

Merton Council Council

1 February 2023

Supplementary Agenda 3

19 Amendments

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Labour Amendment to Liberal Democrat Non-Strategic Theme Motion

Proceeds from the sale of CHAS 2013 Ltd

Proposer: ~~Councillor Simon McGrath~~

Secunder: ~~Councillor Paul Kohler~~

1. Council congratulates Labour administrations past and present, as well as the hard-working, dedicated officers who, over the years, have contributed to building the CHAS 2013 Ltd business into such a substantial asset for the benefit of the residents of Merton.

2. Council notes:

a. a. That the Labour administration was re-elected in May 2022 on the basis of a strong track-record of successful, business-like management of the Council's finances;

a.b. The sale of the CHAS 2013 Ltd business on 6 January 2023, following a rigorous marketing exercise which included substantial cross-party scrutiny of the process;

cb. That the report to Cabinet on 16 January 2023, "Business Plan Update 2023-2027", which includes details of how the Labour administration has projected a balanced budget for the next two financial years, says (Section 5.1) says that following the sale "to ensure maximum benefit to the Council's financial position the proceeds were immediately invested in treasury instruments". The report goes on to say that "for the purposes of the MTFS it has been assumed, given current market conditions, that the return to the Council over the Medium Term will be approximately £5.25m. This has been built into the MTFS and will be refined in line with the forthcoming Investment Strategy."

de. That the final sale price is commercially sensitive, and according to the Share Purchase Agreement signed by the Council, is not able to be disclosed without the agreement of the buyer, while the Council has not released to the public the amount received from the sale, the level of interest to be received shows that it must be very substantial.

e. That an external investigation has been instigated into the apparent leaking of commercially sensitive information relating to the sale.

3. Council believes that:

a. The Labour administration's forthcoming budget and capital programme receipt of such a large sum represents a very significant opportunity to improve the lives of residents and narrow inequalities in the Borough;

b. The Labour administration was recently re-elected by All-Merton residents to oversee the Council's financial management, and should will continue have the opportunity to engage residents in discussions about how the Council's financial resources this capital receipt should be are used, as they do every year.

4. Council requests Cabinet to continue developing a comprehensive Investment Strategy that seeks to maximise the value of all the Council's assets, and to bring back to a future Council meeting a plan for full engagement with Merton residents about how this money should be used. this to the relevant scrutiny panel for further discussion once finalised.

Motion now reads:

Proceeds from the sale of CHAS 2013 Ltd

1. Council congratulates Labour administrations past and present, as well as the hard-working, dedicated officers who, over the years, have contributed to building the CHAS 2013 Ltd business into such a substantial asset for the benefit of the residents of Merton.

2. Council notes:

- a. That the Labour administration was re-elected in May 2022 on the basis of a strong track-record of successful, business-like management of the Council's finances;
- b. The sale of the CHAS 2013 Ltd business on 6 January 2023, following a rigorous marketing exercise which included substantial cross-party scrutiny of the process;
- c. That the report to Cabinet on 16 January 2023, "Business Plan Update 2023-2027", which includes details of how the Labour administration has projected a balanced budget for the next two financial years, says (Section 5.1) that following the sale "to ensure maximum benefit to the Council's financial position the proceeds were immediately invested in treasury instruments". The report goes on to say that "for the purposes of the MTFS it has been assumed, given current market conditions, that the return to the Council over the Medium Term will be approximately £5.25m. This has been built into the MTFS and will be refined in line with the forthcoming Investment Strategy."
- d. That the final sale price is commercially sensitive, and according to the Share Purchase Agreement signed by the Council, is not able to be disclosed without the agreement of the buyer.
- e. That an external investigation has been instigated into the apparent leaking of commercially sensitive information relating to the sale.

3. Council believes that:

- a. The Labour administration's forthcoming budget and capital programme represents a very significant opportunity to improve the lives of residents and narrow inequalities in the Borough;
- b. The Labour administration was recently re-elected by Merton residents to oversee the Council's financial management, and will continue to engage residents in discussions about how the Council's financial resources are used, as they do every year.

4. Council requests Cabinet to continue developing a comprehensive Investment Strategy that seeks to maximise the value of all the Council's assets, and to bring this to the relevant scrutiny panel for further discussion once finalised.

