



Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Special Meeting Tuesday, 4 December 2012
Time:	6.00 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

1. MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Members are reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they are subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

2. BUDGET OPTIONS (Pages 1 - 84)

The following documents are attached for Members' consideration:

- **'What Really Matters' Questionnaire**
- **Summary paper for Regeneration and Environment**
- Options papers relevant to this Committee:
 - Car Parking
 - Garden Waste
 - Waste Charges
 - Dog Kennels
 - Environmental Health
 - Trading Standards

- Pest Control
- Highway Maintenance
- Street Lighting
- Highway Drainage
- Street Cleansing
- School Crossing Patrols
- Withdrawal of Parks' Maintenance
- Reduction of Parks' Maintenance
- Community Patrol
- Dog Fouling
- Modernisation of Leisure Centres
- Libraries (and One Stop Shops) [N.B. This option can be found in the Families and Wellbeing summary document]

3. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR



**PLEASE RETURN BY
31st January 2013**

Budget Options from the Chief Executive

“I offer these options for consideration by Councillors, residents and staff according to the overriding principle that we should spend less on ourselves – taking savings first from our ‘back office’ and so reducing as much as possible the impact on services to residents, particularly our poorest and most vulnerable.”

Graham Burgess, Chief Executive of Wirral Council

You can complete this questionnaire online at www.wirral.gov.uk/whatreallymatters, or hand it in at any Council One Stop Shop, Library, Children's Centre or Leisure Centre. You can also post it back to: What Really Matters, Wallasey Town Hall, Brighton Street, CH44 8ED

Dear Resident

I was appointed as Chief Executive to improve the way in which Wirral Council operates. My first task is to ensure we address the unprecedented budget challenge before us. Unprecedented cuts to Council funding from central Government, combined with unfunded increased demand for social care in particular, mean that we have no choice but to cut around a third of our net budget over the next three years.

These are tough times – for our staff, Councillors, and most importantly the people who we serve. We have some tough decisions to make over the coming months.

Today I publish my options for where savings might be found for Councillors, Partners, staff and the public to consider. I have sought to offer these options according to the overriding principle that we should spend less on ourselves, taking savings first from our ‘back office’ and so mitigating as much as possible the impact on services to residents particularly our poorest and most vulnerable.

You will see from the chart on the next page, we have been largely successful in developing these options to reduce the impact on residents as much as is possible. I guarantee that will always be our overriding principle as we strive to make the savings we are being forced to make.

These options also represent around 25% more than we need to save in this first year. That is to make sure that our Councillors, when they consider these options alongside your feedback, have the opportunity to make choices as they take these extremely difficult decisions. These savings are proposed as part of a three year drive, which will see the Council building firm foundations for the future of the borough by transforming the way we work and provide services.

I am therefore firstly proposing to reduce our Senior Management costs by around a third. I am also consulting on reducing other staffing costs such as car mileage and phone bills.

In addition I am bringing forward options to make better use of our buildings and Information Technology. Importantly I am reviewing the amount of money spent on Agency Staff, Consultants, marketing and all other non essential spending.

Given the size of the budget gap this will not however be enough. The further options I put before you are not easy ones. Council services must change – there is no other way of finding the massive amount of money we need.

My pledge is that I will consult with staff, residents, community, voluntary and faith groups and businesses in order that we make the tough decisions we need to - taking your views and opinions into account.

Graham Burgess,
Chief Executive.

Your details

Please provide your e-mail address if you would like Wirral Council to send you updates about Council services and future consultations. Your information will be managed in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy and will never be passed on to any unauthorised third party.

Your email address: _____

If you don't have an email address please provide your postal address:

Your name: _____

Your address: _____

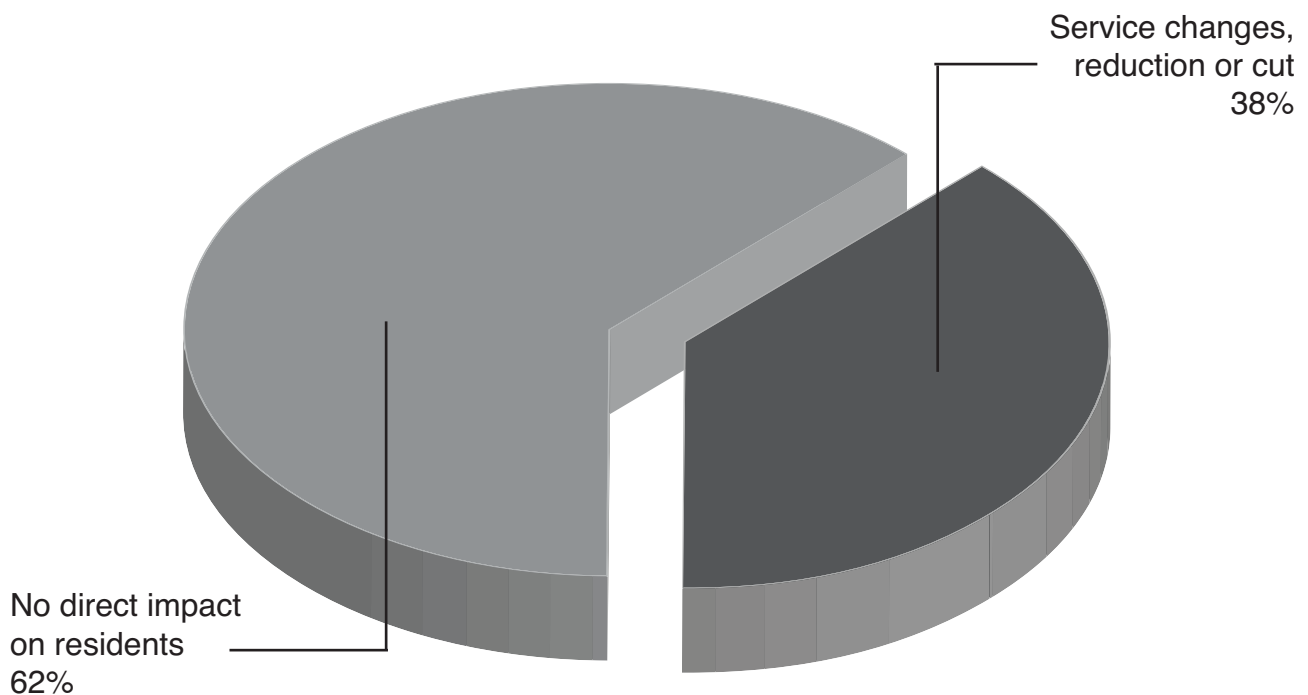
_____ Postcode: _____

What is your relationship to Wirral Council? *(please tick all that apply)*

- Resident Member of staff Local business
 Partner agency/organisation Voluntary/community organisation

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation please tell us its' name:

Where the savings come from



You will see that this questionnaire is split into four sections:

Section A: **Transformation and Resources**

Section B: **Regeneration and Environment**

Section C: **Families and Wellbeing**

Section D: **About You**

There are quite a lot of options, and questions, within this document. All questions have choices to best describe your view. Please tick one box for each option.

Please feel free to complete either as much or as little as you would like – every response, no matter how small, will be counted.

These budget options have been developed by Council Officers and, as much as possible; we have tried to develop them to follow what you told us in the first stage of this consultation.

For each of the options summarised in this report, you can find much more detailed information as to what likely impact they will bring by visiting our website at www.wirral.gov.uk/whatreallymatters, calling into any One Stop Shop or Library, or calling us on 0151 606 2030.

Section A: Transformation and Resources

REDUCING COUNCIL MANAGEMENT

Wirral Council has around 4800 employees. Some of the structures in departments, and services, are no longer fit for purpose and could be updated and reduced, to achieve major savings. This option involves a total restructure and significant reduction in middle and senior management layers across the entire Council.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

WORKFORCE CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

The Council's current salary costs are £102 million. Another £6 million is spent on salary enhancements based on national and local conditions of service. This option is designed to reduce this expenditure by £4 million through making changes to employees' terms and conditions, including car mileage, phones, unpaid leave and single time working.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

PROCUREMENT

The Council is looking to make savings and increase income through the way it pays for goods and services, through starting to charge schools for work it does and also through paying some invoices and bills through an online system.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

TREASURY MANAGEMENT

The way the Council manages its cash flow and borrowing could also be significantly improved to bring in major savings. The Council will fund road repairs, building investments and other works through internal funds rather than borrowing, which will save around £1.7m.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

CIVIC SERVICES (THE MAYOR OF WIRRAL)

The Mayor undertakes a range of civic and fundraising duties throughout their term of office. The option here is to make a saving through re-designing the service to offer better value for money.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

ELECTIONS

The Council currently operates a system of three elections every four years, with Councillors elected for a four-year term. The option here would be to hold 'all-out' elections every four years, where all Members would be up for election for a four-year term.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

REDUCING THE COST OF DEMOCRACY

The Council currently operates a model of governance known as Strong Leader, which involves a Cabinet and five Overview and Scrutiny Committees, plus a number of other committees, who work to set Council policy, make and scrutinise decisions and set the Council budget. This option would involve a review of the Council's constitution and number of committees, and related meetings, to bring savings and a reduction in staff.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICE

The Council invests funds in its computer equipment, which is used by thousands of Council employees on a daily basis. This option involves centralising, and significantly reducing, the funding spent on providing computers, printers and other IT equipment to Council, including reducing the number of employees required to service the equipment.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

The Council's communications and engagement division is responsible for promoting Wirral as a place, the Council's services, consultation activity and public relations and media activity. There are a number of options in this area, including a reduction in the core marketing budget of 50%, stopping the sponsorship of Tranmere Rovers Football Club,

which would bring a saving of £135,000 and removing the funding which is used to subsidise tourism and visitor events throughout the borough.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

AREA FORUM FUNDING

The Council invests funding each year into its programme of Area Forum events. This funding is available for communities to pay for additional Council services or to pay for community or voluntary groups to perform projects and activities. The option here is to cancel the currently frozen allocation of Forum funding, and to further remove the funding from the Council budget in future years, to be replaced by a new method of engaging and working with communities.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

BETTER USE OF BUILDINGS

The Council owns an extensive and varied number of buildings, from which it delivers services and provides back office support. This option involves closing the Acre Lane and Municipal Buildings and relocating staff elsewhere.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

TRANSFORMING BUSINESS SUPPORT

The Council has a range of administration staff throughout the Council, who provide support to departments. The option here is to bring together administration into three business units to support each new Council area, to ensure reduced costs and higher efficiency.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

RESTRUCTURE OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT DIVISION

This Council department is responsible for a number of functions, covering Council buildings, human resources and legal services. This option proposes restructuring and reducing the division as well as investigating the outsourcing of part of the department.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

Is there anything you would like to say about the savings options being proposed under Transformation and Resources?

