

A golden statue of Lady Justice, the personification of the law, stands against a clear blue sky. She is blindfolded, holding a sword in her right hand and a pair of scales in her left. The statue is positioned behind the main title of the document.

Croydon Constitutionalists

Bringing Classical Liberalism to South London

Contact Michael Swadling

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

17th March 2019

Email croydonconstitutionalists@gmail.com

Website croydonconstitutionalists.uk

Facebook facebook.com/CroydonConstitutionalists

Twitter twitter.com/CroydonConst

AS MUCH AS THEY THINK THEY CAN GET AWAY WITH

Two weeks ago Croydon Council once again decided to raise the tax burden on the hard working families of Croydon by the maximum of 2.99% for the council without calling a referendum. To give them the benefit of the doubt that they have not done, as to quote Sir Humphrey Appleby "pitch for as much as they think they can get away with and then think what to spend it on", we would like to ask the council to reconsider the rise and make some savings.

Our proposals would bring down the increased tax take by 10% to a 2.69% increase in council tax. This would give more money back to stretched family budgets and remove the impression of a council treating taxpayers like fools.

To achieve this we needed to save £518,000 from Croydon council's 2019/20 budget. We have done this with room to spare, here's how:

- Croydon's Councillors are amongst the highest paid in London. If we reverse last year's pay increase to bring them closer to the norm we can save £30,429.69 a year.
- Does anyone seriously believe that being the senior leader in Croydon Council is harder than being Home Secretary? Harder than being Chancellor? Are most jobs harder than being a Minister of State, like say the Minister of Housing? Granted this might not be possible overnight, but by reducing the Chief Executive's salary to that of a Cabinet Member (£134K) and all other Directors to that of a Minister of State (£98K) we can save a whopping £213,129 a year.
- We would like to leave more money in people's pockets to make their own entertainment choices. Your weekend is not best planned by the council. The Culture Growth Fund in the past year has funded a Boypark priced above disposable income of most Croydon families, a Croydon Pride photo opportunity for local politicians that could have been funded by commercial sponsors, the Drunken Chorus Arts Collective, and somehow found £10,000 for someone to take a poo on stage. Halving this budget, and funding the truly unique and exceptional arts in the borough, not just those for the upper middle class or that take a poo, we can save £114,500 annually.

- Councillors receive £8000 a year to fund local ward projects on fairly loose criteria. This sounds great but in reality most councillors (and we have 3 per ward in half the borough) struggle for ideas to spend the money on. If the community wants a local service, it's a great opportunity to fundraise and pay for it. If they don't, don't force others to pay for it in tax. This money also risks looking like a series of local bribes, but does support some important services. We suggest councillors struggle by on £4000 a year for their local tax payer funded largess, saving a massive £288,000 a year.

The total saving here is £646,058.69. £127K more than we proposed, the council could even pay down some debt. All of these savings have been achieved without impacting a single front line service.

If these savings weren't enough maybe the council could have saved £11 million by delivering the Fairfield Halls on budget <http://www.eastlondonlines.co.uk/2019/03/outrage-as-council-exceeds-fairfield-halls-refurbishment-budget-by-11m/> or £8 million but keeping to the budget for New Addington Leisure Centre https://www.shakinghands.co.uk/news/20170720_new-addington-leisure-centre/. Of Course had Croydon's highly paid Councillors or Directors brought either project in on budget, Council Tax could have gone down this year.

Both Labour and Tory councillors voted for the increase. The people of Croydon desperately need councillors that will represent them and their families' budget as much as they represent councillors' allowances. We ask the council even at this late stage, to consider these proposals and give those struggling in Croydon a break.

Notes:

- Council Tax and Budget <https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/g1599/Public%20reports%20pack%2004th-Mar-2019%2018.30%20Council.pdf?T=10>
- Councillor Allowances <https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s14262/Members%20Allowances%20Scheme%20-%20Additional%20Information%20February%202019.pdf> and https://www.taxpayersalliance.com/taxpayers_alliance_reveals_cost_of_councillors_allowances_hits_nearly_700_million
- Community Ward Budgets <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/community/advice/community-ward-budgets>
- Payments over £500 <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/democracy/budgets/payments-over-500/about-payment-updates>
- Poo <https://metro.co.uk/2018/10/10/art-festival-featured-woman-pooing-and-it-cost-you-50000-8023524/>

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Michael Swadling at croydonconstitutionalists@gmail.com.