Cllr Billy Christie

Cllr Ross Garrod

Cllr Eleanor Stringer

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Liberal Democrat group amendments to the Labour group's non-strategic theme motion

Standing Up for Merton Residents

Council notes that:

- The Conservative government crashed the UK economy, and they now want to make Merton residents pay for it by forcing councils to consider drastic savings and cuts to crucial services that residents rely on to pay for Conservative incompetence.
- Twelve years of Conservative austerity, supported by the Liberal Democrats in coalition, has decimated funding for local councils – with the real terms equivalent of 60p out of every £1 being slashed from council budgets since 2010.
- Despite the cuts which have been imposed on us by central government over the last twelve years, our fantastic and hardworking council staff, working together with our partners and our incredible Voluntary and Community Sector, have remained completely committed to delivering for the residents of Merton and helping the most vulnerable.
- When Labour took control of Merton in 2010 the council faced an immediate budget gap of £70 million, and the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition took away half of our grant funding. Despite twelve years of austerity, sound financial management from Labour has allowed this council to pass a balanced budget each year, and kept council tax lower than all of our neighbouring outer-London boroughs.
- Conservative economic mismanagement, soaring energy costs, rising bills and inflation reaching a 41 year high, mean Merton is now under unprecedented pressure to balance our budget. This is on top of a significant loss of income from fees and charges since the pandemic, and yet another real-terms cut in funding by the Conservative government.
- The cross-party Local Government Association has long highlighted that council tax rises, particularly the adult social care precept, have never been the solution to the long term pressures faced by councils.

“This Council believes:

- **that transparency is the first step in accountability and essential to build public trust - and that any decisions to increase councillors' allowances, renovate and decorate the administration group's and Leader's offices, and hire more staff to support the administration group and the Leader should be made in an open and transparent way”**

Council welcomes:

- The work of councillors and officers to identify the necessary savings to bridge the funding gap Merton Council is facing, while protecting service delivery. And that these proposals have been produced in line with our values.
- That the Autumn Statement from government in November last year went some way to plugging budget holes, but not nearly far enough, and lacked the long-term sustainable funding plan local government needed.
- The increase in local government core spending power announced in the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24, which will help to alleviate the pressures put on council finances by the government's failure to properly tackle rising inflation, growing demand for social care, and the cost of living emergency. However, this government's funding plans expect councils to raise council tax by the maximum amount permitted without a referendum in order to meet the gaps in funding, effectively forcing councils to raise tax during a cost of living emergency to cover the government's unwillingness to fund councils properly.
- The support this Labour Council is giving Merton residents, including one of the most generous council tax support schemes in the UK, a £60 cost of living voucher for 10,000 residents in receipt of council tax support, paid from the Council's £2 million Cost of Living Fund, and the proposed 1% discount on council tax bills for council taxpayers living in Bands A-D.
- The recommendations of Labour's Commission on the UK's Future, chaired by Gordon Brown, that decisions should be taken as close as meaningfully and practicably possible to the people affected by them and with longer-term financial settlements for local government, in order to provide certainty and move away from the model of ad hoc bidding for central government funding pots.

Council resolves:

- That the Leader of the Council should write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and call on the government to take responsibility for their reckless mismanagement of the economy, to stop taking it out on Merton residents, and to provide the long-term sustainable funding that councils so desperately need to deliver the vital services and support that people in our communities, especially the most vulnerable, rely on.
- To ensure that measures taken in Merton Council's budget process prioritise the protection of service delivery, in particular those which support the most vulnerable in our communities and support our residents through the cost of living emergency.
- To ensure that Merton maintains comprehensive council tax support provision to assist those households who cannot afford to pay.

