

CABINET – 24 January 2007

Minute 225 - FINANCE AND BEST VALUE: PROJECTED BUDGET 2007-08

The Director of Finance presented the projected budget for 2007-08 which had been updated to include the decisions of the Executive Board on 11 January 2007.

A decision was required to progress the setting of the budget.

The Leader of the Council moved a motion, duly seconded, which set out proposed savings.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group referred to debts of £1.9m owed by the Primary Care Trust. The Director of Adult Social Services indicated that some debts had been settled locally and legal advice was being sought on the remainder.

The Leader of the Council indicated that his aim was to keep the Council tax level as low as possible.

The meeting adjourned at 7.50pm and reconvened at 8pm.

The Leader of the Conservative Group indicated that he would not be supporting all of the proposals.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group indicated that he would suggest that several of the savings proposed be referred to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees for scrutiny.

The Leader of the Conservative Group requested further information on the proposed budget savings arising from the reduction of the number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Area Forums.

The Leader of the Council stated that he would submit a budget to the Cabinet meeting on 19 February 2007 and invited other groups to submit their own proposals. Where issues were referred to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, he suggested that where there was no agreement, the Committees needed to investigate alternative savings.

Resolved (5:5, with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Best Value using his casting vote in favour of the motion) - That

(1) in view of the continued and urgent need to make progress on closing Wirral's budget gap for 2007/08, and in the light of the decisions taken in minute 231 (Fairer Charging Policy for non-residential care services), minute 239 (Investment in Energy Efficiency Programme Phase 2) and minute 246 (Provision for the Future – an Overview of the Direction for Care Services), this Cabinet agrees the following and asks Council to approve those items where there is all party support and, in so doing, to suspend paragraphs 2(a) and 2(b) of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules. Where there is no such agreement, Council is asked to refer the relevant item to the

appropriate Select Committee for discussion and subsequent referral to Budget Cabinet.

Children's Services Department

Initial savings from starting a review of positive activities provided to young people across the borough consistent with the newly established district and area structure for Children and Young People's services. This review to take into account the Government's Youth Matters Green Paper and include services provided by both the Statutory and Voluntary sectors (£200,000)

Incorporate Toy Library functions into Seacombe Children's Centre and review Sure Start level of service (£55,000)

Review Management Charges on Youth Offending Service (£70,000)

Adult Social Services Department

Homecare Services: continue overall strategy of enablement reflected in report to Cabinet, concentrating on more specialist and intensive services, with some externalisation of less specialist elements (£400,000)

Explore all options to encourage independence for those who use services in making their own arrangements for transport and maximise the contribution of charges in supporting that objective (£200,000)

Technical Services Department

Transfer cost of Energy Conservation Team from revenue to fee charging basis, set against Capital, PPM schemes, clients etc. (£75,000)

Introduce charges for technical assistance relating to pre-planning application discussions (£30,000)

General Review of Charging Policy (£20,000)

More effective working Streetscene phase 2 (I Business project) (£50,000)

Integration of Building/Development Control application process(I Business project) (£50,000)

Review of revenue/capital charges on capital projects and LTP schemes (£50,000)

Energy Savings: first year result of long term investment in increased energy saving measures (£69,000)

Finance Department

Call Centre developments, including generic working, provision of services for Merseytravel and re-structuring (£90,000)

Increase budgeted procurement saving by a net £500,000 (£500,000)

Regeneration Department

Amendments to Cultural Services staff duty rotas (£50,000)

Review Council contribution to Health Links (£54,000)

Negotiate better use of extended schools in provision of services to the community (£30,000)

Capitalise HMRI grant (£135,000)

Delete two vacant posts (£80,000)

Reduce library book fund (£100,000)

Renegotiate funding on Community Support Officer Provision (£25,000)

Re-profiling of alley-gating programme (£25,000)

Resolution of contractor dispute (One off payment) (£120,000)

Corporate Services Department

Close Tourism Information Centre and provide information through existing One Stop Shops. (Requires EVR or redeployment of four staff.) Explore with Merseytravel opportunities for expanding travel centre at Cloughton Road Bus Station (£58,000)

Cross Council Savings

Reduce allowance for pay inflation from 3% to 2% with departments absorbing any increases over 2% (£1,300,000)

Reduce cost of democracy by:

- (i) Returning to 6 Overview and Scrutiny Committees and 8 Area Forums matching the police beats as before;**
- (ii) Limiting train travel to a maximum cost of no more than the standard second class ticket;**
- (iii) Monitoring taxi use to ensure essential use only;**
- (iv) Limiting attendance at Conferences, with first preference to Portfolio Holders and Scrutiny Chairs and bookings for guaranteed attendance only (£50,000)**

(2) the Director of Finance to report back to Budget Cabinet on potential savings from a detailed review of the use of Consultants and Agency staff across the Council;

(3) the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance as part of their current contract negotiations with Fujitsu to review whether the whole of the £400,000 per annum currently included in the contract is required to continue to provide the necessary service and to report back to Budget Cabinet;

(4) the Director of Adult Social Services to report back to Budget Cabinet with the level of savings that can be achieved from Management Integration of Financial and Support Services with the PCT and the final estimate of achievable savings following a review of reduced funding commitments as a result of recent legal judgements;

(5) it be recognised that Adult Social Services is now being required to make very extensive savings which require fundamental changes in the organisation and delivery of social care services at a time of increasing demand as a result of demographic pressures. It therefore agrees that the total of savings delivered from Adult Social Services should be calculated net of the sum of £100,000 required to provide additional senior level management capacity to monitor and support the programme of change and ensure the savings are delivered on budget and on time;

(6) the Director of Children's Services to incorporate a report on the planned savings from the review of positive activities for young people and on the further savings which would be available to be incorporated in an Efficiency Plan for 2008 to 2011 as part of an overall report back to Cabinet in June.