

REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY

The Council will ensure that there is an effective Medium Term Financial Strategy in place to drive forward the financial planning process and resource allocation. The financial strategy will be determined by priorities set out in the Council's Living Ambition vision and detailed in its Corporate Plan.

The Council is clear about, and remains committed to, its *Living Ambition*, the long-term vision for the future of the borough, which is to provide Havering's residents with the highest possible quality of life, in a borough that thrives on its links to the heart of the capital, without ever losing the natural environment, historic identity and local way of life that makes Havering unique.

Underpinning the *Living Ambition* are five key goals: Environment, Learning, Towns and Communities, Individuals and Value, with a number of strategic objectives under each Goal. The Council is committed to allocating resources in a way that will support the achievement of these objectives.

The Council recognises the pressures on its budget, and while seeking to protect and enhance front-line services as far as possible, will aim to contain these pressures within existing resources. Cabinet Members will examine all budget pressures and seek reductions where possible.

The Council will wherever possible seek new funding and explore new ways of working. The Council will continue to look at new methods of service delivery to improve services to the public and the value for money that they provide, including working in connection with a range of other organisations and groups.

By becoming an increasingly 'connected council', Havering will continue to seek to improve efficiency and deliver better value for money. In particular, the Council will aim to identify efficiencies that will not impact on the delivery of key services to local people. Its focus will be on identifying ways to reduce the cost to tax payers of running those services.

The Council will ensure that, given the severe financial pressures it has already faced and is continuing to face, growth will only be supported in priority areas, and only where these are unavoidable. However, the Council will expect the Government to ensure that adequate funding is made available to fund any additional costs arising from new burdens placed on Havering, or from services transferred to it.

The Council will ensure that the most vulnerable members of its community are protected, will continue to lead in the development of social cohesion, and will ensure that the services provided and resources allocated reflect the diverse nature and needs of our local community and our responsibilities to the local environment.

The Council will lobby to ensure that the Government provides adequate funding to take on any new responsibilities and to illustrate the impact of the low funding basis for Havering and its residents, but will ensure that, in broad terms, its spending is in

line with the basis on which the Government allocates grant funding, and that spending levels will be realigned against any reductions in funding. The Council will therefore continue to reduce its spending where the Government removes funding, in line with the relevant level of reduction.

The Council will engage with its local community, its partners and individual stakeholders in developing financial plans, and will reflect on the outcome of its consultation process in the identification of priorities and the allocation of resources.

While addressing its priorities and setting a balanced and prudent budget, the Council will seek to keep any increase in the Council Tax to the lowest possible level and in line with its stated aspirations whilst maintaining reserves at the minimum level of £10m.

And as part of that process, the Council will not utilise those reserves, or any reserves earmarked for specified purposes, to subsidise its budget and reduce Council Tax levels as this is neither a sustainable nor a robust approach.

The Council will seek to ensure that sufficient financial resources are available to enable it to deliver a long-term savings plan within the constraints of funding available to it from both local taxpayers and the Government, and will seek to utilise any unallocated funds with that purpose in mind.

The Council will adopt a prudent capital programme designed to maintain and where possible enhance its assets, in line with the Living Ambition.

The Council will finance capital expenditure through a combination of external funding and receipts from the sale of assets that are deemed surplus to requirements, and will only apply prudential borrowing as a last resort, unless a business case can be made to finance investment through borrowing, or where there is an income or savings stream arising from the investment.

The overarching objective of the Council's financial strategy remains to deliver high quality, value for money services to our community, whilst ensuring that the cost of those services is compatible with the level of funding provided to it by the Government.