

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27+

Amendment from the Opposition Conservative Group

Proposer: Councillor Matt Hartley. Seconder: Councillor Charlie Davis.

Savings and service transformation

Insert the following additional paragraphs and decisions to section 1 of the MTFS report under "Decisions required":

- 1.17. Note that due to the forecast resourcing gap of £101m by 2029/2030 cited at 1.12 above, there is an urgent need for the Council to put in place robust and ambitious plans to deliver additional efficiency savings over the course of the MTFS, and that not delivering these additional efficiency savings risks exposing residents to the impact of harsher frontline service cuts in future.
- 1.18. Agree, therefore, to prioritise work across the Council to develop, publish and consult on **additional efficiency saving proposals** as soon as possible during the course of 2026/27 with a specific focus on the following three areas:
 1. exploring opportunities to develop **shared back-office services** with other local authorities
 2. going further and faster on **AI-based innovation**
 3. identifying new **income generation** opportunities in areas such as commercial property, anti-social behaviour fines and sponsorship
- 1.19. Agree to pro-actively seek opportunities to develop proposals for **shared back-office services** with other local authorities, with the aim of achieving sustainable savings in back-office functions in areas such as finance, legal services, IT, human resources, licensing and other service areas.
- 1.20. Agree to develop and set ambitious targets for maximising efficiencies from **innovative uses of artificial intelligence-based solutions** to support smarter and more effective service delivery
- 1.21. Agree to engage in work to identify **new income generation opportunities** through measures such as making more commercial use of the Council's property assets, exploring opportunities to further increase anti-social behaviour fines; and securing more external sponsorship for council events/activities.

Immediate savings and investment in local priorities

- 1.22 Note that the future of the borough’s staffed Adventure Play Centre service, crime and anti-social behaviour in our communities, the accelerating loss of family homes to HMO conversions, and the need to protect our green spaces are all local issues of **considerable public interest and concern** to residents across the borough.
- 1.23. Agree, therefore, to address these important issues by making the **additional investments** outlined in *Additional Appendix A*, funded by delivering the **additional ongoing efficiency savings** outlined in *Additional Appendix B*.
- 1.24. Note that the decision at 1.23 has no net effect on the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Net effect of additional proposals outlined at decision 1.23

Additional proposal	Cost 26/27 (£m)	Cost 27/28 (£m)	Cost 28/29 (£m)
Reinstate full budget for Adventure Play Centres to enable new consultation	0.400	0.400	0.400
Fund 2 additional police officers for the borough’s Town Centres	0.200	0.200	0.200
New HMO Information Toolkit to help residents navigate planning & licensing	0.030	0.010	0.010
Fund 1 additional Parks ranger	0.045	0.045	0.045
New Green Spaces Improvement Fund (£300k funding over 3 years)	0.061	0.129	0.129
Reduce communications spending & other efficiencies	(0.616)	(0.647)	(0.647)
Cut the cost of local politics	(0.120)	(0.137)	(0.137)
Net effect on MTFS	-	-	-

Insert the following additional appendices as Additional Appendix A and Additional Appendix B.

Additional Appendix A: Additional Ongoing Investment Proposals

A.1. Note the detail of the additional ongoing investment proposals below, subject to agreement at paragraph 1.23

A.2. Reinstatement of staffed Adventure Play Centres

The council currently operates five Adventure Play Centres (APCs) at Coldharbour, Glyndon, Meridian, Plumstead and Woolwich, managed on behalf of the council by GLL since 2012 as part of the Leisure and Libraries contract. These centres have been part of the borough's play offer for many years and are highly valued by the families who use them and by wider communities.

Each centre is open for staffed, supervised play around 30 hours per week on average, 261 days per year. These hours are concentrated during after-school times, evenings and weekends to align with school-age children's availability.

In February 2025 the Council's MTFS budgeted to make savings in the delivery of the Adventure Play Centres, without giving details of how these savings would be made. In November a consultation was launched on proposals to remove the staffed supervision element at Coldharbour, Woolwich and Glyndon, with only Plumstead seeing no changes.