Section B: Regeneration and Environment

PARKING

Car Park charges vary extensively across Wirral. It is much more expensive, for example, to park in Birkenhead than in West Kirby. The proposal here is to standardise car parking charges across the borough, and reduce the 'all day' charge to a competitive rate of £2.50, and bring in annual and seasonal permit rates in outer Birkenhead car parks. This would also involve reducing staffing across the service.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION

Garden waste is at the moment collected free of charge from Wirral residents. The option here is to stop the free kerbside collection of waste and begin charging for the service. On average, Councils who charge for this service charge in the region of £35 per year.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

HOUSEHOLD WASTE COLLECTION

The 'ERIC' service is available for people to have items of large household waste collected and disposed of. The current charge for this service is £20 per collection; this option would involve raising this charge to £26.50 per collection.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

PRE-PLANNING ADVICE

The Council currently provides pre-planning application advice free of charge, many other Local Authorities across Merseyside charge. The option here is to introduce a fee for all pre-planning advice.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

APPRENTICE PROGRAMME

The Council has for the past few years funded 167 people to complete Apprenticeships, with a further 114 positions available during the current financial year. There are 2 options available here, the first is to remove the budget for this programme, which would end the Wirral Apprentice Programme in its current form; and the second is to reduce the budget to this programme, and explore opportunities to develop a Liverpool City Region Apprentice scheme. Please tell us which your preferred option is:

- Remove the budget for this programme
 - Reduce the budget for the programme and develop a Liverpool City Region scheme
-

HANDYPERSON SCHEME

The Council runs a handyperson scheme, which is open to all residents and means people can request maintenance on their homes for a relatively cheap price. The option here is to redevelop this service, meaning it is targeted more effectively at people who have recently been discharged from hospital, and reducing the service available to the general public.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

RESTRUCTURE OF THE REGENERATION, HOUSING AND PLANNING DIVISION

This option involves a service restructure in the Regeneration, Housing and Planning division, as a result of some significant changes which have led to a reconsideration of the work of the department.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

KENNELS SERVICE

The Council operates a kennels service, which serves to re-home abandoned and stray dogs. This option would involve closing the specific Wirral service and instead providing a joint service with partners across Merseyside. This would mean residents would have to travel to Halewood to collect their dogs.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

HOME INSULATION

The Warmer Wirral programme provides free or reduced cost home insulation for Wirral residents.

- Remove the budget for the programme
 - Reduce the budget for the programme, allowing for some energy efficiency and fuel poverty work to continue
-

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

The Environmental Health team perform a wide range of duties related to the health, wellbeing and safety of the borough. This option involves developing a partnership with Cheshire West

and Chester to put a mutual organisation together to deliver the service.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

TRADING STANDARDS

Within the Trading Standards team there are a number of officers who are responsible for providing support to vulnerable customers. This budget option involves reducing this service by a number of officers.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

PEST CONTROL

The Pest Control service provides a treatment service to residents and companies. The option in this area involves reducing the department by one member of staff.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

The Council has a contract in place to cover all highway maintenance, which is soon going to be re-tendered. This option would reduce the proactive maintenance of roads, footways, signage and street furniture, and mean the Council would focus most resources on maintenance where there is a direct safety issue.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

STREET LIGHTING

The Council operates a scheme whereby people perform lighting inspections at night. This option would involve stopping these night-time inspections and also, where it is safe to do so, switching off lighting either completely or for part of the night.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

HIGHWAYS DRAINAGE

The Council performs regular maintenance work across drainage inspections on the highways, ensuring that risk of flooding is brought as low as possible. This option would reduce the service, and mean focusing the activity on targeted inspections at problem sites.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

STREET CLEANSING

The Council, through its contractor, invests a significant amount of resources in collecting litter and cleaning the streets. This option would involve reducing that investment, and working with the community to improve levels of street cleanliness. If successful, this reduction would be rolled out across other areas.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

SCHOOL CROSSING PATROLS

The Council provides school crossing patrol sites across the borough. This option would involve inviting schools to pay for the crossing

patrol service and removing the cost to the Council. If schools are not prepared to pay for the service then it may be removed.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REMOVAL OF THE MAINTENANCE OF PARKS

Wirral has over 200 sites which are classified as being 'parks and open spaces', which are a mixture of large and local parks, general green spaces, beaches and bowling greens. This option would involve stopping maintenance on a number of parks, green spaces, beaches and grass verges and working with community organisations and 'friends of parks' groups to ensure the service was maintained.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REDUCTION IN THE MAINTENANCE OF PARKS

This further option relating to parks involves the reduction of maintenance whereby some areas will be cut every three weeks, rather than two, a reduction in bedding displays and the pre-planned maintenance programme. Rural grass verges would also be left for wildlife and only cut where there is a road safety issue. The Council would work with community organisations and 'friends of parks' groups to ensure the service was maintained.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

HOUSING SUPPORT FOR BME COMMUNITIES

Part of the Council's supporting people team is a small service which helps to provide support for people from black and minority ethnic communities to live independently. The option here is to remove this service, as other services both from the community and public sectors, including the Citizen's Advice Bureau, could potentially fill the gap.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

SUPPORTING PEOPLE

The supporting people programme delivers services to around 5,500 Wirral residents; making sure that those people with housing related needs are supported. This option would involve reducing this budget through renegotiating contracts, tendering services, remodelling services and closing services.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

INVESTING IN WIRRAL'S BUSINESSES

Wirral Council runs a service called Invest Wirral, which is designed to provide a wide range of business support services. The option here would be the reduction in support to businesses through a number of avenues, including business investments, grants and other funds. These funds may be replaced regionally. This option would also reduce duplication with other services by removing the Invest Wirral events budget and social enterprise support.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

COMMUNITY PATROL AND DOG FOULING

Wirral Community Patrol consists of more than 20 officers who work towards improving the security and safety of Wirral Council properties but also making Wirral a safe place to live, work and visit. The Council also provide a Dog Fouling Enforcement Team which aim to improve and protect the Wirral environment by reducing dog fouling. The option is to stop paying enhanced salaries for evening and weekend work for Community Patrol, except for bank holidays, and also to reduce the size of the dog fouling enforcement team.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

MODERNISATION OF LEISURE

Currently, Leisure Centres across Wirral have periods where usage is extremely low, compared to the number of staff working at the sites. The option in this area is to make a number of changes to pool operating times and working practices, including closing Europa Leisure Pool and Guinea Gap Pool during less busy times, and reducing the staff requirements for the sauna operation at Guinea Gap Leisure Centre among others.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

Is there anything you would like to say about the savings options being proposed under Regeneration and Environment?

Section C: Families and Wellbeing

COMMUNITY MEALS

The Council provide an outdated, but appreciated, meals-on-wheels service. This service charges people £2.68 per meal. The proposal here is to increase this charge by 79p per meal to a total charge of £3.47 per meal – which is what the service costs the Council.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The Council provides a range of technology which is installed in people's homes to enable them to be more independent, such as bed occupancy sensors, property exit sensors, pull chords, flood detectors and falls detectors. These devices are installed and monitored 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, free of charge. The proposal here is to implement a weekly fee for this service of £3. This charge would only be applied to those people who could afford it.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

CHARGING FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Wirral Council's charges for adult social care services are among the lowest in the region. Many Councils charge 100% of a person's disposable income, Wirral currently charges 75%. The proposal here is to bring our charges in line with other North West Councils and charge 100% of a person's total disposable income.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

TARGETED SUPPORT THROUGH NHS CONTRACTS

The Council works closely with the NHS to provide a whole range of services for vulnerable adults; including nursing care, residential care and reablement (where a person is supported back to full health following an illness) among others. In this area the Council will work with colleagues in the NHS to reduce the use of higher cost services such as nursing and residential care to focus on community based alternatives such as Assistive Technology, intermediate care and reablement.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

EXTRA CARE HOUSING

The Council provides over 200 extra care housing units across the borough, which is a form of sheltered housing and residential care. The option here is to re-tender those contracts and look to provide the same level of service at a lower cost.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

RESIDENTIAL AND RESPITE CARE

The Council owns 3 residential care homes which provide short breaks for people with learning disabilities and mental health difficulties. The option here is to reduce the number of facilities from 3 to 1, while still providing the same service. More people will then benefit from supported living arrangements rather than residential care.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

DAY CARE AND DAY SERVICES TRANSFORMATION

The Council owns a number of Day Centres which support people with Learning Disabilities, Physical Disabilities and Mental Health difficulties. All of these centres need, to different extents, substantial investment and, due to younger people choosing to use other services, demand is substantially reducing. This option would involve investment in some centres, and the closure of others, while at the same time transforming the service to ensure it offers a modern and quality service.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REVIEW OF SUPPORT FOR CARERS

When a carer is assessed for support, a “carer’s budget” is identified and allocated to the person. This option would involve changing this system and replacing it with an annual grant, which would be based on a banding system currently

used by other Councils. This would be based on the carer’s role and requirement for support, and would mean some carers receiving less financial support, but some receiving more according to their need.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

TRANSPORT POLICIES

The Council provides transport for over one thousand people across the borough every day to travel to Council facilities and schools among other places. This option would involve a full review of that transport, with a view to stopping providing transport to some or all Council facilities and schools. This would require people using the transport to either contribute towards the cost of the service or find other ways to travel to the service.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

AREA TEAMS FOR FAMILY SUPPORT

Area Teams provide preventative services for vulnerable children and families. This option would involve reducing the number of teams from 11, to 4, and require the teams to re-focus their work based on need.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

SCHOOLS MUSIC SERVICE

The music service has for many years received a subsidy from the Council. This option removes that subsidy and requires the service to bring in enough income to break even.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