Councillor Ross Garrod
Christie

Councillor Eleanor Stringer

Councillor Billy

So that Motion now reads:

Standing Up for Merton Residents

This Council believes:

- that transparency is the first step in accountability and essential to build public trust - and
- that any decisions to increase councillors' allowances, renovate and decorate the administration group's and Leader's offices, and hire more staff to support the administration group and the Leader should be made in an open and transparent way

Council notes that:

- The Conservative government crashed the UK economy, and they now want to make Merton residents pay for it by forcing councils to consider drastic savings and cuts to crucial services that residents rely on to pay for Conservative incompetence.
- Twelve years of Conservative austerity, supported by the Liberal Democrats in coalition, has decimated funding for local councils – with the real terms equivalent of 60p out of every £1 being slashed from council budgets since 2010.
- Despite the cuts which have been imposed on us by central government over the last twelve years, our fantastic and hardworking council staff, working together with our partners and our incredible Voluntary and Community Sector, have remained completely committed to delivering for the residents of Merton and helping the most vulnerable.
- When Labour took control of Merton in 2010 the council faced an immediate budget gap of £70 million, and the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition took away half of our grant funding. Despite twelve years of austerity, sound financial management from Labour has allowed this council to pass a balanced budget each year, and kept council tax lower than all of our neighbouring outer-London boroughs.
- Conservative economic mismanagement, soaring energy costs, rising bills and inflation reaching a 41 year high, mean Merton is now under unprecedented pressure to balance our budget. This is on top of a significant loss of income from fees and charges since the pandemic, and yet another real-terms cut in funding by the Conservative government.

- The cross-party Local Government Association has long highlighted that council tax rises, particularly the adult social care precept, have never been the solution to the long term pressures faced by councils.

This Council believes:

- that transparency is the first step in accountability and essential to build public trust - and that any decisions to increase councillors' allowances, renovate and decorate the administration group's and Leader's offices, and hire more staff to support the administration group and the Leader should be made in an open and transparent way

Council welcomes:

- The work of councillors and officers to identify the necessary savings to bridge the funding gap Merton Council is facing, while protecting service delivery. And that these proposals have been produced in line with our values.
- That the Autumn Statement from government in November last year went some way to plugging budget holes, but not nearly far enough, and lacked the long-term sustainable funding plan local government needed.
- The increase in local government core spending power announced in the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24, which will help to alleviate the pressures put on council finances by the government's failure to properly tackle rising inflation, growing demand for social care, and the cost of living emergency. However, this government's funding plans expect councils to raise council tax by the maximum amount permitted without a referendum in order to meet the gaps in funding, effectively forcing councils to raise tax during a cost of living emergency to cover the government's unwillingness to fund councils properly.
- The support this Labour Council is giving Merton residents, including one of the most generous council tax support schemes in the UK, a £60 cost of living voucher for 10,000 residents in receipt of council tax support, paid from the Council's £2 million Cost of Living Fund, and the proposed 1% discount on council tax bills for council taxpayers living in Bands A-D.
- The recommendations of Labour's Commission on the UK's Future, chaired by Gordon Brown, that decisions should be taken as close as meaningfully and practicably possible to the people affected by them and with longer-term financial settlements for local government, in order to provide certainty and move away from the model of ad hoc bidding for central government funding pots.

Council resolves:

- That the Leader of the Council should write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and call on the government to take responsibility for their reckless mismanagement of the economy, to stop taking it out on Merton residents, and to provide the long-term

sustainable funding that councils so desperately need to deliver the vital services and support that people in our communities, especially the most vulnerable, rely on.

- To ensure that measures taken in Merton Council's budget process prioritise the protection of service delivery, in particular those which support the most vulnerable in our communities and support our residents through the cost of living emergency.
- To ensure that Merton maintains comprehensive council tax support provision to assist those households who cannot afford to pay.

Councillor Ross Garrod
Christie

Councillor Eleanor Stringer

Councillor Billy

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Liberal Democrat group amendments to the Conservative non-strategic theme motion

ULEZ Consultation

Council notes ~~with grave concern that the Mayor of London has led a campaign to disenfranchise Londoners, including our residents in Merton, regarding support for the ULEZ expansion.~~

1. that on 4th March 2022 the Mayor of London announced his plan to expand the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) from its current boundary of the North and South Circulars to cover almost all of Greater London, including Merton.

