

Liberal Democrat Group Budget Amendments February 2025

The Liberal Democrat Group propose the following six amendments to the 2025-2026 budget.

Delivering a better Bromley

1) Bromley Town Centre Development Coordinator (£75,000) - to be funded from the Transformation Fund

Recruit a dedicated officer to investigate residential and commercial development opportunities in Bromley Town Centre, in line with the local plan and urban design recommendations, to transform Bromley Town Centre into a vibrant destination hub for living, working and leisure. This position would sit in the Regeneration Team (not Planning) and would act as a facilitator to bring forward new proposals for development. The cost of not doing more to secure Bromley's commercial future as it competes with growing and improving town centres elsewhere in South London could be irreversible for the town centre's future. **The position is to be funded via the Transformation Fund. It should be reviewed after 12 months to establish full benefits.**

2) Reduce empty homes (£75,000)

Recruit a dedicated Empty Homes Officer focussed on reducing the empty homes in the borough by working with developers, landlords and freeholders to bring empty buildings and units back into use. The extra resource will deliver additional homes in the borough, reduce temporary housing costs and deal with derelict sites that cause misery to neighbours. This position would sit in the Housing Team (not Planning) . This position would also manage any funding opportunities from the central government to bring empty homes back into use. **The position is to be funded via extra Planning Application Fee receipts (anticipated by the new Grey-belt designation and high house building targets). It should be reviewed after 12 months to establish full benefits.**

3) Save the Welfare Fund (£250,000)

Bromley Council should reverse its decision to axe the £250k Welfare Fund. This fund is critical in supporting some of the most vulnerable residents in the borough with household items (such as bed, cooker or fridge) for their accommodation. Bromley Food Bank, on the frontline of poverty and deprivation, are opposed to this fund closing. Closing the Welfare Fund may undermine the Council's Homelessness Prevention Strategy, as this fund provides assistance for residents to settle into accommodation when they are discharged from the Council's homeless duty. Such residents could be forced to choose between paying the rent and buying a bed, fridge and cooker. It also seems premature to axe this fund, when it is not known how much the Homelessness Prevention Grant from the central government will

alleviate budget pressures in the overall Housing Budget. **Ideally Officers should find a way to fund the Welfare Fund from existing Council budgets - if this is not possible then the Member Initiative Fund should be used.**

Supporting community priorities

(4) Support for projects to help the digitally excluded (£40,000)

The people we are most concerned about in relation to loneliness are often also likely to be digitally excluded. The great work of the borough's Loneliness Strategy should be expanded to consider and address digital exclusion. The established loneliness support network should be leveraged to provide help for those that are digitally excluded. This could include a register of those residents that would like to identify as digitally excluded. Council policies and decision making should not only consider the impacts on loneliness, they should also consider the impacts on those digitally excluded. This budget is to provide for small projects that will support the borough's digitally excluded residents. **To be funded from the Members Initiative Fund.**

(5) Install card payment parking meters at key locations (£80,000)

Residents continue to ask for the option to pay for parking by card. They tell us they are using council car parks less because they cannot use or do not like to use RingGo. Parking revenue has fallen across the borough. It's time to trial card payment parking meters at key locations to see if parking revenue can be increased along with footfall into our town centres and shopping parades. **There is funding available in unallocated S106 Local economy and Town Centres that Officers confirm can be used for this purpose.**

(6) Additional Funding for Road Safety Interventions (£150,000)

Road safety issues are one of the most significant concerns of our residents. Road safety concerns impact many residents and communities across the borough. Whilst it is expected that major highway and road safety projects will take time, minor interventions such as signage, road markings and vehicle activated signs should be delivered quickly. Currently there is a lengthy waiting time for these simple interventions. The additional £150,000 will provide additional capacity to speed-up responses. **To be funded from CIL - noting the council has not allocated any of the community level spending (15% of CIL receipts).**