

London Borough of Bexley

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Council sets course through financial challenges

Bexley's Cabinet reviewed the success of the Council's medium term financial strategy and continuing economic challenges and uncertainty at its meeting yesterday (29 January).

The Council's annual budget-making process is entering its final stages, leading up to the approval of the budget and Council Tax for 2018/19 on 7 March.

"Our focus is on living within our means and making sure we use the money we have to deliver the maximum benefit for the borough and our residents," said Council Leader Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE. "People know that the economy is going through a challenging period, but we will continue to show that we can do a lot of good with the money we have. We are also continuing to plan carefully for the future and ensure we put money aside to ensure we can cope with the unexpected."

Looking ahead, the gradual withdrawal of government grant means that Bexley must be financially self-sufficient from 2020/21. Like many other councils, Bexley faces significant spending pressures, including the cost of increasing homelessness, together with increased demand for adults' and children's services. Economic conditions are such that increasing inflation is pushing up service costs year on year.

Since 2011, Bexley has achieved considerable success in finding new and better ways to deliver services, while saving £110m. Examples include -

- Developing a new model of care for people with learning disabilities, that is focused on independence rather than dependence, and will improve their quality of life.
- Closer partnership to deliver better outcomes for vulnerable children and to help keep families together.
- The creation of Belvedere Beach with external funding.
- The success of the borough's new community libraries.
- Continuing savings as a result of the Council's moves to new offices, which are now shared with the NHS Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group.

Becoming self-sufficient is now central to the Council's financial planning. Work continues to generate income through commercial activities, improve the way services are commissioned, intervene early to prevent care needs escalating, promote economic growth and work strategically with a growing range of public and private partners.

"We focus on improving the things we can control and I'm proud of what we've achieved both in balancing the budget and improving services," said Cllr Don Massey, Deputy Leader of the Council. "We've gained a great reputation for managing our budget, attracting inward investment, innovating and working with others to improve the borough – and that's what we plan to keep doing."

You can view a webcast of the Cabinet's discussion and access the budget papers online at <https://bexley.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

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Attachments

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