OAKLANDS OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

This service provides outdoor recreation and education activities, primarily for schools. The service also receives a subsidy from the Council, and this option would involve removing that funding and requiring the service to break even.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

The Council provides an educational psychology service, which helps all children with special educational needs. The proposal in this area is to reduce this service and have a more targeted approach, whilst continuing to meet statutory requirements.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

FOUNDATION LEARNING

This is a programme offered to schools to support vocational learning for young people who are at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

The proposal in this area is to remove this funding and instead provide support through the careers education information, advice and guidance service.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

COMMISSIONING OF PARENTING SERVICES

The Council invests money with organisations in the community and voluntary sector to provide parenting and family support, and the proposal in this area is to target a reduced service at those families most at risk of poor outcomes.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

SCHOOLS BUDGET

The Council has a budget for schools maintenance and also contributes towards a 27-year Private Finance Initiative agreement. The proposal in this area is to transfer the costs currently met by the Council to the schools budget.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND INCOME FROM SCHOOLS

The Council provides a number of services to schools, some of which are provided free of charge as part of the Council's legal obligations, some which are charged back to schools and some which are provided for no cost, or a cost which is lower than it costs to deliver. The option in this area is to reduce the level of free services the Council provides for schools and increasing the income from those services provided to Academy schools.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REVIEW OF VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH SECTOR GRANTS

The voluntary, community and faith sector provide a number of services such as luncheon clubs, advocacy support and day care with funding provided by the Council. The proposal is that the Council reviews these services as part of a wider Council approach to ensure more targeted and cost effective services, based on early intervention and prevention.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

ASSESSMENT AND CARE MANAGEMENT

The Council is reviewing its assessment and care management process working closely with the NHS to improve the experience of care service users and make quicker the process from referral to support plan. The proposal is that through making the process more efficient, it would be possible to respond to financial pressures by reducing the number of social

workers and assessment support workers, although it is accepted that this would potentially negate improvements made through redesign.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REVIEW OF RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

Many Councils have changed their services for learning disabilities, and developed supported living opportunities as an alternative to residential care. The option in this area is to develop supported housing arrangements for people with learning disabilities as an alternative to residential care.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REVIEW OF EQUIPMENT AND EMERGENCY DUTY

The Council provides equipment for people such as wheelchairs and also provides an emergency out of hours care management system. The proposal here is to review both services and investigate a shared service with the NHS to save money.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

YOUTH AND PLAY SERVICES

The Council provides and maintains 6 play schemes and 14 youth facilities, as well as extensive outreach projects. The option here is to review the number of play schemes, reduce the outreach service and integrate all youth clubs into the main four youth 'hubs'.

This would involve centralising all of the youth services within the main four hubs, and investing in a new Youth Zone for Central Birkenhead.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

YOUTH CHALLENGE

The Council also funds services around risk taking behaviour (alcohol and drugs) as well as positive activities such as drama and arts. The option here is to reduce the budget of those services and ensure that the budget is used to target the most vulnerable.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

CHILDREN'S CENTRES AND SURE START

The Council has 16 Children's Centres, as well as a number of satellite children's centres. The option here is to reduce universal services from children's centres, to transfer provision of day-care to Private, Voluntary or Independent providers and to charge for most universal services which are provided. This would also include the release of a number of satellite children's centres, and a reduction in the Sure Start budget.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

HELP AND ADVICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The Council provides an optional service for people who are over 65, which provides support and advice about benefits and how to access other voluntary and Council services. The option in this area is to remove this service, and instead use existing contracts with a number of voluntary and community organisations to provide it on our behalf.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

CAREERS, EDUCATION INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

Through a contract, the Council provides a wide range of careers advice to young people. The option in this area is to reduce this service so it is targeted at those most in need.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

SHORT BREAKS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The Council provides funding for children with disabilities to go on short breaks, which provide respite for them and their families. The option here is to reduce the number and range of the short breaks which are provided, while still providing the service.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

This is a service which provides support for children with mental health needs. The option here is to reduce this service by one third, and target resources at those most in need.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REVENUES AND BENEFITS

As Welfare Reform and Universal Credit is rolled out the workload in the Revenues and Benefits division will increase. Staffing levels will, however, be able to reduce to reflect the new arrangements. The option in this area is therefore to begin to reduce staff in this division as the new Universal Credit is implemented.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

INCREASING COURT COSTS

The Council at the moment charges non-payers of Council Tax £65. This is below the actual costs, which are around £87. The option here is to increase these charges to £75.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS

There are a range of discounts and exemptions on Council Tax available to Wirral residents, including reductions for properties undergoing major repair and long term empty properties. The option in this area is to conduct a full review of these discounts with a view to increasing income from Council Tax.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

COUNCIL TAX PENSIONER DISCOUNT

Pensioners aged over 70 in Wirral currently receive a discount of 7.76% against their Council Tax. The option here is to reduce that discount or change the qualifying criteria.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

COUNCIL TAX DISCRETIONARY RELIEF

Wirral last year paid discretionary business rate relief for charities, voluntary, social, educational and sporting organisations for a total of over £1m. The option here is to review and potentially reduce the amount of businesses and funding which is used to help these businesses with their rates.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

LIBRARIES AND ONE STOP SHOPS

Wirral Council has a network of 13 One Stop Shops and 24 Libraries. The options in this area include: further merging of libraries and One Stop Shops, the reduction of opening hours, particularly around Christmas and New Year, and the increased use of volunteers in the running of the facilities. The option of community asset transfer will also be part of this option. The Council also propose to reduce the book fund, which libraries use to purchase new books.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

Is there anything you would like to say about the savings options being proposed under Families and Wellbeing?

Section D: About you

This section is all about you. It would be helpful when we analyse the results of this questionnaire for us to know a little bit about you.

The next few questions are optional – you don't have to complete them if you don't want to. None of the information you give us will be used for any other purpose than reviewing the results of the questionnaire, and will never be passed on to any third party.

Your gender:

- Male Female Prefer not to say

Your ethnicity:

Please tick a box or state your ethnicity:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Irish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other British | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other white background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White & Black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> White & Black African |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White & Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other mixed background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Asian background | <input type="checkbox"/> African |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Black background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arab | <input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy, Romany or Irish Traveller |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say | |

Your religion or belief:

What is your religion?

- | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim | <input type="checkbox"/> Sikh | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say | | | |

Or, what is your belief?

- | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Humanist | <input type="checkbox"/> Atheist | <input type="checkbox"/> Agnostic | <input type="checkbox"/> Pagan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any other belief | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say | | |

Your disability:

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

- Yes No Prefer not to say

Please tick all the boxes which apply:

- Physical Disability Mental Health Sensory impairment
 Learning Difficulty Prefer not to say

Your age:

- Under 16 16-24 25-44 45-64
 65+ Prefer not to say

If you are under 16, please do not answer the remaining questions.

Marriage or Civil Partnership:

Are you currently:

- Married Single Divorced Widowed
 In a Civil Partnership None of the above Prefer not to say

Your sexual orientation:

Please tick one box -

- Heterosexual Lesbian or gay Bisexual Asexual
 Prefer not to say

Gender Reassignment:

Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?

- Yes No Prefer not to say

Thank you for your time and involvement - it will make a difference.

**www.wirral.gov.uk/whatreallymatters
engage@wirral.gov.uk
0151 606 2030**

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Regeneration and Environment
Budget Options
from the Chief Executive

The Budget Challenge in Wirral

Dear Resident

I was appointed as Chief Executive to improve the way in which Wirral Council operates. My first task is to ensure we address the unprecedented budget challenge before us. Unprecedented cuts to Council funding from central Government, combined with unfunded increased demand for social care in particular, mean that we have no choice but to cut around a third of our net budget over the next three years.

These are tough times – for our staff, Councillors, and most importantly the people who we serve. We have some tough decisions to make over the coming months.

Today I publish my options for where savings might be found for Councillors, Partners, staff and the public to consider. I have sought to offer these options according to the overriding principle that we should spend less on ourselves, taking savings first from our ‘back office’ and so mitigating as much as possible the impact on services to residents particularly our poorest and most vulnerable.

These options also represent around 25% more than we need to save in this first year. That is to make sure that our Councillors, when they consider these options alongside your feedback, have the opportunity to make choices as they take these extremely difficult decisions. These savings are proposed as part of a three year drive, which will see the Council building firm foundations for the future of the borough by transforming the way we work and provide services.

I am therefore firstly proposing to reduce our Senior Management costs by around a third. I am also consulting on reducing other staffing costs such as car mileage and phone bills.

In addition I am bringing forward options to make better use of our buildings and Information Technology. Importantly I am reviewing the amount of money spent on Agency Staff, Consultants, marketing and all other non essential spending.

Given the size of the budget gap this will not however be enough. The further options I put before you are not easy ones. Council services must change – there is no other way of finding the massive amount of money we need.

My pledge is that I will consult with staff, residents, community, voluntary and faith groups and businesses in order that we make the tough decisions we need to - taking your views and opinions into account.

Graham Burgess,
Chief Executive.

Regeneration and Environment Services in Wirral

Wirral's local environment and economy are some of the biggest factors in driving the quality of life, health and levels of achievement for our residents.

The Council invests every year in maintaining and improving the local environment, and in stimulating the local economy through helping our local businesses to succeed and expand, and encouraging businesses to start up or relocate in Wirral.

Economy and Regeneration Services

We want Wirral to be a place where businesses flourish and people have access to jobs and quality affordable homes.

In order to achieve this, it is vital that the Council continues to support a thriving local economy which provides the bedrock for social, economic and environmental well being amongst all of our communities. We want to continue to support business growth, but to do so in a more focused manner that works with and utilises the experience and resources of other key stakeholders. We want to support the creation of jobs by the Private Sector through providing a supportive and enabling environment, not only through the day to day support provided by the Council, but also through speedy and appropriate use of the Council's Planning powers.

Having a quality and affordable place to live is important to ensure that all our residents live in a safe and appropriate home that allows them to gain maximum benefit for access to jobs, leisure, amenities, education and to gain associated social and economic benefits that they both desire and deserve. We will continue to work with Registered Social landlords and Private Sector landlords to maximise the number and range of quality homes for rent. We will continue our programmes to restructure the Housing Market and work with House Builders to increase the number of new homes built in Wirral.

