

PROPOSED BUDGET AMENDMENT FROM THE LABOUR GROUP

(Proposer Cllr Keith Darvill)

(Seconded Cllr Matthew Stanton)

Proposal

The Labour Group proposes the following budget amendments:

That the saving closing South Hornchurch Library is reversed	£0.100m
That the saving closing Harold Wood Library is reversed	£0.101m
To reduce the Capitalisation Direction	£0.069m
That Gidea Park Library is re-purposed for alternative use (see below)	
Total costs	£0.270m

This would be financed by:

Removal of costs of bin liners from the Food Waste collection	£0.270m
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The proposal includes a medium-term option to re-purpose the Gidea Park Library site to provide additional facilities to support Children, Young People and Families with special educational needs or care needs.

Strategic Director of Resources Financial implications:

The proposal as set out is to permanently reverse the closure of Harold Wood and South Hornchurch Library savings, financed by not issuing bin-liners in relation to the Food Waste collection that the Council must, by law, roll out by April 2026.

It is recognised that the bin liners may encourage increased resident take-up of the new service and therefore reduce the overall residual waste tonnages that need to be disposed of. This could lead to significant savings beyond the cost of the bin liners when the new waste contract is reprocured.

The proposal includes an option to re-purpose Gidea Park Library for alternative use. Any meanwhile use of sites must be done so on the basis of the Council recovering its running costs in full. The medium-term proposal to re-purpose the Gidea Park Library site to provide new facilities for children and young people will be subject to a full business case, to ensure the proposal is financially viable. New facilities *should* deliver cost avoidance savings and reduce pressures on the Council's Social Care budget and provide better outcomes for those with care needs.

Although the saving is financially viable, as the Council's S151 Officer, I am unable to recommend this. The library saving was agreed by Council in February 2024, to be implemented over a two-year period. This forms part of the Council's Improvement and Productivity Plan and the Council will be held to account for delivery of this saving, as part of the £15.3m overall savings put forward for 24/25.

In my view, all cost reductions should be used to offset the Council's request for a Capitalisation Direction and the Council must be accountable for delivery of all savings put forward.