

Support for the 2024 Government Budget – draft amendment

Amend the title to read “Qualified Support for the 2024 Government Budget”.

Amend the motion to read as follows, inserting the text in green/italics:

This council recognises the chronic lack of underfunding that the Local Government sector faces is a result of the deliberate choices made by consecutive Conservative Governments. These deliberate choices utilised insufficient funding to compel councils to increase council tax, thus using a regressive funding model to place the burden on local people.

This council notes that in the upcoming local government funding review, the Government should move towards a fairer approach, to reduce the inequality gap and benefit our poorest residents.

This council welcomes the recent 2024 Government Budget and acknowledges its benefits for the residents of Stockport.

The budget outlines significant investments and reforms aimed at strengthening public services, supporting local businesses, and addressing cost-of-living pressures.

This Council particularly acknowledges the following points:

- The increase in the National Living Wage to £12.21 per hour will support many low-paid workers, boosting income for families and helping to alleviate financial pressures.
- We applaud the allocation of additional funding for the NHS, including an investment to deliver more than 1.25 million diagnostic tests and expand capacity for 30,000 procedures. We also welcome an additional £1 billion to reduce the backlog of critical NHS maintenance, repairs and upgrades, and will be making the case for much needed investment into Stepping Hill Hospital.
- A substantial increase in local road maintenance funding to address potholes. The budget goes beyond the government's initial pledge to fix an additional 1 million potholes each year, providing an extra £500 million to the 2024-25 baseline for local roads maintenance.
- We recognise further investment in social care, with a minimum of £600 million in new grants specifically aimed at supporting social care services. More investment is needed though in this field, and we will work with the Government to help achieve this.
- Increased investment in children's services, including a £1 billion boost for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and alternative provision, will improve services for families in Stockport.
- The government plan to simplify the wider local funding landscape, reducing the number of grants and consolidating them into the Local Government Finance Settlement, as well as moving towards a multi-year settlement for local government so local authorities can plan more effectively.
- The £500 million boost to the Affordable Homes Programme will support the development of more desperately needed affordable homes in Stockport. Future grant investments will prioritise social housing, enabling Stockport to expand its

supply of homes for social rent, providing secure, affordable options for those in need.

- Finally, we welcome the extension to the Household Support Fund, with the government providing £1 billion in 2025-26.

This council notes, however, that:

- *The legacy of the last Conservative government and the impact of their short-sighted and ill-judged decisions which have left all public services, including the NHS and local government, woefully underfunded.*
- *Many of the measures mentioned above, whilst giving welcome additional funding for many areas, do not make up the shortfall local authorities face;*
- *Several measures in the government's budget, such as the increase in employers' national insurance contributions, will have impact on the cost base, and our partners' ability to help us deliver services to our residents;*
- *The two-child benefit cap has not been lifted and will keep many families in our borough in poverty;*
- *Council Tax payers remain "at risk" to cover the accelerating costs and increasing demand for demand-led services such as children and adult social care and Special Educational Needs and Disability provision;*
- *Specific funding for the urgent building works needed to make Stepping Hill Hospital safe and able to function at capacity has not been made available, despite earlier promises that this would happen.*
- *The decision to drastically lower the winter fuel payment threshold without an appropriate Equality Impact Assessment and ignoring any Socio Economic Duty will result in thousands of pensioners being plunged into poverty, unless there is an immediate reconsideration.*

This council expresses its *qualified* support for the 2024 Budget and its contributions to improving the quality of life for our residents. We look forward to working alongside the with the community to maximise any benefits, mitigates any disbenefits as far as we are able and drive positive change across Stockport.

This council resolves to

- *Continue to lobby government for adequate funding for local government, to remove the two-child benefit cap, to stop council taxpayers from facing the risk associated with demand-led services, and to fund the urgent building works needed by Stepping Hill Hospital.*
- *Call on government to exclude the care sector, bodies delivering council services and the third sector from the increase in NI employer contributions*
- *Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Deputy Prime Minister to ask the government to reform the way in which Local Government is funded to allow for a fairer model that provides sufficient funding, and to move away from the ideological approach that widens the inequality gap and fails the poorest people in Stockport.*

Moved by: Councillor Jilly Julian

Seconded by: Councillor Mark Roberts