Regeneration and Environment Services in Wirral

In what are tough economic times for both the Council and the nation as a whole, we must ensure that the limited resource available maximises the opportunities to achieve our vision for Wirral. It is therefore necessary to focus continuing resources into areas that will have most impact, when maximising the opportunity to utilise other resources available. We have to make some difficult decisions as we simply do not have the resources to continue spending the same amounts to achieve these goals.

However, the Council will continue to allocate its own resources into activities that will help support business, create jobs, allow access to those jobs for Wirral residents and allow people to live in safe, affordable and relevant housing.

Environment Services

Councils, including Wirral Council, have long had the principal role in commissioning or delivering a range of near-universal municipal services to all households and neighbourhoods in their area. These include, amongst others, waste and recycling, street cleansing, highway maintenance and traffic management, road safety, parks and open spaces.

Wirral Council has delivered its services through a range of different channels. These include direct via its own staff, through contractors and through shared service arrangements with other councils.

Increasingly, these functions have been

carried out in various partnership or collaborative arrangements with other public agencies (e.g. police and fire service) or, where appropriate, with volunteer or other community groups.

This broad based strategy has served the public well and remains a sound basis for service delivery. It will, however, need reviewing and rebalancing in light of changing needs, increasing pressure on resources and through value for money challenge.

It needs to be recognised that there is projected to be a marked, steady, decline over the foreseeable future in national resources to support these types of services. That will inevitably be mirrored in councils across the country, including in Wirral.

Against that background and conscious that demand for services is likely to outstrip the ability to supply, it will be necessary to make difficult decisions. Such decisions will need to be taken against a strong evidence base and with the limited resources allocated within clear priorities.

Increasingly, there will be a clear need to manage demand and, more generally, to manage public expectations of what the Council can and cannot do. The role of community and other groups will increase in significance as the Council itself diminishes its activities in the more discretionary areas where it is not required by statute to provide services or functions. More broadly, there will need to be a new relationship between the

respective roles of the council and citizens.

Universal Services

Many of what are now universal municipal services are provided as a result of statutory requirements but where the actual level or quality of service is not closely defined. Other services which people are used to seeing as universal have a greater or lesser degree of discretion as to whether they are provided at all and to what level of provision.

There will be the need for decisions, informed both by evidence and from the views of the public and their representatives, as to the balances needing to be struck. It seems clear that the extent and quality of municipal services enjoyed now cannot be sustained with the resources available or in prospect. The difficult decisions will be around just what emphasis should be given to what; unfortunately it seems entirely unrealistic to expect to retain current service levels in these service areas.

Targeted Services

It will be necessary to identify service areas that are not, as such, universal across the community but meet particular needs. These more targeted service areas are often those where council provision sits alongside or competes with other providers.

In future, a sharper judgement will need to be made on whether the Council should continue to operate a particular service or whether other provision would suffice to meet the need of the community. In any case, these targeted services need to be assessed by the council on their commercial merits just as much as on their social benefits. Without this approach, costs will inevitably have to be transferred and carried by the rest of the community who don't benefit from the service in question.

Outcomes Approach

Within the two-pronged approach of Universal and Targeted services it is right, and drives to the heart of a Council's role, that full account is taken of the range of "outcomes" that it wants to achieve for the communities it serves.

Outcomes emerge and are defined through the political and corporate planning process, through societal norms and sometimes from statute.

A particular tension is that many highly desirable outcomes require services or interventions that are non-statutory, are discretionary and have to compete for a diminishing pool of local resources. It is also the case that many of these are highly regarded by local communities.

This suggests that the relationship between delivering services to citizens and citizens taking more direct responsibility for outcomes needs to change. This will be at the heart of the

agenda for community outcomes and will help to shape the Council's own organisational emphasis.

Service Strategy

Our strategy is based fundamentally on an outcomes approach, clear policy rationale and using evidence based prioritisation.

We shall set these out clearly so that all can see both how and why decisions have been taken.

We shall enhance and sharpen up our approach towards explaining to and engaging with direct customers and other service users. This will help manage expectations but it is also appropriate to undertake active means of influencing the behaviour of targeted groups to help meet their needs as well as to help reduce unnecessary demand. The influencing of behaviours, helping to support and facilitate change, will be a core feature of the future strategy.

Many user needs can be met through relatively straightforward self service channels and we will increasingly provide these through various means.

We shall streamline and simplify our organisational structure and arrangements. Overlapping functions will be eliminated, professional "silos" will be dismantled where practical and multi-functional teams created. We shall have much more multi-skilled and multi-tasked staff, especially in inspections,

enforcement and community education. This will enable us to become more focussed, more efficient and reduce the number of parallel activities that we undertaken at present.

We shall reduce the amount and levels of management and redesign managerial spans of control. Our support services will themselves be designed to directly support service needs and will complement, and not duplicate, the Council's central support services.

We shall ensure that our service arrangements are sufficiently adaptable to meet a wide range of future challenges. These include resource levels, different models of procuring delivery of services and the like.

We shall enhance our collaborative arrangements with other agencies and work hard to engage with interested groups and the communities of Wirral more generally. In that regard we have a key role to play in supporting area or neighbourhood based arrangements and our new organisational approach has this at their heart.

Budget Options

The budget options in this report have been proposed to try and re-design the services we deliver; to make the savings we need to make but at the same time maintain safety standards and protect the quality of services as much as possible.

These budget options have been developed by Council Officers and, as much as possible, we have tried to develop them following what you told us in the first stage of this consultation.

That consultation focussed on four main themes: raising income, changing service delivery, re-shaping services and stopping services. The options in this report also follow those four main themes.

For each of the options summarised in this report, you can find much more detailed information as to what likely impact they will bring by visiting our website at www.wirral.gov.uk/whatreallymatters or calling us on 0151 606 2030.

What You Told Us:

“The Council should look to raise income through raising or introducing charges. Raising charges should take every step to not disadvantage or marginalise vulnerable groups by making services unaffordable, and the services selected for increased charges should be chosen carefully.”

Option: Increase Income from Parking

Currently, car parking charges vary across the borough. It is much more expensive to park in Birkenhead or Liscard, for example, than it is to park in West Kirby.

This option would include standardising charges across Wirral to bring them all onto the same current tariff as Birkenhead, and reduce the ‘all day’ charge to a competitive rate of £2.50 and annual and seasonal permit rates in outer Birkenhead car parks.

This option would also include reducing the administration involved in servicing parking appeals, reducing what we spend on parking enforcement, and reducing what we spend on collecting cash from and performing maintenance on parking meters.

This proposal rationalises the charging regime across the borough. Broadly, parking in western areas would have charges increased to align with the existing charging regime in the East. The greater tendency for use of car parks in the West would generate additional revenue. This will remove the inequalities of low charges in West Wirral but will mean charges in these areas i.e. Heswall and West Kirby will increase substantially.

Through standardising car parking charges across the borough, income is expected to increase by £150,000 per year although business in some locations is expected to fall. Through setting a competitive ‘all day’ rate in outer Birkenhead Car parks, this should encourage a return to parking in some of these areas.

**Budget Saving:
£281,000**

Budget Options

Option: Garden Waste Collection

Garden waste is currently collected free of charge from Wirral residents once per fortnight. Councils are not required by law to either offer the service for free, or offer it at all. This service is popular among residents, and contributes towards improving the local environment and improving recycling levels.

The option would remove the free kerbside collection of garden waste and replace the service with either a chargeable 'opt in' service operated by the Council, or an 'opt in' subscription service operated by a private or community organisation.

This option could potentially result in increased levels of fly tipping; which would be mitigated through help and support to allow residents to home compost and reduce their garden waste.

**Budget Saving:
£1 million**

Option: Increasing Waste Charges

Wirral Council operates a service where bulky or large items of household waste can be collected, for a charge, which is known as the ERIC service. The Council also provides replacement bins for a charge for residents who have lost or damaged their bins.

This option would increase the cost of the Environmental Reciprocal Improvement Carrier (ERIC) service from the current fee of £20 to £26.50 per visit. It will further review the policy for replacing bins and increase the existing charge, while tightening up the policy on who receives free replacement bins.

This option does bring the risk of increases in fly tipping and complaints, but also provides the opportunity for residents to work together to get better value from the service, for example neighbours requesting one visit to collect both of their bulky items. It will also increase income to the Council to safeguard against further price rises and reductions to other services.

**Budget Saving:
£80,000**

Budget Options

Option: Planning

The Council currently provides pre-planning application advice free of charge, whereas many other Local authorities including Sefton, Liverpool and St Helens all charge a fee.

The option in this area is to introduce a fee for all pre-planning advice.

Evidence from other Councils is that these schemes work and generate income, careful monitoring will be put in place to make sure that pre-planning advice still continues.

**Budget Saving:
£10,000**

What You Told Us:

“The Council should make savings through changing the way services are delivered through outsourcing, sharing services or encouraging groups of staff to take over the running of services – as long as the Council kept the responsibility for the quality of the service.”

Budget Options

Option: Wirral Apprentice Programme

The current Wirral Apprentice Programme is creating 114 apprenticeship placements in Wirral, and has been charged to provide a 12 month subsidy for NVQ level 3 placements and nine months for NVQ level 2. The programme has been well received by Wirral businesses and has been successful in providing apprenticeships.

This option would involve stopping the programme, and therefore not providing a further 55 apprentice positions across Wirral over the next 12 months.

This would mean that only the national apprenticeship scheme would then be operating in Wirral. However, there may be an opportunity of developing an apprenticeship scheme for the Liverpool City Region. In this case there would be a greatly reduced cost to the Council and Wirral would then be offering a programme similar to the other City Region authorities.

**Budget Saving: £500,000
or £420,000 dependent upon
which option is agreed**

Option: Handyperson Scheme

The work of the Handyperson Service helps people to continue living independent lives in their own homes for longer, resulting in fewer clients needing to access health and social care services at an earlier stage. The aim of the service is to offer an effective solution to a wide range of housing related problems, at a reasonable cost delivered by trusted Council employees.