The consultation responses demonstrated overwhelming opposition from public and service users to the proposed cuts in the service. The Council received representations from London Play, the Playwork Foundation, Fair Play for Children, the Save Our Adventure Playgrounds local campaign group and the Metropolitan Police's Neighbourhood Superintendent for Greenwich citing their concerns about the proposed cuts. Concerns have also been raised about the consultation process.

Given these concerns, this proposal **re-instates the full budget for the Adventure Play Centre service** by reversing the proposed £400,000pa saving, to enable time for the Council to develop new transformation proposals and **launch a new consultation** on the future of the service.

Links to Corporate Plan:

- Mission 4 – Children and young people can reach their full potential
- Mission 9 – Neighbourhoods are vibrant, safe and attractive with community services that meet the needs of local residents
- Mission 15 – Our Council is better at listening to communities, and communities feel they are heard

A.3. Funding two additional police officers for our Town Centres

In December 2025, the Council passed a motion on tackling anti-social behaviour and making our streets safer. This resolved to take a number of measures, including expanding the number of Community Safety Enforcement Officers and providing new mobile CCTV units. These proposals mirrored items proposed by the Opposition Conservative Group in their tabled amendment to the MTFS in February 2025.

Among the other proposals highlighted in the December 2025 motion was the funding of two new police constables and a police data analyst apprentice, with the aim of “helping to strengthen our Integrated Enforcement model and deliver smarter, locally driven policing”.

Community safety and crime remain significant priorities for residents in the Borough. This proposed additional investment would increase the number of extra funded police officers from 2 to 4 at a cost of £200k pa.

Links to Corporate Plan:

- Mission 5 – Everyone in Greenwich is safer, and feels safer
- Mission 9 – Neighbourhoods are vibrant, safe and attractive with community services that meet the needs of local residents

A.4. Developing an HMO Information Toolkit for residents

The number of Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the Royal Borough has increased sharply in recent years, changing the character of residential neighbourhoods and reducing the number of available family homes. The Council currently has limited powers to prevent this.

The Council has a Mandatory Licensing Scheme for all HMOs, and the law requires that licenses under the scheme can only be issued if the Council is satisfied that the premises are “reasonably suitable for occupation” by the number of intended residents, and that the proposed license-holder is a “fit and proper person.” Landlords must meet the required threshold for maintaining good standards in the management of that property or face fines of up to £30,000.

An Article 4 direction means that those seeking to convert a family home into an HMO must apply for planning permission, but as the Council currently has no specific planning policy to protect family homes, there are limited grounds on which they can be refused. Specific policies aimed at limiting the number of HMOs have been included in the new draft Local Plan, and Council passed resolutions in July and October 2025 aimed at strengthening measures to regulate them.

The proposed additional funding set out in this appendix would allocate £50,000 over the three-year period of the MTFS to developing and promoting an **HMO Information Toolkit** for residents, taking a proactive approach to supporting residents to navigate complex planning and licensing processes as they relate to HMOs. This should include how to exercise their rights to comment on HMO planning applications, how to complain about the operation of licensed HMOs, and how to report unlicensed HMOs.

Links to Corporate Plan:

- Mission 8 – Development delivers positive change to an area for existing and new communities
- Mission 15 – Our Council is better at listening to communities, and communities feel they are heard

A.5. Funding an additional ranger for the parks service

The protection and maintenance of parks and green spaces in the Royal Borough is a top priority for residents. The Council's Parks and Open Spaces Survey in 2022 found that while a majority of residents who responded were fairly or very satisfied with the quality of local parks, the main reasons given for not visiting them were concerns about cleanliness, anti-social behaviour and appearance of the spaces.

Volunteers from park friends groups do an important and valuable job in maintaining our parks and ensuring they remain clean and properly cared-for. But keeping them in the best condition also requires support from paid staff from the Council's parks service.

This additional investment will allow for the recruitment of an additional park ranger for the parks service at a cost of £45k per annum, to improve the support available across multiple parks and green spaces.

Links to Corporate Plan:

- Mission 9 – Neighbourhoods are vibrant, safe and attractive with community services that meet the needs of local residents
- Mission 5 – Everyone in Greenwich is safer, and feels safer

A.6. Introducing a new Green Spaces Improvement Fund

This additional proposal allocates an investment in excess of £300,000 over the three-year period of the MTFS in a new Green Spaces Improvement Fund, with opportunities for improvements to our parks

and green spaces to be identified by the Parks service in consultation with the borough's many dedicated Parks Friends groups.

