs.

At a time of cost cutting and hardship - it's vital that council tax increase is kept to the absolute minimum.

Proposals to reduce the SRA budget is to take the first step whilst making changes it is vital to show residents the cost saving and reduction of services des not only apply to them. Council accepts the responsibility for the tough actions and begins from within to show we are together with the people of Oxford.

Whilst referencing high inflation and world conflicts such as the war in Ukraine it is important to begin locally within the scope you have and to remain focused on expenditure you have influence over.

We note the current cabinet is operating with 9 members since November 2023 and the current administration with 22 members, results in nearly half receiving additional SRA's. We do not believe that is in line with Councils principals at a time when we set out tough budget proposals. Referencing high inflation and world conflicts such as the war in Ukraine

These amendments have been tabled to give back to the community and the public the power to spend their money as they wish and mainly to create an overall feeling of togetherness. The amendments also add over £400,000 to the City's reserves to protect finances should our assumptions not be met.

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