The option here is to redevelop the service, meaning it is targeted more effectively at people who have recently been discharged from hospital, and reducing the service available to the general public.

The service reaches some of the most vulnerable in our community, who might normally be reluctant to accept more intensive help. Many clients are older owner-occupiers who are not known to statutory health and support services, yet they often lack a network of family or friends to support them to maintain their homes.

**Budget Saving:
£209,400**

Budget Options

Option: Restructure of the Regeneration, Housing and Planning

A service restructure in the Regeneration, Housing and Planning (RHP) Department to address reducing external grant income and changes to external organizations providing services.

Over the last 12 months there have been a number of significant changes which have led to a reconsideration of the structure and work of the Department:

- Regeneration Team: The proposed team restructure/ reduction will realise revenue savings of £143,700.
- Invest Wirral: Through the removal of the International Links and Social Enterprise posts, a saving of £47,900 for each will be made (a total of £95,800).
- Investment Strategy Team: The Inward Investment Manager post is currently vacant. Deleting this post will result in a saving of £60,800.
- Housing Strategy Team: This team currently has a vacant Principal Officer Housing Strategy post. Deleting this post will result in a saving of £38,600.

The work of the Regeneration Team has reduced as access to external funds such as those via NWDA and ERDF have diminished, particularly in relation to funds for development of the “place”. The proposals involved reducing the number of project managers from six to three, that will continue to allow sufficient resource to deal with the deliverable projects seeking some form of external resource.

There has recently been a successful bid for EU funds from a voluntary organisation in Wirral to develop support for Social Enterprises and referrals will be made to that organisation.

The Government has recently increased resource into UKTI to encourage businesses to look at international markets for additional business. Referrals will be made direct to UKTI for relevant business support.

Not filling the vacant Inward Investment manager post will mean that we will be unable to have a dedicated senior officer dealing with the creation of Inward Investment. We will spread that role across a number of senior officers and increase our publicised “offer” via the LEP and UKTI.

The Principal Housing Officer post has been vacant for a while and not filling the post will mean continuing as we have, with duties shared amongst the team.

**Budget Saving:
£338,900**

Budget Options

Option: Kennels Service

The Council currently operates a collection service during office hours and a standby service for the collection of strays outside normal hours. Detained animals are kept at the Council kennels in Birkenhead.

The option here would be to stop delivering a specific Wirral Council service and instead join negotiations with city region partners to deliver a cross Merseyside scheme to make savings.

The kennels in Wirral would close and owners would need to travel to Halewood to collect their pets, which could be a disincentive and harm the current 80% re-homing rate.

**Budget Saving:
£100,000**

Option: Home Insulation

The Warmer Wirral programme provides free or reduced home insulation for Wirral residents.

There are two options in this area; either to remove the budget for the programme, which would provide a saving or reduce the budget and still allow some work relating to energy efficiency and fuel poverty.

This could lead to some people having less access to affordable insulation programmes, but would be mitigated by a number of new national programmes.

**Budget Saving:
£985,600 to remove the budget.
£925,600 to reduce the budget**

Budget Options

Option: Environmental Health

The Council's Environmental Health team perform a wide range of duties related to the health, wellbeing and safety of the borough.

This option involves developing a collaboration for this function with Cheshire West and Chester in order to develop a mutual organisation to deliver the service.

This option would have no impact on the level of service.

**Budget Saving:
£109,000**

Option: Trading Standards

Within the Council's Trading Standards division there are a number of officers who are responsible for providing support to vulnerable customers.

This budget option involves reducing this service by One Fair Trading Officer and a Senior Trading Standards Officer

Some of this workload for the proposed option would be taken up by other staff. A further option for this area is to abolish the Fair Trading Scheme.

**Budget Saving:
£71,000**

Budget Options

Option: Pest Control

The Pest Control Service provides a treatment service to domestic customers and fulfils contracts for the private sector.

The option in this area involves reducing the department by one member of staff.

This proposal will see the loss of one full time member of staff, which could have a potential impact on the level of service.

**Budget Saving:
£30,000**

What You Told Us:

“You said we should look at non-universal, optional services and investigate if they could be reduced or stopped.”

Option: Reduce Highway Maintenance Activity

A potential reduction in grants means the Council will have significantly less funding to spend on road maintenance in the coming years. At the moment, the Council has a contract with an external company to complete all road maintenance work.

This option would reduce proactive maintenance of roads, footways, signage, and street furniture. This means that the Council would only complete maintenance where there is a direct safety issue.

This option will still ensure our roads and highways are safe, but reducing the more cosmetic work done on our roads will reduce the quality of our highways network in places. This brings a number of risks which will need to be mitigated, but ensures that we are using our remaining resources in a responsible manner.

**Budget Saving:
£588,000**

Option: Reduce Street Lighting

At the moment the Council operates a scheme which involves people travelling the borough to perform lighting inspections at night.

This option would stop night time inspections of lighting and where it is safe to do so, switch off lighting either completely or part of the night.

To make this option work, the Council would trial equipment to reduce energy consumption and also work with volunteers, such as Neighbourhood Watch Groups, to replace the scouting service, as well as extensively promoting the methods of reporting faulty lights. A safety-first approach will be taken to reducing or switching off lighting.

**Budget Saving:
£265,000**

Option: Rationalise Highways Drainage Service

The Council performs regular maintenance work across drainage inspections on the highways, ensuring that risk of flooding is brought down as low as possible.

This option would rationalise the wider drainage inspection service through targeted inspections at problem sites and reduced levels of maintenance.

Money can be saved by changing the inspection arrangement for highway drainage, and prioritising only those areas at greater risk of flood.

**Budget Saving:
£106,000**

Option: Reduce Street Cleansing

The Council, through its contractor Biffa, ensures that Wirral streets are well cleaned. This is, however, at a high cost.

The option would pilot a reduction in quality of service with a view, if the results are acceptable, to reducing the level of street cleansing in future years.

A reduction in Council street cleaning will be balanced out by encouraging partnerships with the voluntary/community sector to keep Wirral's streets clean, however, street cleanliness in some areas may still reduce. This option would involve reducing the levels of cleaning in rural areas, industrial areas and some residential areas, but would not affect tourist 'hot spots', main retail areas and the main gateways in and out of the borough.

The Council recognises that this option might increase customer dissatisfaction and will work with the community to encourage more local ownership to reduce litter.

**Budget Saving:
£1 million**

Option: Reducing School Crossing Patrols

The Council currently provides school crossing patrol sites across the borough, which are funded and managed almost entirely by Wirral Council. This is not a statutory service, and is operated during school term time only.

This option would involve charging schools for the crossing patrol service and removing the cost to the Council entirely.

The council would continue to employ the staff and provide professional supervision. Many safety schemes (e.g. Pelican crossings) have been introduced on Wirral roads and in some cases the provision of these schemes and retention of the crossing patrol may be duplicated. Schools would be invited to consider this aspect, and would be expected to provide the funding for each of the patrol staff.

**Budget Saving:
£330,000**

Option: Maintenance of Parks and Open Spaces

Wirral has over 200 sites which are classed as being 'parks and open spaces'; these sites are a mixture of large and local parks, general green spaces, beaches and bowling greens.

There are two options in this area:

The first is to stop the maintenance of the non-golf and football pitch areas of some parks as well as stopping maintenance of a number of local parks, green spaces and beaches.

The second option is to reduce the maintenance regime, so that more areas are left for wildlife and only cut once a year, and some areas being cut on a three week cycle rather than the existing 2 week cycle among other reductions.

The Council would work with, particularly, Friends groups to ensure that parks could be maintained through community management, and aims that by 2015 Friends groups had a major role to play in the maintenance and future development of all parks.

**Budget Saving:
£850,000 for option one or
£450,000 for option two**

Budget Options

Option: BME Support in Supporting People Service

Part of the Council's Supporting People team is a service which, while not statutory, is designed to provide support to help vulnerable people from the BME community to live independently in accommodation and prevent problems that can often lead to hospitalisation, institutional care, custody, tenancy breakdown and homelessness.

The option would involve stopping this service, and requiring other organisations to provide this type of service.

Since the establishment of this service in 2005, a number of other community based organisations have been developed in Wirral who provide services to the BME Community. As a result there is increased capacity to assist clients in accessing services.

Further potential clients can also access other floating supported services tendered in 2009. The services are available to all socially excluded vulnerable groups, including those clients from the BME Community. We also hold a contract with Wirral Citizen's Advice Bureau to provide housing advice and support to all Wirral residents, which provides a very similar service to this one.

Budget Saving:
£100,000

Option: Supporting People

The supporting people programme currently costs £9.75 million and delivers services to around 5,500 Wirral residents. The service makes sure that people who have housing related support needs are supported to maintain their tenancies and remain independent.

The option would involve reducing the budget of this service through renegotiating contracts, tendering services, remodelling services, and closing services.

The impact of this budget reduction would be mitigated by the remaining resources within the division being more closely focussed on the most vulnerable.

Budget Saving:
£2 million

Budget Options

Option: Investing in Wirral's Businesses

Wirral Council operates a service called Invest Wirral, which provides a wide range of business support services including supporting private sector investment, providing business advice, investment in start up businesses, a business forum, the Council's green growth strategy, and social enterprise support services.

The option in this area would reduce the support offered to business in a number of locations, including withdrawing the 'Business Angels, investment fund and the Business Investment Grant. These options may be replaced by regional grants in the future. Additional options in this area would avoid duplication with other services by removing the Invest Wirral events budget, and the social enterprise support, both of which should have no implications for Wirral businesses.

These options are proposed in the knowledge that they will impact on the Council's ability to invest to support new businesses, but will be mitigated by working closely with regional and national organisations to provide replacement funding.

**Budget Saving:
£352,000**

Option: Community Patrol and Dog Fouling

Wirral Community Patrol consists of more than 20 officers who work towards improving the security and safety of Wirral Council properties but also making Wirral a safe place to live, work and visit. The Council also provide a Dog Fouling Enforcement Team which aim to improve and protect the Wirral environment by reducing dog fouling.

The option is to stop paying enhanced salaries for evening and weekend work for Community Patrol, except for bank holidays, and also to reduce the size of the dog fouling enforcement team.