This proposal provides Parks Friends groups with an additional source of potential funding, as well as replacing the well-used opportunity that Parks Friends groups have had to fund small-scale improvements during the operation of the Ward Budget scheme, which ends at the end of 2025/26.

Links to Corporate Plan:

- Mission 9 – Neighbourhoods are vibrant, safe and attractive with community services that meet the needs of local residents
- Mission 5 – Everyone in Greenwich is safer, and feels safer

A.7. Note that the additional ongoing investment proposals in Additional Appendix A total £0.736m in 2026/27 rising to £0.784m from 2027/28 onwards, as summarised in Table A.

Table A: Additional ongoing investment proposals

Additional ongoing investment proposal	Cost 26/27 (£m)	Cost 27/28 (£m)	Cost 28/29 (£m)
Reinstate full budget for Adventure Play Centres to enable new consultation	0.400	0.400	0.400
Fund 2 additional police officers for the borough's Town Centres	0.200	0.200	0.200
New HMO Information Toolkit to help residents navigate planning & licensing	0.030	0.010	0.010
Fund 1 additional Parks ranger	0.045	0.045	0.045
New Green Spaces Improvement Fund (£319k funding over 3 years)	0.061	0.129	0.129
Total additional ongoing investment	0.736	0.784	0.784

Additional Appendix B: Additional efficiency saving proposals

B.1. Note the detail of the additional efficiency savings proposals, subject to agreement at paragraph at 1.23.

B.2. Reducing communications spending & other efficiencies

This proposal would implement a package of additional non-frontline efficiency savings, mainly comprising reductions in communications/PR spending and increases in income generation. The measures comprise:

- Reversing the 2023 decision to expand the Communications team (£0.237m) by absorbing the work of the Community Engagement Team within the rest of the communications function's resources, as previously.
- Deleting the newly-created post of Director of Communications & Community Engagement (£0.110m in 2026/27 rising to £0.130m from 2027/28)
- Removing advertising roles that were previously predominantly focussed on Greenwich Info following the end of the print edition of (£0.110m in 2026/27 rising to £0.121m from 2027/28), with residual responsibilities reallocated to existing teams
- Ending PR/reputation management service subscriptions, spending on professional photography and ending the Council's subscription to the Local Government Information Unit (£0.059m)
- Securing external sponsorship to defray event costs to cover a part of the budget for civic events and other events (£0.050m)
- Further increasing income to defray the cost of the Greenwich festivals programme and Sparkle in the Park (£0.050m)

In total, these measures amount to a combined saving of £0.616m in 2026/27 rising to £0.647m from 2027/28.

Links to Corporate Plan:

- Mission 19 – Our Council works in the most efficient and effective way possible
- Mission 16 – We develop networks with communities, key partners and businesses to meet need and address challenges together

B.3. Cutting the cost of local politics

This proposal would implement further savings from 2026/27 by reducing the cost of local politics. This comprises:

- Removing the budget for the Cabinet Assistant Special Allowance which was introduced in 2018/19 and then doubled to four roles in 2024/25 (£0.020m)
- Ending the Political Assistant system introduced by the Council in 2024 at the end of the current council term in May 2026, upon the expiration of the current fixed term contracts (£0.080m in 2026/27, with a full year effect of £0.94m from 2027/28)
- Reduce the overall cost of Cabinet by £20,000 rising to £23,000.

In total, these measures amount to a net saving of £0.120m in 2026/27 rising to £0.137m from 2027/28.

Links to Corporate Plan:

- Mission 19 – Our Council works in the most efficient and effective way possible

B.4. Note that the additional efficiency savings outlined in Additional Appendix B total £0.736m a year in 2026/27 rising to £0.784m a year for 2027/28 onwards, as summarised in Table B.

Table B: Additional efficiency saving proposals

Additional efficiency saving proposals	Cost 26/27 (£m)	Cost 27/28 (£m)	Cost 28/29 (£m)
Reduce communications spending and other efficiencies	(0.616)	(0.647)	(0.647)
Cut the cost of local politics	(0.120)	(0.137)	(0.137)
Total additional efficiency savings	(0.736)	(0.784)	(0.784)

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