

Norwood Forum Response to Lambeth Budget engagement survey 2026/27

This representation covers:

1. Clarifications on the published survey
2. Making better use of the volunteer sector
3. Community engagement
4. Housing
5. External funding
6. Lambeth's property portfolio
7. Enforcement
8. Conclusion

1. Clarifications on the published survey

Norwood Forum notes with concern that Lambeth Council (LBL) has to respond to a budget reduction of £183m over the next four years of which £99 million has already been identified. The remaining £84 million deficit must be found over four years, equating to £21 million a year, or 5% of the annual budget, or 3% factoring in supplements to resources from external grants. We would be grateful if you would confirm our understanding to be correct, with some potential misunderstanding created from the projected four year saving figure set against an annual budget in the introduction to your survey.

Our principal role as one of Lambeth's designated Neighbourhood Forums is to act as a link between the Council and the community who will undoubtedly share our concerns. Our aim is to seek clarifications and present some potential savings relevant to the Norwood area. Could you please confirm the statutory services that are not in your power to cut and could be misleading to be presented as an option in your survey, accepting some cost savings to some of these services may be possible.

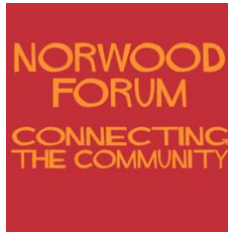
2. Making better use of the voluntary sector

Your survey includes an option for greater use of the voluntary sector and a call for more participation. As such an organisation, we have been lobbying for more support and engagement since the Lambeth Forum Network was set up precisely for this purpose. and as this year's LFN Annual Report shows, the network delivers tremendous value for money - with 2024/25 £60K Lambeth grant the Network secured £1.2million in additional funding and delivered the equivalent of £334, 470 worth of volunteer hours. The LFN should be at the very heart of this budget saving process.

Norwood Forum's latest accounts presented at last month's AGM detailed 2102 volunteer hours equating to £31,800. Our small grants programme offered significant community benefits by local volunteer organisations in return for grants of just £300 or less. We ask that you work in closer partnership with Lambeth Forum Network members to deliver community benefits through our connected volunteer organisations. The potential for significant savings is well documented. This includes community initiatives that look at early prevention of costly health,

Norwood Forum is run by local volunteers dedicated to fostering a sustainable, vibrant, and creative community. Our goal is to make a meaningful difference to the quality of life for everyone who lives, studies and works in Norwood

www.norwoodforum.org – info@norwoodforum.org



social and environmental problems. These figures demonstrate there is real added value for the Council and our Borough if there were community forums in each ward. We would also like to mention relevant charities with locations in the Norwood area; Erasmus and South Side Rehabilitation who work to get people who are homeless back in employment. Could you let us know of any work you are engaged in with these organisations and others such as L'Arche who support those with learning disabilities, including provision of accommodation? Is there a role for households with space and desire to host a homeless family for a set period of time and are any initiatives in place to facilitate such a scheme you can make us aware of?

3. Community engagement

Good community engagement can offer significant cost savings. We would like to see clear, accessible information, more in person / online meetings and efforts to have more open and welcoming Citizens Assemblies precisely to provide input into financial decisions. We would all like to see fewer costly legal battles between the Council and sections of the community, noting those in our local area. Legal advice, further community engagement and clear communication in advance of such initiatives being introduced may offer related savings and better protections in light of the above. We are aware of Lambeth's legal costs amounting to £30million in 2024, up from £10 million in 2019.

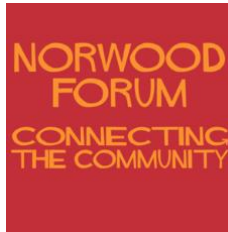
4. Housing

Housing is an area of vast cost increase, from temporary accommodation to increased cost of repairs and maintenance. Early intervention can save money on bigger issues that arise later. Given the immediate funding crisis, we acknowledge there are not large sums immediately available to the Council, but we hope you might make use of external funding streams to address much needed capital projects. For example, better use of green energy subsidies for social housing where possible or for you to apply for specific funding grants to re-purpose unused buildings or empty housing stock for respectful temporary accommodation instead of being at the mercy of private landlords charging above market rates with varied and uncertain living conditions. One of many such examples can be found on Casewick Road, which charges a day rate, yet has housed people for over a year. We would like you to work with other London boroughs to bring down the high daily rate that we understand is set London wide. We are grateful for information regarding any discussions towards this aim whilst more long term and cost-effective solutions are sought. Regarding one of the largest estates in our area, Central Hill Estate, we note reports of a considerable number of empty homes, and would be grateful for a specific progress report on this situation?

Further measures that might be considered are modular homes, unveiled by City Hall as a stopgap and might be used for the 4500 Lambeth families in temporary accommodation. Local sites that might be considered include Lambeth owned car parks, space around empty garages and other unused and ecologically redundant land and we are ready to work with you to identify specific potential locations. You may also consider sites where development has stalled, such as on Avenue Park Road. Could you let us know if you are considering installing any accommodation of this type and any sites you are considering in the Norwood area if so?