The community patrol option would not impact on the level of service delivered to Wirral residents but will equate to a loss of income for the staff involved. In terms of the dog fouling team, there would be an impact for Wirral residents who may see an increase in the levels of dog fouling.

**Budget Saving:
£362,000**

Budget Options

Option:

Modernisation of Leisure

Currently, Leisure Centres across Wirral have periods where usage is extremely low, compared to the number of staff working at the sites.

The option in this area is to make a number of changes to pool operating times and working practices, including closing Europa Leisure Pool and Guinea Gap Pool during less busy times, and reducing the staff requirements for the sauna operation at Guinea Gap Leisure Centre among others.

These proposals will require changes to the activity programmes in leisure centres which will affect groups such as swimming clubs, but will have the least affect on the majority of users.

Budget Saving:
£429,000

CAR PARKING OPERATIONS

Budget Savings £281k

Reduce expenditure associated with parking operations and increase income.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Reduction in administration resources due to the reduced number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) issued.

Reduction in costs associated with the running, maintenance and monitoring of the service.

Reduction in expenditure on parking enforcement contract due to reduced demand, through better targeting of resources.

Increased income from car parks, through rationalisation of parking charges across the Borough, to bring all car parks inline with the current tariffs in Birkenhead.

The provision of car parks is in direct competition with private sector provision in many places. A reduction in the 'all day' charges in outer Birkenhead to a competitive rate of £2.50, to stimulate a return to long stay parking in these areas, and an increase in expected income.

Reduction in annual and seasonal permit rates to complement the above option for outer Birkenhead, together with better promotion and marketing and an option for monthly payment plans. This is again expected to net an overall increase in income.

IMPACT

Achieving the full year savings provided by the estimated parking income level changes will require a decision to be reached no later than early January 2013 in sufficient time to amend traffic regulation orders and alter tariff settings on pay-and-display machines.

Actual income levels are dependent on the willingness of service users to pay the revised charges.

If the economy continues to decline then the potential income, and thus the potential savings may not be fully achieved.

The reduced frequency of cash collection potentially increases the value of money taken in the event of theft.

MITIGATION

Car parking operations, both on-street and off-street, contribute to the Council's management of the safe movement of traffic, as part of the statutory duties imposed on the Council as Traffic Manager and as Highway Authority.

Enforcement frequencies in some out of town areas will reduce as will responsiveness to enforcement requests. There will be a reduced frequency of collections in low income car parks and less frequent replacement of components for pay and display machines.

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GARDEN WASTE KERBSIDE RECYCLING SERVICE

BUDGET SAVING £1M

The garden waste service is currently provided to 112,000 households who currently receive a free fortnightly collection. Around 21,000 tonnes of garden waste are currently recycled, contributing 15% of Wirral's overall 40% recycling performance. The Council propose to introduce an opt-in charge for the service of £35 per year, in order to fully recover the collection costs.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

This service is not a universal service but is funded by all tax payers of Wirral.

The Council has a right to charge for the collection of separately collected garden waste under The Controlled Waste Regulations, 1990 (Amended 2012) Schedule 2.

Charging for the collection of garden waste is a "Priority Delivery Option" in the Joint Recycling and Waste Management Strategy for Merseyside and as such has been subject to public consultation and a sustainability appraisal. Nationally, districts that charge for garden waste produce less waste that is sent to landfill overall, indicating that charging for this service encourages waste prevention behaviour amongst residents.

IMPACT

There will be a fall in Wirral's recycling performance of 3-5%, however, the impact of on the pooled Merseyside Recycling target (50% by 2020) will be less as some people will take their garden waste to the Household Waste Recycling Centres.

There will be a significant increase in customer contacts via the Streetscene Call Centre to enquire about the new service or to complain about the charge.

There may be small increase in fly tipping as a result of introducing a charge.

Anticipated savings are based on 30,000 households joining the service, with the potential of this increasing to 40,000 in the medium term.

MITIGATION

Officers have requested a "financial package" to ensure the Council is fully resourced to manage the commercial element of the service.

Take-up and performance forecasts have been modelled on other local authorities who have introduced charges.

Additional funds have been identified to intensify the promotion of home composting, including expanding our successful workshops that help residents learn how to compost successfully.

Customers will be provided with “terms and conditions” of the service to ensure their customer rights are protected and the Council mitigates service delivery risks.

INCREASE IN WASTE CHARGES

Budget Saving £80k

This option will increase the cost of the Environmental Reciprocal Improvement Carrier (ERIC) service from the current fee of £20 to £26.50 per visit to recover the cost of the service.

This option will review the existing policy for replacement bins and increase the existing charge for replacement wheelie bins, tighten up on number of free wheeled bins being distributed to residents and also ensure costs are recovered from bin warranties.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The Council has a statutory duty to provide all services discussed within this option under Section 45 of the Environment Protection Act (Part 2) 1990. However, the Council may levy a reasonable charge for the collection element of this waste to recover its costs.

So far in 2012/13, Wirral Council has seen a drop in calls from the equivalent months in the previous year of around 13% for the ERIC service. Similar decreases have also been reported by other Merseyside authorities (even those that offer a free service). The low number of fly-tipped "white goods" items reported through Streetscene compared to other waste streams also supports the view that the borough is being trawled for these items as they currently have a net value within the waste industry.

Net income can expect to increase by £30k pa from an increase to the ERIC service.

An estimate of increased net income of £50k pa as a result of the Bin Charging Policy Review.

IMPACT

There may be an increase in complaints from customers and an increase in fly tipping.

If there is a fall in demand for the services then income targets will not be met.

Residents unable to afford a new bin; this could lead to contamination of other bins and fly tipping.

MITIGATION

The service will still run but with changes to the conditions of those entitled to a free replacement wheelie bin.

Instances of fly tipping and abandoned bins will need to be monitored.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This option proposes that the Council Kennels/Warden Service should consider being part of the Merseyside consortium service for the collection and retention of dogs.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The council operates a collection service during office hours and a standby service outside normal hours.

A Merseyside Consortium (Liverpool, Knowsley, Halton and Sefton) jointly pay a private contractor to deliver both the out of hours and kennelling service.

The members of the Merseyside Consortium pay approximately £235,000 for this service which operates from Halewood. This contract is due to be re-tendered and should Wirral be included, would provide the potential to meet statutory requirements at lower cost than the existing council service.

IMPACT

There are likely to be a number of logistical and practical hurdles to investigate if this option was pursued and to meet its statutory obligations the authority. Five employees are at risk from this proposal, though Wirral may have to still employ one Dog Warden supplementary to this contract (as in Sefton model)

Under these arrangements the kennels in Wirral would close and owners would need to travel to Halewood to collect their pet. This could be a disincentive to such reclaims.

The capacity of any new arrangements would also need to be considered so as to ensure that there is proper capacity to cope with demand and to retain animals for a suitable period.

In terms of implications for voluntary, community and faith groups, the "Friends Group" will have a particular interest in this proposal and should be specifically included in the consultation.

In addition to the above, the transport of dogs to the site in Halewood would increase carbon emissions from road transport.

This proposal could potentially have a one off saving of £100,000 in year 2014/15.

MITIGATION

There are additional options as to how this service could be delivered differently. These include:

The potential to reduce the operating costs of the service through reducing the availability of the acceptance point arrangements from 24 hr availability to a cut off at 10pm or later.

The Kennels operating through an RSPCA affiliated organisation at Cross Lane. Discussions have taken place concerning co-operation between the council and that organisation.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This option proposes an investigation into collaboration with Cheshire West and Chester in order to establish a Mutual to deliver regulatory services. Other alternative ways of providing these services will also be provided.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Cheshire West and Chester Council is committed to the development of an alternative model for the delivery of regulatory services, such as Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing.

Potential savings opportunities available by transferring the work to a mutual are:

- Introducing a value for money test for all suppliers of products and services to the mutual. (support costs savings)
- Reduced sickness levels via increased staff commitment. Research suggests the average number of sick days in provider services is 14 days per employee per year. The average number in social enterprises is 9 days.
- Less bureaucratic processes.
- Increased productivity through more engaged employees.
- Increased cost-cutting through employee and service user innovation.

The new delivery model has the potential to create an organisation that can develop as a trading entity and deliver savings to the councils.

Saving will not be until 2013/14.

IMPACT

The establishment of the mutual or other alternative means of service delivery requires the development of a sound business case and consultation with staff.

In addition, the establishment of the new legal entity will require specialist legal advice. Cheshire West and Chester have engaged specialist legal advisors for the purpose.

MITIGATION

The service could be retained in house but the potential benefits from a mutual with other partners would not be achievable. Saving from the in house service would undermine delivery.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This budget option is to reduce the staffing level within the Trading Standards Teams by one Fair Trading Officer and a Senior Trading Standards Officer.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The Fair Trading Officers is engaged in providing support to vulnerable consumers who encounter trading standards issues. The officers are also involved in pro-active work to support business.

The proposed loss of posts will realise a saving of £71,000. Further savings will be made by the abolishment of a current vacant Trading Standards Officer post.

IMPACT

There will be less resilience within the teams to respond due to sickness absence. Response times to enquiries may lengthen and the level of intervention more reliant upon self help measures.

MITIGATION

The consumer support work will be redirected to the remaining team and the business support element taken up by the Trading Scheme project Officer.

Some of the workload for the proposed deleted post will be taken up by other staff members.

In addition, a further option for service delivery would be to abolish the Fair Trading Scheme. This is a viable scheme that earns income that greatly offsets costs.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This option presents a proposal to reduce operating costs of the Pest Control Service in Wirral whilst continuing to increase income.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The Pest Control Service provides a treatment service to domestic customers and fulfils contracts to the private sector. Income from the growing private sector treatments subsidises the cost of the free provision for public health significant pests.

The exercise has identified a reduction in operational costs of £21,500 for pest control. It is proposed to add to this by a reduction of one specialist operational staff member at a saving of £30,000. This will equate to a total reduction in direct operational cost of £51,000.

IMPACT

The proposal will see the loss of one full time staff member. This could undermine the ability of the service to deal with the demand for service.

A reduction in staff/ level of service could have an impact on Registered social landlords are key customers for the service. Area treatments have been successfully organised through partnership with for example, Wirral Partnership Homes.

