

OSC Budget Recommendations

– Cllr Irina von Wiese and Cllr Victor Chamberlain,

24th January 2023

1. OC notes Council Tax is a regressive tax despite the assistances available. OSC recognises that increasing council tax by the maximum 4.99%, alongside the tax increase by the Mayor of London, will represent a £75 increase for the average Band D household. OSC believes that during a cost of living crisis, this will put vulnerable residents under unacceptable financial pressure. OSC recommends carrying out a consultation with all residents regarding the proposed council tax increase.
2. OSC notes the concerns raised by the Equality and Human Rights Panel about the potentially negative impacts of the budget on children and young people and families. In particular lines: 106, 113, 120, 122, 125, 161, 305, 308, 309 and 310. OSC understands that many of those relying on these services are amongst the most vulnerable in Southwark. OSC recommends these lines be removed from the budget proposals and the council, instead, looks for further savings, efficiencies and income generation opportunities to maintain vital social care services.
3. Line 312 – OSC recognises the vital role of ‘short breaks’ or ‘respite care’ in social care and the benefits it has to carers and those they care for. OSC believes there have been insufficient assurances about the £1.1m saving. OSC believes this will have a negative impact on service users. OSC recommends that the council proactively undertake a consultation with residents and in particular adult carers who use the respite care service. If the findings of that consultation are not in support of the saving, OSC recommends removing line 312.
4. Line 210 – OSC welcomes the intention of the council to raise £1m from onstreet advertising that will help fund key services. OSC, however, understands that Manchester council has raised £2.4m with a comparable on-street advertising capacity. OSC recommends the Council explores the potential to generate additional income from on-street advertising.
5. Line 213 – OSC notes that, since the bulky waste charge was introduced in 2015, Southwark has become the 11th worst local authority for fly-tipping in the country. OSC believes increasing the charge will lead to increased flytipping, environmental hazards and vermin and it is the poorest residents who will suffer most. OSC recommends removing line 213 and keeping the bulky waste charge at its current rates.
6. OSC recognises that the council's housing repairs service is in a state of crisis and has repeatedly let down residents. OSC recognises the significant and

severe levels of complaints recently regarding the council's housing stock and repairs. OSC recommends the council include commitments that would improve the housing repairs service in the 2023-24 budget proposals.

7. Line 433 – OSC notes that the commitment in line 433 is vague and has no outlined benefit to the residents Southwark. OSC recognises that, whilst the council is making cuts to key services, all spending must be allocated to where it is needed most. OSC recommends removing line 433 and using the £348,000 committed to it to maintain key services.
8. OSC welcomes line 167, which shows how the council can rationalise its office space to make savings. OSC notes that the council can go further in this regard – making use of the under-utilised office space at the council's disposal, particularly Tooley Street. OSC recommends the council explore how the council's estate (specifically 160 Tooley Street) can be used to generate income and make further efficiencies.
9. Line 448 – OSC recognises that, during the current cost of living crisis, the voluntary sector has been plugging gaps in the council's support network, providing vital help to our most vulnerable residents. OSC notes that the proposed £200,000 in line 448 is insufficient to properly support these organisations. OSC further notes that the proposed plan to receive 'bids' does not reflect the need to work in co-operation with the voluntary sector in order to the most effective funding and support.