

Conservative Group Budget Amendment 2021/22

Additional support for local centres, the economy and business to help recovery from Covid19 and conditions uplift for Parks to improve the quality of recreation for residents, in support of health and wellbeing through the personal challenges of the global pandemic.

Free Parking on Saturdays in local and district centres and the Town Centre (including Merseyway) for one year.

The Covid19 Global Pandemic has had a massive impact on lives and livelihoods in Stockport.

This Government have provided unprecedented support with one of the world's most comprehensive economic responses to protect jobs, incomes, and business throughout and beyond this pandemic. In Stockport, we have benefitted from over £24.4M in additional Government support to the Council and £114.108M additional money in business grants.

With the success of the Government's vaccine rollout programme, we look forward to being able to gradually ease restrictions in the coming months and it will be important to give people confidence in our local area and to encourage people back as the economy reopens.

This proposal will support the local economy with residents keeping money in their pocket to spend in the local shops and remove the disincentive to visit local shops over out of Town shopping destinations with free parking

The Conservative Group therefore propose providing free parking on Saturdays in all local centres, district centres, the Town Centre and Merseyway shopping centre for one year. We need to attract residents back into our district, local and town centre as the economy reopens and understand that many will be reluctant to use public transport for such journeys.

Providing free parking will also remove the disincentive to choose local and travel to the free out of town shopping centres that compete with local and district centres.

Stockport Conservatives want to help businesses to re-open and recover successfully, see our local, district and Town Centres thrive and understand that supporting local business means more sustainable local communities, fewer empty units and generates business rates to support essential services.

Free parking to be supported from a one-off contribution of £0.486m from reserves via a reallocation of the Brexit preparation and contingency reserve. This reserve was originally set up to support any costs resulting from preparations in the run-up to Brexit and any local impacts and has not been called upon to date. We therefore propose reallocating a proportion of this fund to deal with the priority of supporting the local economy to reopen in the wake of Covid19, with the remaining Government funding for Brexit to remain in reserve.

Parks and Greenspaces conditions investment.

Parks and Greenspaces have been heavily used and appreciated during the Covid19 pandemic as places to exercise and take a break, to boost mental health and wellbeing during the periods of heavy restrictions and lockdown and to socialise safely out doors with others when that has been possible. Many residents have appreciated the space and access to nature parks and greenspaces have provided but after a previous lack of investment and upkeep, the additional use seen over the last year has taken its toll. With more use, more upkeep and maintenance is required, bins need emptying more frequently and new planting or variety may improve the space and quality for the increased volumes of park goers and their sometimes competing uses. The Conservative Group therefore propose a one-off investment in parks across the Borough of £300K to be used for the improvement of these valued spaces in consultation with local councillors. This is separate and in addition to the proposed investments in play facilities and outdoor sports and pitches already proposed under “Parks and Green Spaces Investment” in the Cabinet Revenue Budget.

One off spend of £300K to be allocated to parks conditions and investment to be used during 2021/22 in consultation with ward Councillors and supported by a further £300k being released from one-off resources held in reserves.

Proposed by: Cllr. John McGahan

Seconded by: Cllr. Linda Holt

Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer - Risk Assessment

The Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer has reviewed the amendment and undertaken a risk assessment of the budget proposals as a result. The Deputy Chief Executive’s comments are set out below:

The amendment utilises and invests £0.486m from a current specific earmarked reserve that includes £0.858m made up of government grant received for Brexit preparations and the Council’s Brexit risk contingency budget. The amendment also seeks an additional investment of £0.300m from one-off resources held in reserve. The above is in addition to the Cabinet’s proposed investment of £2.1m from one-off resources held in earmarked reserves as per section seven of the 2021/22 Cabinet Revenue Budget.

On the basis of the above and the allocation of these resources to nonrecurrent spend, my assessment of the proposed 2021/22 budget remains as set out in the report, i.e. that the estimates made for the purposes of the calculation of the budget are robust and the level of reserves and balances are adequate.

No tables within the budget reports require alteration as a result of this amendment.