In terms of legal implications, the council has a statutory duty to ensure that infestations of pests are treated.

MITIGATION

Changes have been previously made to mitigate the loss of one team member in that the team leader also carries an operational workload and **all operatives** now undertake treatments for both domestic and commercial premises as part of normal routine.

In terms of possible additional options for service delivery, other local authorities outside of Merseyside have used private contractors to carry out pest control treatments on behalf the council. This can be done for the current service. However, the reduced net direct cost of the service is effectively supporting 1550 free treatments for rats. Unless there is a sharp decline in income then this represents good value for money.

Another option is to charge for rat infestation treatments. This is not recommended for the following reasons:

- A charge will discourage reporting and infestations could go ill or untreated.
- Citizens may be tempted to treat themselves using relatively strong poisons. This could provide health risks lead to non target species being harmed and increase immunity amongst the rat population.
- Unlike other pest species rats can affect properties other than those harbouring the animal. Problems arise when people are unwilling to pay to treat a problem that they perceive as being the responsibility of others.

- The current system is being effective in reducing and controlling the overall population in Wirral.
- Rat treatments are carried out in areas of Wirral but tend to disproportionately affects vulnerable communities.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Budget Savings £588k

This option would reduce maintenance of roads, footways, signage, and street furniture to that which is necessary to ensure safety of all highway users or to resolve significant maintenance issues.

Rationalisation of the highways inspection, asset management and enforcement arrangements, reducing the number of employees.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Maintenance of the highway is a statutory duty; the level of maintenance is not prescribed.

IMPACT

A reduction in the service provided will result in less maintenance and a slower response to maintenance needs.

Increased customer dissatisfaction with the Council.

A reduction in highway maintenance will contribute to the increasing deterioration of the highways, which in turn may lead to increased demand for safety-related footway and carriageway inspections and repairs, and proportionately more expensive maintenance at a later date.

Reduced highway maintenance will result in deterioration in the appearance and performance of the Streetscene, influencing community wellbeing.

MITIGATION

The service would still be delivered but at a reduced level.

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STREET LIGHTING

Budget Savings £265k

This option would stop night time inspections (scouting) of lighting and where it is safe to do so, switch off lighting.

Some investment in equipment changes will be required to achieve a reduction in the energy charges and is offset against savings in energy purchased.

Reduce lighting and illuminated maintenance activity for repairs, alterations and maintenance, together with discontinuing painting of columns and non-essential vandalism repairs.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The switching off of street lights will reduce the energy consumed reducing costs and the carbon emissions produced in the generation of electricity.

Stopping night time inspections eliminates the expenditure on the allowances and expenses incurred with this service.

IMPACT

A reduction in the service provided will result in less maintenance and a slower response to maintenance needs.

There may be increased customer dissatisfaction with the Council, and an increase in claims against the Council for slips, trips and falls.

A reduction in maintenance of the equipment will contribute to the increasing deterioration of the highways infrastructure, which in turn may lead to proportionately more expensive maintenance at a later date.

There is the risk of a greater number of errors or omissions in the reported data, received from the public reporting faults with street lighting.

The maintenance of all aspects of the highway infrastructure is a statutory duty imposed on the Council as Highway Authority.

A reduction in street lightning may result in an increase in night-time road traffic collisions.

Reduced street lighting and street lighting maintenance may result in actual or perceive community safety concerns in respect of night-time anti-social behaviour or crime.

MITIGATION

Discontinuation of the night-time scouting service will result in the public being expected to report lights not working, and this would likely result in a greater number of enquiries to Streetscene.

MAINTENANCE OF HIGHWAY DRAINAGE

Budget Savings £106k

This option would rationalise the highways inspection arrangements and review gully cleansing arrangements by reducing gully cleansing through better targeting of problem sites, reduce the amount of inspection and maintenance carried out to that which is necessary to ensure safety of all highway users and resolve significant highway drainage issues. Employee savings can also be made.

The maintenance of all aspects of the highway infrastructure is a statutory duty imposed on the Council as Highway Authority.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Whilst the maintenance of the highway is a statutory duty, the level of maintenance is not prescribed.

IMPACT

A reduction in the service provided will result in less maintenance and a slower response to maintenance needs.

No investigation into matters which are not the responsibility of the Council as Highway Authority.

Reduction in service may result in customer dissatisfaction with the Council, and an increase in claims against the Council for slips, trips and falls.

A reduction in highway drainage maintenance will contribute to the increasing deterioration of the highways, which in turn may lead to increased demand for carriageway inspections and repairs.

A reduction in highway drainage maintenance may result in increased standing water on the highway or flooding nearby due to run-off from the highway.

MITIGATION

A reduced level of service will still be delivered.

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STREET CLEANSING FREQUENCY REVIEW

Budget Saving £1m

The current street cleansing service (delivered by Biffa) costs Wirral four and a half million pounds every year. A reduction in the frequency of street cleansing aims to save up to one million pounds.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The current key performance indicator (KPI) for street cleansing carried out by Biffa shows that over the last 12 months, 96.8% of all locations surveyed are to an acceptable standard, which is an over performance on the street cleansing standards when compared nationally, or against our target.

In order to identify the desired savings of up to one million pounds the frequency of cleanse for many locations across the borough will drop, reducing KPI performance levels. An invest to save bid will be needed to fund resources to carry out a six-month pilot study.

IMPACT

It is highly likely reducing the frequency of street cleansing will initially increase customer dissatisfaction which may lead to a rise in customer referrals/complaints during the pilot period to Streetscene.

Wirral Council has an obligation to maintain reasonable cleansing standards and ensure the public highway is not obstructed by waste. The pilot will establish how long areas stay clean so that realistic but adequate cleansing frequencies can be established. Reactive operational resources required to respond to cleansing requests will be monitored in order to identify the hardest areas to keep clean.

Most of the reduction in cleanse will be in residential areas, with secondary retail areas and industrial areas also being affected.

MITIGATION

A six month pilot (starting in January 2013) will take place to research the cleansing frequency tolerances of all land types across the borough highlighting exactly how long various location types take to fall below standards. The pilot will identify areas that can be changed immediately and areas that should not be changed.

A Litter Reduction Strategy will be developed that tackles the undesirable behaviour of littering. The strategy will seek to encourage citizens to look after the immediate place where they live and the associated resources will be targeted to areas where the streets become littered quickly.

There may be an opportunity to allow private sector organisations to bid for extra cleansing from either Biffa or other providers to allow for a higher standard of local environmental quality in various commercial/industrial areas affected.

The initial pilot option would allow for public consultation throughout the six month research period.

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SCHOOL CROSSING PATROL SERVICE#

Budget Saving £330k

This option proposes charging schools on a discretionary opt-in basis for the provision of school crossing patrols to assist children and adults on their journeys to/from schools to enable the service to be 'cost neutral' to the Council.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (section 508A) places a duty on Local Authorities to promote and encourage sustainable travel to/from school. The 1988 Road Traffic Act, Section 39, places Statutory Duty on the local authority to undertake studies into road accidents and to take steps both to reduce and prevent accidents.

The School Crossing Patrols (SCP) service supports these aims, however there is no statutory duty for local authorities to specifically provide a SCP service.

This service is undertaken broadly in line with the nationally recognised guidance issued by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) and the Criteria for patrols approved by Council in February 2009.

A saving of £330,000 could be realised if the service became self-funding with schools paying for the service if they choose to do so.

Analysis of the injury accident data recorded and provided by the Police shows that at sites where the Council has provided a School Crossing Patrol road safety is good.

IMPACT

Schools may decide not to prioritise the funding of school crossing patrols and this would result in the service ceasing at sites servicing their school.

Not all patrol sites operate directly outside a school, with some Patrols serving a wider community.

Where schools share the use of a Patrol and wish to continue to provide the service, a suitable arrangement for apportioning costs will be developed in conjunction with them.

The removal of a patrol which meets the Council's criteria may lead to additional road accidents/casualties.

Recruitment of staff into this service is recognised nationally as an issue, requiring continued effort.

A reduction of the School Crossing Patrol Service will impact on staffing levels.

MITIGATION

Schools would pay for the provision of School Crossing Patrols to enable the service to be 'cost neutral' to the Council. Technical Services would continue to provide the staff,

training, risk assessments/safety audits, uniform etc and would undertake recruitment for vacant sites to ensure that safety and standards are maintained.

WITHDRAWAL OF PARKS' MAINTENANCE

Budget Saving £850k

This report explains how the Council would cease to maintain over 100 sites, (the majority being smaller sites), all bowling greens except at Birkenhead Park and cease to maintain 16 beaches while continuing to maintain most major parks, sports pitches and golf courses.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Wirral Council faces significant budget pressures and the Parks and Countryside Service have been asked to investigate options for significant financial savings.

The option set out in this report is to cease Wirral council's maintenance of the following sites: the non-golf and non-football pitch parts of Arrowe Park; 14 local parks, excluding recently installed play areas which would be retained on 3 of them; 32 natural and semi-natural green spaces; 44 amenity green spaces excluding recently installed play areas which would be retained on 3 of them; cleansing of beaches; all bowling greens except those in Birkenhead Park.

IMPACT

Withdrawing maintenance from these sites within the short timescale is expected to result in the following:

- Some sites may become overgrown with vegetation and litter. The Council would work to actively encourage measures to enable some sites could be taken on and managed by community-based partner groups.
- Some sites could be reallocated for alternative land use, subject to other considerations and consents, for example local amenity, planning and biodiversity interest. Such uses might include: creating new allotments in areas with large waiting lists; sale of land for gardens or development; and woodland or wetland creation which would require additional capital funding.

Whilst we expect alternative partnership management arrangements can be put in place in many areas if this is not achieved the main potential impacts of the cessation and reduction of sites' maintenance set out in this report may be as follows:

- **Impacts on the health and wellbeing of communities** - Green and open spaces provide valuable health benefits and social opportunities for people, including those with mental health conditions. Reducing the number of accessible green spaces may have a particular effect on more vulnerable people and the socio-economically deprived communities which are set out in the EIA for this report. Fitness trails in Arrowe and Mersey Parks would not be installed.
- **Impacts on local people and the visitor economy** - due to loss of cleansing of beaches. Wirral Council's visitor research shows that its beaches are a major part

of the visitor economy which employs 4,000 people. Reduced standards of cleanliness on the 16 beaches could result in reduced visitor numbers and loss of some of these local jobs as well as a loss of quality of life for local people.

