

Liberal Democrat Budget Amendment 2020/21

Stockport Council declared a climate emergency at its meeting on 28th March 2019. The motion which led to this declaration noted the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report of October 2018 which showed that we are on track for irreversible and catastrophic warming unless we take immediate action, locally, nationally and globally.

This council meeting agreed to support the Greater Manchester 5 year plan and “to ensure the right resources are in place within the council to support this work”. We note and welcome the cross-party work which has led to the draft Climate Action Strategy.

The Liberal Democrat Group recognises how hard it is to make the necessary funds available given the continuing pressure on local government finances, through both reduced central government grants and increased pressures including wage and price inflation, increases in demand for children’s social care, and demographic changes, leading to an ageing population requiring increased health and social care support.

To reflect the importance of this issue and the impact it will have on our residents, this amendment seeks to establish a Climate Emergency Fund of £6.4m for the civic year 2020/21, equivalent to the dividend received from the council’s shareholding in Manchester Airport Group for 2019/20, which would honour this council meeting’s previous commitment to ensure the right resources are in the right place.

This would be deployed as follows:

Monies to be administered by Ward Councillors at Area Committees, 21 x £0.100m	£2.100m
Monies for strategic, cross-ward projects, inc Highways Infrastructure	£4.300m
Total Climate Emergency Fund	£6.400m

Liberal Democrats believe that decisions are best taken at the level closest to those who are affected by them. Of the available £6.400m, we believe £2.100m should be made available to ward councillors to invest in projects proposed by local groups, such as improving the biodiversity of grass verges, community orchards, tree planting, flood protection measures, electric charging points, upgrading or creating footpaths and/or cycle ways away from busy roads, installing cycle security infrastructure, and other non-recurrent projects for which there is local need. This would equate to £0.100m per ward. Any monies not committed by the end of the civic year would be recycled back into the Climate Emergency Fund.

Of the ideas which the Cabinet have already mentioned in their report, the Liberal Democrat Group believe that the development of an environmentally-inspired urban green space such as the creation of a Memorial Park at the site of the Hopes Carr air disaster would be exactly the sort of project which ought to be funded and we would encourage local members to bring this forward.

The remaining £4.300m should be used for strategic projects, such as developing a business case for tram-train between Marple and Stockport, a feasibility study for a similar tram-train link between Stockport and the proposed new railway station for Cheadle, developing strategic walking and cycling routes, and the one-off procurement of more gully clearing capacity for the borough to address any current backlog.

This would also include the £1.500m repairs and maintenance of highways and infrastructure which has been planned following recent flooding events, but would also mean that consideration could be given to additional spending on increased flood protection rather than simply repairing any damage now and leaving roads and pavements vulnerable to future flooding events.

The Council has had a number of windfalls this year. Of the one-off funds available, £3.531m is still currently uncommitted. We believe all of this money should be put into the Climate Emergency Fund.

In the first year the Climate Emergency Fund would be funded by:

Currently available and unallocated one-off funds		£3.531m
Cabinet spending commitments to be retained and put under the umbrella of the Climate Emergency Fund		
Highways Infrastructure flooding repair and maintenance	£1.500m	
Support to the local and community fund*	£0.500m	
Fund to support the Council's climate emergency call to action	£0.250m	
Funding of Ward orchards across the borough	<u>£0.150m</u>	
Total retained spending commitments		£2.400m

**These additional monies to be focussed on climate emergency-related projects, as mentioned in the draft Climate Action Strategy going to Scrutiny in the next business cycle*

Cabinet spending commitments to be ceased

Investment in new adult gym equipment in parks**	£0.460m	
Claw back from the other, round number one-off proposals and/or increase in outturn surplus position/contribution from earmarked reserves	<u>£0.009m</u>	
Total ceased commitments		£0.469m

Total Climate Emergency Fund **£6.400m**

***The £0.540m children's play equipment in parks element of this commitment would go ahead under this amendment proposal*

The Liberal Democrat Group believe that the Council should aim to set aside all windfall monies, such as the forthcoming benefit from the business rates retention pilot, any surpluses in the collection fund, any end of year turnout surplus, etc., so that, whenever possible and if one is paid, an amount equivalent to the previous year's airport dividend is available each year to continue to transform the borough and address the Climate Emergency. The amount being committed to the Climate Emergency Fund each year should be a specific line in future budgets.

Corporate Director's, Corporate and Support Services, Risk Assessment

The Corporate Director, Corporate and Support Services has reviewed the amendment and undertaken a risk assessment of the budget proposals as a result. The Corporate Director's comments are set out below:

On the basis that the amendment reallocates one-off resources available to the Council in 2020/21 to non-recurrent spend, my assessment of the proposed 2020/21 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.

Moved by: Cllr Lisa Smart
Seconded by: Cllr Malcolm Allan