Norwood Forum is run by local volunteers dedicated to fostering a sustainable, vibrant, and creative community. Our goal is to make a meaningful difference to the quality of life for everyone who lives, studies and works in Norwood

www.norwoodforum.org – info@norwoodforum.org



We understand that in 2024 Savills Estate Agents conducted a major housing stock condition survey. Could you provide a link to the full report please and let us know if this will be used as the basis for any decisions to repurpose, rebuild or sell Lambeth owned housing stock? Could you also provide details of any Lambeth Council owned properties being considered to be repurposed, rebuilt or sold in the Norwood area? We would also like to reference the still vacant property of the Cherry Tree children's centre on Barston Road. We would welcome information on why this property has remained vacant. If it is unviable given the Council's financial situation, we would encourage its adaptation for use for adult temporary accommodation or other viable use; we understand the property has been refurbished so further adaptation costs may be low. Alternatively, it might be sold and the funds used for capital refurbishments elsewhere. Doing nothing seems the worst possible option.

The input of community groups such as ours to promote Council efforts to identify vacant properties is of value and might be made better use of. Specifically, we would like to help by publicising your call to be informed of empty homes and property, including those in the private sector, along with your response. Could you also explain any initiatives to better integrate the Housing department into the Council and have the savings arising from these steps been quantified? We would note roads on Lambeth Housing Estates, including those in the Norwood area, are controlled by the Housing department with different policies in place, for example, car parking charges.

5. External funding opportunities

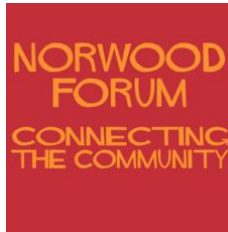
We would urge you to remain open to funding capital projects, especially where these are part funded by grant. Note the successful local examples of the National Lottery Heritage Grant for the stunning restorations in West Norwood Cemetery providing significant increase in community use (and 90% grant funding may be available from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for further investment) and Thames Water funding for flood prevention works in Norwood Park that have the added advantage of improving the park for all users, noting Lambeth's significant contribution to both, but not having to bear the full cost. Can you give examples of any other central govt funding opportunities you are exploring, including for education, apprenticeships and training? We acknowledge the training courses you offer Lambeth estate residents through TRAs, and ask if there is further central govt funding available, possibly through the Department of Education, to help young people not in education, employment or training. Such training could be delivered in community buildings and with the help of volunteer organisations such as Rathbones and High Trees. Like the help offered by Erasmus and South Side Rehabilitation, such initiatives can help address some of the root causes of homelessness and social care. We also hope Lambeth is looking to other London boroughs for inspiration.

6. Lambeth's property portfolio

We hope Lambeth buildings can be optimised to address housing and unused public buildings or spaces can be utilised for community benefit. Examples include a substantial part of the first floor in West Norwood Health and Leisure Centre. Our own Thriving Norwood wellbeing project is working with dozens of local service providers looking for space. Some of the root causes of

Norwood Forum is run by local volunteers dedicated to fostering a sustainable, vibrant, and creative community. Our goal is to make a meaningful difference to the quality of life for everyone who lives, studies and works in Norwood

www.norwoodforum.org – info@norwoodforum.org



the extensive need for social care are addressed by these groups. Local examples of volunteer community groups managing facilities directly include estate community halls that are rented out by Tenants and Resident Associations (TRAs) or the great facilities at the Peabody Trust.

Rathbones run the Old Library in West Norwood effectively, making effective cost savings through reduction in their energy use (though the building remains in need of investment), as do many TRAs who use any surplus income from community halls to the benefit of estates, reducing the financial and administrative burden on Lambeth Council. Whilst we recognise such initiatives are unlikely to solve the funding crisis independently, would sweating the Council's property portfolio further, especially if it was for delivering not-for-profit projects working in partnership with mainstream service providers such as the NHS, offer cost savings and bring direct benefits to some of the most vulnerable sections of our community?

7. Enforcement

Parking: We recognise efforts to increase enforcement and penalty charges for illegal parking by Lambeth Council, with the benefits of reducing road danger, improving accessibility and contributing to the parking surplus which was last recorded at over £32 million. Further efforts to increase enforcement in the Norwood area would be welcomed by Norwood Forum, particularly in areas of high parking demand, such as Norwood Rd, Knights Hill, Gipsy Road, Rosendale Road and Croxted Road.

Flytipping: An ever-expanding issue where enforcement, which we appreciate is not straightforward, should be reaping financial rewards. Apart from reporting flytipping, how can Norwood Forum better support the Council to keep our neighbourhood clean?

Lambeth Bylaws: We note with interest that Lambeth has approached London Councils with a proposal to introduce fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for byelaw offences in parks and open spaces that are covered by Lambeth Byelaws with a maximum fine of £500 and the current consultation on this. We await the outcome with interest.

8. Conclusion

We hope the Council will genuinely recalibrate its relationship with the voluntary sector, particularly making use of the existing networks within the Borough. Norwood Forum want to be part of the solution to address this funding crisis. With more information such as that we ask for in this document, we can help bring the community on this journey as partners. We can only do this with the Council's collaboration and support.

Norwood Forum

Norwood Forum is run by local volunteers dedicated to fostering a sustainable, vibrant, and creative community. Our goal is to make a meaningful difference to the quality of life for everyone who lives, studies and works in Norwood

www.norwoodforum.org – info@norwoodforum.org