- **Impacts on bowling green users** - Over 2,000 people belong to bowling clubs who use the Council's bowling greens. Many of them are over 60 who benefit physically, mentally and socially through regularly enjoying bowling.
- **Impacts on communities** - due to the risks of not maintaining the sites attracting anti-social behaviour and vermin. There would be fewer opportunities for local people to volunteer and be part of the Friends of Parks network.
- **Potential increase in claims to the council** - from slips and trips of people using the sites when they are not maintained.
- **Capacity for local groups to manage sites** - If the Council, partner or external grant funding were not found for start-up costs then land use reallocation - for example creating new allotments or habitats - would not be possible. Partner groups such as friends or other community based groups may not have capacity for taking on the management of these sites.
- **Wirral Council Employees** - In terms of staffing, ceasing to maintain the parks and open space sites indicated in this report would result in loss of 28 maintenance staff jobs.
- **Legal advice** - Legal officer input would be required for a variety of site transfer or change of use options and when dealing with increased claims.
- **Biodiversity** -The Council has a statutory duty to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out its functions. The cessation of maintenance on natural and semi-natural green spaces would need to be managed to maximise positive biodiversity outcomes.

MITIGATION

Some sites could be taken on and managed by community-based partner groups, however, significant staff input would be needed to manage the transition of sites from managed to no council management.

REDUCTION OF PARKS' MAINTENANCE

Budget Saving £450k

This option sets out a change in maintenance regime where:

- Rural verges are left for wildlife and only cut once a year except for sight lines.
- Further areas of parks and open spaces will be left for wildlife and as wild flower meadows.
- Some areas will be cut on a 3 week cycle instead of the existing 2 week cycle.
- A staff restructure will include the integration of grass cutting across the Highway and Parks and Countryside Teams and further savings in the Development Team.
- A reduction in bedding displays which will only continued on key sites.
- A reduction in the pre-planned maintenance programme.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Wirral Council faces significant budget pressures and the Parks and Countryside Service have been asked to investigate options for significant financial savings.

IMPACT

The main potential impacts are anticipated to be as follows:

- A more diverse range of flora and fauna in verges and some parks and open spaces.
- Less colourful floral planting in some parks and on many roundabouts.
- An increase in public enquiries to the Council about grass cutting and decrease in customer satisfaction as many local people are used to, and like, close mown grass across the Wirral.
- The proposed reduction in pre-planned maintenance will result in some infrastructure projects being achieved on a longer time scale or not at all as other priorities become essential. This will gradually lead to a further decline in the parks infrastructure for example paths, play areas, fences and walls. There are likely to be more trips and falls as the parks' infrastructure declines.
- The staff restructures will mean that less staff will be managing less maintenance in a more efficient manner and the Development Team will share responsibilities across the team. The staff will be reduced by four seasonal operations staff and one Development Team staff.

MITIGATION

Sight lines will be maintained on the highway verges for the health and safety of all users of the highway network.

Cutting the grass once a year will necessitate the purchase of appropriate machinery as part of the Parks Modernisation Programme.

Adequate resources and protocol would need to be in place to deal with enquires about the new standards and to ensure effective engagement with Elected Members and local people.

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This option proposes budget savings in the reduction of the operational cost of the Community Patrol and Closed Circuit Television Control Room Service. The proposal is that the premium payments for shift work is removed and pay for all shifts other than those for bank holidays would be at plain time.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

As part of the Joint Community Safety Team Community Patrol Service provides 24 hour response and security service for the council and through a service contract to schools and Wirral Partnership Homes. Supporting this role is the Closed Circuit Television Control Room.

Wirral Community Patrol is Wirral Council's service that is tasked to providing security for all of its premises 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The team consists of officers dedicated to "Helping make Wirral a safer place to live, work and visit." Wirral Community Patrol operates 24 hours a day 365 days a year including ALL holidays. The service employs 18 full time equivalents who work a shift system.

Staff in the Control Room are responsible for the monitoring of the Wirral CCTV system, the Emergency repairs calls for MBW, Alarm handling, calls relating to Wirral Community Patrol and radio support for these officers. Additional responsibilities include school emergency activation; emergency plan telephone, parking machine alarms and recording all calls and logging all information are all undertaken in this unit. The Control Room Operates operates 24 hours a day 365 days a year including ALL holidays. It employs 11 staff who work a shift system.

Currently staff working shifts are paid at time x 1:1/2 for Saturday and Sunday for nights during Monday to Friday at time x 1:1/3.

The proposal is made in order to realise savings. This would be £150, 000 and this averaged over 29 staff involved is a loss of £5200p.a.

IMPACT

The full savings can only be achieved if the necessary statutory steps can be taken to allow implementation in the new financial year.

This option would affect 29 staff and on this basis equates to an average loss per staff of £5200 p.a.

MITIGATION

The services provided by this service are provided by external contractors in other local authorities. The approximate saving that has been quoted in other boroughs is 10-15% on costs. This option provides a saving of 11% of staff costs. The service could be included into a wider facilities management outsourced contract.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

Dog Fouling Team – Proposal is to reduce the dog fouling enforcement team from ten staff to two enforcement officers.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

In, June 2010, a specialist team of five dog fouling wardens was created using resources from the then “Future Jobs Fund”. The purpose of the team was to tackle the problem of dog fouling throughout the borough through visible enforcement and by the promotion of responsible job ownership.

Following Policy Options, a permanent dog fouling team was created of 1 Team leader and 9 Enforcement Officers.

The option of reducing the team by seven enforcement officers and the team leader will realise a saving of £162,000 taking into account lower penalty fines.

IMPACT

The reduction would result in the service having just two officers to continue to maintain an enforcement presence.

A risk exists in that the level of dog fouling in the borough rises due to the reduced presence of enforcement officers. For the highway, the refuse removal contract includes removal of dog fouling.

The option involves the loss of 8 posts at a saving of £162,000.

MITIGATION

The smaller team could operate pending consideration of a private sector involvement in dog fouling enforcement.

A second option of non-delivery also exists in that the whole team could be abolished at an additional saving of £ 38,400.

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MODERNISATION OF LEISURE OPTIONS

Budget Savings £429k

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

Analysis of the current Leisure Centre swimming pool programmes at each site has identified a high staff to income ratio at certain periods. This is mainly due to the rigid health and safety recommendations for the operation of one/two swimming pools at the same time, even at quiet periods when usage is low.

Savings could be made by making the following changes to pool operating times and working practices; close Europa Leisure Pool during less busy times, close Guinea Gap Leisure Pool during less busy times, reduce staffing requirements for the sauna operation at Guinea Gap Leisure Centre, close the basket store facility at Woodchurch Leisure Centre and transfer use of dry side operation to the community, introduce self lifeguarding of swimming club times at all leisure facilities, reduced requirement of reception resources.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The changes proposed to operating times are when levels of use are low and staff costs are high.

IMPACT

The proposal will require changes to the activity programmes in Leisure Centres which will affect established user groups such as swimming clubs.

Although compulsory redundancies can not be ruled out, it is hoped to achieve the necessary staff reductions by means of EVR or redesign of current shift rotas and working practices.

Staff turn-over may increase because of the reductions in conditions of employment

MITIGATION

The proposed changes to operating times have been designed to have the least affect on the majority of users.

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OPTION: LIBRARIES AND ONE STOP SHOPS

BUDGET SAVING: £629,000

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This option is regarding potential savings options in relation to the Council's range of One Stop Shop and Library sites through a range of changes to the service.

The options involved in this area include:

- **Further merging of existing library and one stop shop sites, which bring savings in terms of reducing the number of staff which are required**
- **Options regarding reducing opening hours particularly around Christmas and New Year**
- **Reducing the book fund which is currently allocated on an annual basis to Libraries.**

This option would also involve encouraging volunteers to take a greater role in Library services, and to further investigate and explore the possibility of community asset transfer for some sites.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Merging of Libraries and One Stop Shops

Budget Saving: £400,000

This proposal represents the likely savings that will be achieved via the current programme of merging One Stop Shops and Libraries. This builds on the sum already within the 2012/13 savings programme of £200k.

The sites offering wider service availability will be more attractive as a local community hub and focal point for services and allow other agencies, organisations to utilise and support the facilities.

Library & OSS reduced hours (Christmas & New Year)

Budget Saving: £90,000

A one off saving of £90k, achieved via savings in cost of buildings and overall the need for staff at this time. This would be via reduced hours or total staff in service. This proposal can be independent or complimentary to the above option regarding merging sites and may be affected by the wider proposals on staffing terms and conditions

Reduction of the Book Fund

This proposal would involve the Book Fund, which is allocated to libraries on an annual basis, being reduced by £139,000.

IMPACT

Merging of Libraries and One Stop Shops

This merger widens the function of sites, which will to a degree reduce staffing at merged sites. This would see a number of actual sites merge to reduce the total

number of sites, reducing buildings occupied and maximising use of sites. There is a requirement to improve some of the joint buildings which could only be financed by reserves to the level available.

Library & OSS reduced hours (Christmas & New Year)

This proposal requires consultation with users and partners and is unlikely to affect our statutory responsibility for providing an efficient and comprehensive library service. The staffing implications are that each site would be closed during this period with a single One Stop Shop maintained for emergency contact and this would allow the reduced staffing resources easier deployment through the rest of the year

MITIGATION

Library One Stop Shop operating arrangements via merger and re-provision

Aligned to this would be the ongoing work already underway to maximise the effective use of volunteers, partner organisations and local community to support and complement the service available. This proposal requires consultation with users and partners and is unlikely to affect our statutory responsibility for providing an efficient and comprehensive library service. The staffing implications are that as each site is merged there is potential savings and within these proposals would see an overall reduction of six full time employees in each year.

Library & OSS reduced hours (Christmas & New Year)

The proposal is to close Library and One Stop sites between Christmas and New Year. This is reducing the service, but at a time when usage is well below the norm in any case and some level of contact service would still be maintained.