2. the motion passed by this Council on 21 September 2022 on this issue, supported by both the administration and the main opposition group, which set out some concerns with the proposed scheme and notes support for “a more generous scrappage to mitigate the impact of switching to electric vehicles or retrofitting to become ULEZ compliant”;

3. the amendment to the Mayor’s budget passed by the London Assembly in which £125 million of unallocated reserves are proposed to be used to increase the scale and the scope of the vehicle scrappage scheme; and

4. that a councillor called for the expansion of ULEZ principles to Merton’s diesel levy at the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Panel at its meeting on 21 November 2021, as recorded in the minutes to that meeting “[A named Conservative councillor] requested this panel look at reviewing the diesel surcharge so it’s more harmonized with the Mayor’s ULEZ.”

~~The Mayor of London has:~~

~~–Repeatedly made false statements to the GLA Assembly and the press about the ULEZ and the consultation;~~

~~–Manipulated the consultation and the results by excluding more than 5,200 consultation responses from the results thereby disenfranchising Londoners who do not wish to be hit by the ULEZ tax;~~

~~- Broken his promise that the ULEZ expansion would not go ahead if there was significant opposition.~~

Therefore, council ~~calls upon~~ asks the ~~e~~Cabinet to:

~~- Write to the Mayor of London and demand that the ULEZ expansion is immediately halted; both raising the concerns previously expressed by this Council on 21 September 2022 and backing the recent amendment to his budget, that led the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry to state “ULEZ reforms could pave the way to a safer, greener London”; and~~

~~- Consider amending its flat rate diesel levy on parking permits to accommodate ULEZ principles.~~

~~-- Refuse to allow the installation of any ULEZ infrastructure;~~

~~-- Call for a new comprehensive, free, and fair consultation across all of London;~~

~~-- Support Conservative demands for an immediate investigation into the conduct of the Mayor and support any potential future public inquiry.~~

Cllr Nick McLean Cllr Eleanor Cox Cllr Michael Paterson

So Motion now reads:

Council notes:

1. that on 4th March 2022 the Mayor of London announced his plan to expand the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) from its current boundary of the North and South Circulars to cover almost all of Greater London, including Merton.

2. the motion passed by this Council on 21 September 2022 on this issue, supported by both the administration and the main opposition group, which set out some concerns with the proposed scheme and notes support for “a more generous scrappage to mitigate the impact of switching to electric vehicles or retrofitting to become ULEZ compliant”;

3. the amendment to the Mayor's budget passed by the London Assembly in which £125 million of unallocated reserves are proposed to be used to increase the scale and the scope of the vehicle scrappage scheme; and

4. that a councillor called for the expansion of ULEZ principles to Merton's diesel levy at the meeting of the Sustainable Communities Panel at its meeting on 21 November 2021, as recorded in the minutes to that meeting "[A named Conservative councillor] requested this panel look at reviewing the diesel surcharge so it's more harmonized with the Mayor's ULEZ."

Therefore, council asks the Cabinet to:

- Write to the Mayor of London both raising the concerns previously expressed by this Council on 21 September 2022 and backing the recent amendment to his budget, that led the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry to state "ULEZ reforms could pave the way to a safer, greener London"; and

- Consider amending its flat rate diesel levy on parking permits to accommodate ULEZ principles.

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Labour Amendment to Conservative non-strategic theme motion

ULEZ Consultation

This Council notes:

- ~~with grave concern~~ That the Mayor of London has led a concerted campaign to tackle toxic air pollution, to protect disenfranchise Londoners, including ~~our~~ residents in Merton, from diseases due to air pollution over the next 30 years; ~~regarding support for the ULEZ expansion.~~
- The Mayor of London's laudable aim to drastically reduce the cost to the NHS and the social care system of air pollution currently running at £10.4 billion; ~~has:~~
- The Mayor of London has already taken ground-breaking action with his support for ULEZ in central London and this has reduced harmful pollution levels by almost a half and because of this, 4 million Londoners are now breathing cleaner air; and

Whereas:

- The Mayor of London has listened to Merton Council during the comprehensive consultation over the expansion of ULEZ to outer London and has provided more help for residents during this Cost of Living emergency;
- The Mayor of London has introduced the most generous scrappage scheme yet - £110 million – to support Merton residents on lower incomes, disabled residents, micro businesses and charities to scrap or retrofit their non-compliant vehicles;
- The Mayor of London has ~~r~~Repeatedly made false statements to ~~kept~~ the GLA Assembly, London boroughs, including Merton, and the press informed about the ULEZ ~~and the consultation~~ and noted that ~~t~~;
Manipulated the consultation was hijacked by Fair Fuel UK, a vested interest group using tactics to manipulate and the results by excluding more than 5,200 of a fair consultation; ~~responses from the results thereby~~
disenfranchising Londoners who do not wish to be hit by the ULEZ tax;
- 59% of responses to the Mayor's consultation ~~Broken his promise that the on~~ ULEZ expansion agreed that more needed to be done to tackle toxic air ~~would not go ahead if there was significant opposition.~~

Therefore:

This Council calls upon the cabinet to:

- Work with the Mayor of London and TfL so that the ULEZ expansion is supported by a wide-ranging engagement with residents on the detail of the

scrappage scheme and on the exemptions for disabled drivers and community transport, meaning no impact from ULEZ as a result of these exemptions until 2025 and 2027 respectively;

- Write to TfL with their suggestions for bus route extensions as part of the Mayor of London’s plans, announced in November 2022, for improving the bus network in outer London, with over 1 million kilometres added to the network through planned new routes and improvements.

~~– Write to the Mayor of London and demand that the ULEZ expansion is immediately halted;~~

- Work with TfL to understand any requirements for ~~Refuse to allow~~ the installation of any ULEZ infrastructure in outer London;

~~Call for a new comprehensive, free, and fair consultation across all of London;~~

- ~~– Support~~ Conservative demands for an immediate investigation ~~regular review and monitoring~~ into the operation of the scrappage scheme so that it is sensitive to the impact of the Cost of Living emergency on Merton’s residents ~~conduct of the Mayor and support any potential future public inquiry.~~

~~Cllr Nick McLean~~

~~Cllr Eleanor Cox~~

~~Cllr Michael Paterson~~

~~Cllr Stephen Alambritis~~

~~Cllr Linda Kirby~~

~~Cllr Laxmi Attawar~~

Motion now reads:

ULEZ Consultation

This Council notes:

- That the Mayor of London has led a concerted campaign to tackle toxic air pollution, to protect Londoners, including residents in Merton, from diseases due to air pollution over the next 30 years;
- The Mayor of London’s laudable aim to drastically reduce the cost to the NHS and the social care system of air pollution currently running at £10.4 billion;
- The Mayor of London has already taken ground-breaking action with his support for ULEZ in central London and this has reduced harmful pollution levels by almost a half and because of this, 4 million Londoners are now breathing cleaner air; and

Whereas:

- The Mayor of London has listened to Merton Council during the comprehensive consultation over the expansion of ULEZ to outer London and has provided more help for residents during this Cost of Living emergency;
- The Mayor of London has introduced the most generous scrappage scheme yet - £110 million – to support Merton residents on lower incomes, disabled residents, micro businesses and charities to scrap or retrofit their non-compliant vehicles;
- The Mayor of London has repeatedly kept the GLA Assembly, London boroughs, including Merton, and the press informed about the ULEZ consultation and noted that the consultation was hijacked by Fair Fuel UK, a vested interest group using tactics to manipulate the results of a fair consultation;
- 59% of responses to the Mayor’s consultation on ULEZ expansion agreed that more needed to be done to tackle toxic air.

Therefore:

This Council calls upon the cabinet to:

- Work with the Mayor of London and TfL so that the ULEZ expansion is supported by a wide-ranging engagement with residents on the detail of the scrappage scheme and on the exemptions for disabled drivers and community transport, meaning no impact from ULEZ as a result of these exemptions until 2025 and 2027 respectively;
- Write to TfL with their suggestions for bus route extensions as part of the Mayor of London’s plans, announced in November 2022, for improving the bus network in outer London, with over 1 million kilometres added to the network through planned new routes and improvements.
- Work with TfL to understand any requirements for the installation of any ULEZ infrastructure in outer London;
- Support regular review and monitoring into the operation of the scrappage scheme so that it is sensitive to the impact of the Cost of Living emergency on Merton’s residents.

Cllr Stephen Alambritis

Cllr Linda Kirby

Cllr Laxmi Attawar

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